

Psychoanalytical Study on Preeti Shenoy's
The One You Cannot Have

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyse the latent content of the novel in the light of Freud's psychoanalytical theory and other psychological concept, i.e., Electra Complex in order to unravel the causes for equivocal behaviours of significant female character, disclose the hidden contents and meanings untold by the author.

Preeti Shenoy as India's only bestseller woman novelist of the year 2016, has been gifting many interesting novels to the readers with her real-life themes and her simple vocabulary. In her significant novel, *The One You Cannot Have*, she deals with many untold psychological issues faced by youngsters, particularly married women, such as trauma, depression, and repression. Therefore, the proposed paper aims to analyse the latent content of the novel in the light of Freud's psychoanalytical theory. In other words, it is an attempt to find out the hidden aspects of the novel, by analysing the strange attitudes of the significant characters.

Keywords: Preeti Shenoy, *The One You Cannot Have*, id, ego, superego, latent content, Electra Complex, etc.

In Sigmund Freud's 'psychoanalytical theory', he explains three modes of thought process – 'id', 'ego', and 'superego'. Id acts fully under the control of unconscious mind; ego acts under the control of conscious mind; and superego is under the control of conscience. Id is pleasure-oriented and hence it never bothers about the comments of the external world and cultural heritage of persons. Whereas, superego is concerned about morality, culture, heritage, laws, and ethics of the state. And the third aspect is conscious mind which compromises both id and superego and directs to take a socially acceptable act. Every act of human beings has to go through the above-mentioned thought process, before it is done.

The interference of the id, the ego, and the superego in decision-making is inevitable and it occurs invariably in all walks of life irrespective of time and context. At this juncture, it is quite relevant to analyse such thought process of some significant characters in the novel. The

researcher intends to analyse equivocal and contradictory activities of Shruti who undergoes a tremendous psychological trauma before her marriage with Rishab and after it too. She seems to be struggling between her id and superego, i.e., she struggles between her unconscious mind and conscience. Hence, she is not able to take any decision firmly. Ever since she got married to Rishab, she has to suppress all her intent wishes which she had dreamt of in the past, just for the sake of others, specifically for her mother's sake.

Driven by the superego, Shruti sacrifices her long-dreamt love for the sake of her mother and community despite her dislike for marriage. She tries to suppress and repress all her memories about her lover Aman, subsequently she blocks his Facebook account and goes far away from him, in order to forget him. But though she buries down her thoughts of Aman, she desperately fails finally in forgoing her past life with him. The more she tries to repress her memories the more her memories arise. The interference of id or unconscious motive is inevitable from which everyone suffers. She is completely influenced by her unconscious motives, i.e., her repressed wishes and memories which drive her towards an unknown direction that may be antisocial or unethical at times.

Shruti's act of postponement of her motherhood is worth analytical as it is obscure and not discernible. Despite she is forced or rather insisted by her family members and even neighbours in connection with her becoming pregnancy, she never changes her decision which induces one to find out the genuine causes of her stern decision. Her unpreparedness for motherhood makes one think of her sanity. Further it leads to a question, i.e., why did she marry Rishab, when she is not ready to bear his child? This act of her is quite suspicious and in a way Shruti's postponement can be compared with young Hamlet's postponement in revenging his father's murderer.

According to the patent content of the novel, Shruti must have agreed to marry Rishab though it is quite against her desire, in order to rescue her dying mother from cancer. This sacrifice (meant to be) is done by her as per the influence of her superego, which must have directed her to give up her long-dreamt life. In psychological terms, at first, she deliberately let her superego win her id by suppressing her id within herself. Nevertheless, she has socially agreed to be as Rishab's wife, internally she is no longer ready to accept him as her soul mate, as she had already kept Aman (her real soul mate) at the bottom of her heart. Ever since she started loving Aman, she had deemed him as her husband and thereafter she started living as his wife mentally even without any social recognition (marriage). Moreover, emotionally and psychologically they were united to each other even without marriage. At this juncture, though she agreed to marry Rishab physically, she could hardly accept the thought of being his wife emotionally. In other words, she has not thrown Aman away from her heart (she cannot do it) hence she can never accept Rishab at any cost as her real husband. Soon after her wedlock with

Rishab, her physical detachment from Aman is misunderstood by others as though she has forgotten her past memories and Aman truly, but her family and the society miserably failed to comprehend her immeasurable emotional attachment with Aman. This could be the most possible cause for Shruti's postponement in becoming mother. Eventually it is quite discernible that when there is a conflict between id and superego it is the former which is more influential than the latter. Hence, unconscious mind is something powerful which is capable of influencing persons despite the interference of traditional norms and conscience.

The content of the unconscious would always find its outlet at any point of time though it has been buried deeper. Hence, if an individual tries to act against their id, it is the former who would fail. The repressed wishes of humans would be fuming as that of volcano within them that may explode any time that would be unpredictable. Shruti's effort to destroy the reminiscences of her past or anything which would remind her of Aman, is a strong fulcrum for the mightiness of the unconscious mind, which is well capable of resurrecting after any number of its burial. For instance, Shruti rationally or consciously wants to forget Aman and her past but she fails miserably in overcoming her unconscious, because nobody can forget his / her happiest moments which they enjoyed once in their past. Shruti's despair over her unconscious is discernible from the following:

I feel like a traitor to be even thinking of Aman nearly two years into my marriage. Everybody says that things change after marriage. Everybody says that you forget the life you had before you got married. But they lie. How can you forget who you were? ... Marriage does not take away your past. At best, it paints a rosy picture of a 'new life'. But can a new life be built on the foundations of a past soaked in unforgettable memories? (Shenoy, 44)

It is learnt that unconscious is a treasure house of pleasures and hence it might give pleasure to persons whenever they do think of their pleasurable moments. Since the unconscious part of mind hoards only secret desires or repressed or shattered desires of their past, it enforces her to accomplish the objective of her unconscious mind. The unconscious mind never considers or afraid of the norms and tradition of the society rather it is completely focused on acquiring one's internal desires. Thus, Shruti is completely influenced by her id and hence despite her deliberate detachment from Aman, she could not help remembering her happiest chapter of her life, i.e., her relationship with Aman which she considers to be her happiest moments of her life.

