



Identity as an Accomplishment in Select Novels of Buchi Emecheta

1. Linsheya M Mefflin, Ph. D Research Scholar (Full Time), Reg. No. 20223284012018, Women's Christian College Nagercoil, Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundarnar University Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu, India.
2. Dr. Reni Y.G, Research Supervisor, Assistant professor of English, Women's Christian College Nagercoil. Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundarnar University Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu, India.

Abstract:

This paper explores the identity of an individual is explicated through the aspects of culture, religion, lifestyle, profession and gender. It is exhibited as a logo to one's individuality to the entire world. Identity can be evolved through triple tasks. The foremost factor is discovering the potential that an individual exhibits, then selection of its purpose in life, finally tending the opportunities to execute the potential in order to exhibit individuality to the society. Buchi Emecheta through her writings she visualizes the peregrination of characters to reach the pinnacle of identity. Furthermore, this paper vividly portrays various spheres of identity namely personal identity, social identity and cultural identity. This paper also inculcated the social Identity theory. Finally, it also emphasizes the need of identity for an individual to survive.

Keywords: Identity, Personal Identity, Social Identity, Cultural Identity.

DOI Number: 10.48047/nq.2022.20.17.nq880314

Neuroquantology 2022; 20(17): 2480-2485

Identity is comprised of goals, beliefs and values of an individual. Critic Erickson states "It as an awareness of the consistency in self-overtime, the recognition of this consistency by others" (Erickson 19). Identity is formulated by the act of exploration of choices and options that an individual adopts. The Oxford Dictionary defines identity as "the fact of being what a person is" (723). It enables the personality of an individual. Humans encompasses multiple relationships to cultivate their identity as a child, teenager, colleague in an institution that an individual



embodies, as a spouse, and also performs a role as father to exhibit their own identity. It revolves around the course of a human's life. Failure to this act constitute to an identity crisis. Development of identity is an essential one to comprehend the individuality and participation with the social groups where the human survives. Based on their distinct components' identity is labeled into personal identity, social identity, cultural identity, racial identity and gender-based identity and Religious identity.

Personal identity of a black woman is recognized by self and it is intrapersonal in nature. The components of personal identity are closely related to experiences that human beings exposed individually in their lives. It may manifest an alteration in human being with new exposure and fabricates a new identity. Identity shapes the black woman based on the perception she acquires. It also emphasizes the qualities adored by him through their system of beliefs, ethics and moral values. The traits of character in specific situation provokes the behavior tendencies in an individual to enhance personal identity. This personal identity also enables dispositional qualities of optimism, temperament, consciousness from others in society. Personal identity is enhanced by fueling the solid sense of self in a wellbeing and is viewed as an essential one. Emecheta explores the personal identity of woman as a tradeswoman where Ma Blackie in *The Bride Price* novel, where a young black widow persists her identity in a proficient manner hammers out as a deal with husband's saving and paid for oil, who barter it with white man with soaps from Whiteman's land. Blackie puts on sale as a tradeswoman to achieve the strategy of personal identity. It is expressed as, "Ma earned little money by clever act of buying and selling with Ezekiel's savings she bought oil. She sold it to the Whiteman, who took it back to England and made it into soap. Then she bought the Whiteman's soap and sold it to her people" (



27). It evidences the hardship of a widow in a business to enhance her personal identity in the midst of miseries in her life.

Social Identity emphasizes the identity in association with social groups where an individual voluntarily or involuntarily belongs to it. This identity is externally organized with a community and it aligns the individual in it. In social identity the class or group where people belong to is considered as a source of pride and it arouses a sense of belongingness to a human being. It constitutes multiple identities in relation with the group where an individual is connected. Social identity theory was proposed by psychologist Henri Tajfel and John Turner. This theory states the ways that the individual self-concepts are based on their membership in social groups. In the novel *Kehinde* Joshua, fourteen-year-old boy of the family who was under the influence of British culture expresses his social identity in relation with the group who get together. As a teenager he is dependent on ideas and beliefs of the peer group than his parents. Joshua contends with his father for the act of watching television is gazed as, “Joshua wanted to stay up late and see the end of football match, arguing that he was fourteen and all his friends at school would be talking about the match the next day. I’ll look a fool, Dad if I can’t put in a word, just because you didn’t let me stay up to match. Think of it! Dad” (*Keh*. 3). Joshua in order to enhance his self-esteem and social identity and recognition among the peer group at school he updates himself with current events. This showcases the efforts put forwarded by the teenager to emphasize his social identity in a public. According to the critic Erickson “A sense of recognition which shapes the personal identity as well as social identity” (Erickson 124).It was regarded as a reason for the act to condemn his own father. This identity can influence behaviors, attitudes, and values of oneself and others. Social identity can be empowering and challenging as it can impact the way human beings to introspect themselves and interact with the world around them.



Cultural identity constitutes the sense of belongingness, identification and interrelation where the individual persists with the cultural group. The specific culture encompasses their customs, beliefs, tradition, language, food, lifestyle and social behaviors. It is a complex interplay of people's experience and interaction within others of a particular culture. Cultural identity is not a static one. It can evolve or transform a person on factors such as migration, globalization. It fosters a sense of pride and maintains a cordial relation among same cultural group. According to Horowitz cultural identity is contemplated as "the identity of a group or culture of an individual as far as one is influenced by one's belonging to a group or culture and which is associated with a geographic area where people share common traits like language, religion, culture and other traits" (Horowitz 97). So, cultural identity is believed to be an organic system which is embedded by its structure and cultural values in it.

Furthermore, cultural identity is explicated through the diversity in food. The selection of food by individual reveals the sense of belongingness. It also internalizes the preference of specific culture by a person in a society and enhances their own identity in a particular group. Emecheta deplores it in the novel *Kehinde* where the parents continue African food culture in Britain that exposes their cultural identity. She cooks the monotony of ground rice and soup every evening. It explicits her cultural practice even in migrated nation but on the contrary her children attempt to shift from native host cultural identity to western culture. Thus, the choice of food also helps to gain cultural identity.

Language has a crucial role in shaping the cultural identity of an individual. It is used not only as a weapon for communication but also it acts as a carrier of cultural and historical values. It is a powerful marker of cultural identity to interlink with their heritage to express their cultural



belongings. According to Portes and Rumbaut, language is defined as “the limits of communities and nations and lead to bounded national identities and ethnic solidarities” (Portes 131). The usage of same language initiates a bond and relation between the members of the same cultural community. Emecheta explores the complexity of language and identity in relation with Nigerian society. It is explored through the novel *Kehinde* at the time of quarrel Albert and Kehinde shift to their mother tongue that exhibit their cultural identity on the contrary Joshua rejects Igbo language and prefers English. It attempts to reflect their ancestral language identity. Thus, Language is used as a powerful tool of identity. So, cultural identity enhances a source of source of strength and empowerment in an individual on the basis of cultural expression. Culture identity is multidimensional. It must be celebrated and valued by people from different backgrounds.

The social inequality is contemplated as a challenge for the indigenous people to acquire identity. This is reckoned as a priority one in many nations where people deprived of their own identity on different aspects. The objective of preserving identity can be accomplished by resisting it and by pointing out the views and needs in advanced manner and to obtain participation in the public sphere.

ABBREVIATIONS:

The Bride Price - BP

Kehinde - Keh

WORKS CITED:



Emecheta, Buchi. *The Bride Price*. Florene: Heinmann.1995.

Emecheta, Buchi. *Kehinde*. Heinemann. 1994.

Erickson, E. “The Problem of Ego Identity”. *Psychological Issues*, 1, P.P. 124.

Horowitz, D. *Ethnic Groups in conflict*. California : Berkley, 2000, P.P. 97.

Portes Alenjandro, Ruben G. *The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. Berkley: California
2001.

Tajfel, Turner, J.C. *Social Identity Theory of Inter- Group Behaviour*. Chicago. 1986.