Shruti is torn between her feeling and social norms. One part of her mind encourages her to go along with her arising desires, and the other part of her mind warns her of her unethical act and its terrible consequences. In psychological terms, Shruti's id pulls her towards Aman but her superego always never fails to warn her of her duty to act as a well-nurtured wife to be safe from

ignominy. Her dislike for her husband and her past life with Aman were known by her husband. As a result, each of them has to live like Tom and Jerry as there is no true love and affection between them. Their indifference between each other rived apart their happy married life and which seemed to intensify the familial riot or any physical or psychological assault which would be unbearable and unacceptable. She dies to know more about the present status of Aman owing to her contrition or guilt for having collapsed his life by rejecting him and married an unknown man at the time of marriage. It is Shruti's injustice or betrayal to Aman which tears off her normalcy and peace of mind completely over a period of time ever since her marriage. Hence, having struggled a lot between her emotion and tradition, she with great valour decides to follow her unconscious mind, i.e., to meet Aman at least once in her lifetime to penance for her sin.

Catapulted by her overpowering emotion, she even goes to the extent of transgressing the serious traditional norm of the well-constructed Indian culture, i.e., even after her marriage she tries to betray her husband by exploring the whereabouts of Aman in order to meet him. That clearly reveals her state of helplessness over her repressed wishes and hence she takes all serious effort in order to meet Aman, despite her guilt. Eventually, culmination of the power of the id is well-portrayed in the final chapters of the novel, i.e., since she is driven by her unconscious mind, she directly goes to Aman's residence to express all her suppressed plight. Her nerve-breaking decision is to be in touch with him but contrarily in her unconscious mind she is fully ready to give up her husband and ready to renew her life with Aman. However, Aman's response to Shruti's sudden realization of her mistake is quite unexpected but his final decision to go away from Shruti and to marry Anjali is absolutely rational so as to safeguard the culture of India at last. This reflects the strength of unconscious mind which is hardly controlled by persons in general.

Another aspect of this research is relevant to psychoanalytical study and hence study of characters and their attitudes are worth notable. The psychological aspect about Shruti's unexpressed feelings is well-noticeable. In researcher's opinion Shruti might have been suffered a lot owing to Electra complex, which enumerates a father's excessive love for his daughter and vice versa, meanwhile daughter's hatred towards her mother. Researcher justifies his claim by citing appropriate reasons from the novel.

In this novel the most important reason for Shrutit's endless angst is her mother herself since the latter is one of the core reasons for all physical and psychological turmoil of her daughter. Despite her minimum role she influences her daughter's life to large extent and ultimately, she becomes the only responsible person for Shrutit's perennial grief. It is Shrutit's mother who is (indirectly) the primary reason for failure of Shrutit's love (life). In other words, Shrutit's mother may be termed as her passive villain. Shrutit is coerced and emotionally threatened by the critical health condition of her mother. Another possible reason is her father's

disapproval for her love marriage with Aman. Deliberately or accidentally her mother is hospitalized and subsequently to be operated upon, hence as a conscientious daughter she has to sacrifice or give up her dream world for the sake of her mother's well-being. Sacrificing her love she has somehow saved her mother from a deadly disease, but ironically ever since her marriage to Rishab she becomes a patient with too much stress and depression in all walks of her life. Thus, these are two major reasons which capsize Shruti's heaven into hell, i.e., from happy zone to a symbolic incarceration at Rishab's home from which she could not find any escape route. Therefore, to Shruti's depressed and repressed state her mother sentiment, her rude father, (perhaps rude at the time of match-making) and eventually her society or its convention which remain as significant causes for the destruction of her life.

Shruti's effort to mitigate all her desires becomes futile, because of the intervention of her unconscious (id) mind which is believed to be insurmountable. Many characters in the novel, namely, Shruti, Aman, and Dipika, appear to sacrifice or forget their loved ones or their desired wishes just for the sake of others, but their actions are mere consolations and not real resolutions. Only at surface level they are likely to renounce or forget things or persons partially, but their memories of once enjoyed pleasures would never get erased from their inner mind as they always get stored like in unconscious mind which is a recycle bin of human mind. This concept is precisely well-described by Sigmund Freud in one of his popular essays titled, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming", in which he observes firmly, "But whoever understands the human mind knows that hardly anything is harder for a man than to give up a pleasure which he has once experienced. Actually, we can never give anything up; we only exchange one thing for another. What appears to be a renunciation is really the formation of a substitute or surrogate."

With Freud's observation it is discernible that really humans never sacrifice anything, but they substitute or exchange their desires with other aspects. Hence, it is hardly possible for a person to claim control over his/her unconscious mind (id) which is something superior than conscious (ego) and conscience (superego). Thus, latent content of the novel influences the patent content significantly.

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