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RESEARCH ARTICLE

A PSYCHOANALYTICAL STUDY OF RAMA MEHTA'S INSIDE THE HAVELI

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Abstract

This particular work will discuss the psychoanalytical view in the work of Rama Mehta. Psychoanalyses expand a theory of conscious, subconscious and unconscious that associates with the nature of human behavior. As it is noticed that all human behaviors are provoked by impel or instincts, which are the consequences of the neurological demonstrations of physical needs. Here the different characters are analyzed from a psychoanalytic point of view revealing the connections of their id, ego and superego and how it influences their actions in return.

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Introduction:-

Sigmund Freud has perfectly defined psychoanalyses through his works and lectures. He exaggerated the term psychoanalyses under one's personality, which is mainly composed of three major elements which employ's together to build a multifaceted human behavior. These elements are id, ego and superego.

'It is a theory that is regarded as a theory of personality organization and the dynamics of personality that guides psychoanalyses.' (Hossian 41)

Sigmund Freud was a neurologist commonly known as the founder of psychoanalysis. He was born in a small town of Czechoslovakia on 6th of May 1857. He was the first son of his father's second wife, 20 years younger than her husband. They shifted to Vienna and lived most of his life there. He was a brilliant child from beginning and joined medical school afterwards. Soon he started his research work under the motivation of his physiology professor. Freud's s works and lectures carried him both reputation and isolation from the mainstream of the medical community.

Freud's analysis of human behavior:

According to Freud all human behaviors are provoked by impel or instincts, which are the consequences of the neurological demonstrations of physical needs. There are some terms he has given to indicate some particular topics, such as 'iros' for life instincts, the 'oomphs' which motivates and empowers one's psyche, and the 'libibo' are the instincts of pleasurable acts. There are also some pleasure principles which are the instincts of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, libibo is also a part of it. 'thanatos' are responsible for the aggressive behavior which is a form of death instinct. He says that human experiences contribute to the personality of a person with their growth.

'The Freudian conception of the process by which the subject is constituted is fundamentally dialectical in nature and involves the notion that the subject is created and sustained (and at the same time decanted from itself) through the dialectical interplay of consciousness and unconsciousness.' (Ogden 517)

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Freud has classified the personality of a person in three major categories. They are; **id**, **ego** and **superego**. Id is supposed to be present at the time of birth also. Id is primarily based on pleasure principle; it has no regards for reality, always in search of pleasure. It denies pain and sufferings and doesn't care for anyone else and their needs, it only cares for self satisfaction. We can observe the effect of id in a newborn baby also. For occupying his mother's attention he cries, he doesn't care where his mother must be busy at that time. This reveals how the id works in the case of a newborn baby; he only seeks his pleasure and doesn't care for anyone else. Id comprises the early stage of childhood, ranging from birth to 2 years.

Ego starts developing just after the duration of id. It rises when the child starts interacting with the immediate outer world more and more. It works on reality principle. Ego considers the desires and needs of others also and understands the outcomes of being selfish and self centered. Ego takes care of the needs of id, meanwhile also considering the consequences and situations related to it. It restrains the unacceptable demands of id.

Superego boosts up from the age of five. As from this stage of life the restrains are started on a child from their immediate family or relatives and their friends. Ethical morals are implemented from this particular stage of life and accompany them till death. It is the part of one's conscience and defines to us the difference between; what is wrong and what is right.

According to Freud that " in a healthy person, the ego is the strongest, so that it can satisfy the needs of the id, not upset the superego and still take into consideration the reality of every situation. This is not an easy job by all means. If the id gets too strong, impulses and self gratification take over the person's life. If the superego becomes so strong, the person would be driven by rigid morals, would be judgmental and unbending in his or her interactions with the world." (Freud 7)

Freud has defined that the human psyche comprises three major divisions; conscious, subconscious or preconscious and unconscious. It can be easily understood by the iceberg metaphor.

The Unconscious Mind

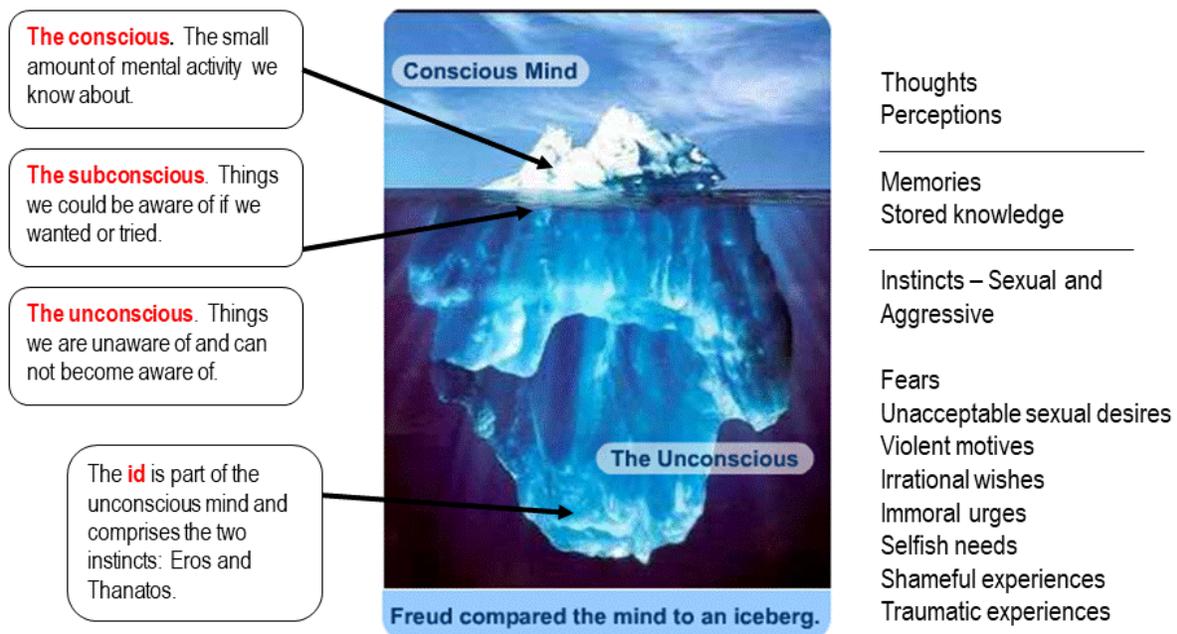


Figure 1:-

Freud's concept of conscious displays the feelings, perceptions, thoughts and memories of the present time. Conscious composes only a little portion of human mind, the person is only aware of this little information proved

by conscious mind at that particular time. It only discloses a very little portion of human mind and a lot of it is still buried inside the brain and is inaccessible.

“Conscious thinking is such thinking which is accompanied by measurements of thoughts arising and developing in the mind and by the transfer to thoughts information governing thinking.” (Temkin 669)

Subconscious or the Unconscious comprises the information and memories of which the person is not thinking at the moment, but it can be made available if one needs it. It can be easily turned to the conscious mind, as the preconscious can access this information if provoked, but simply it does not make the active conscious. The subconscious is buried somewhere beneath the conscious and it is excavated when we search for it, for example; remembering childhood incidents, or the name of a forgotten person, or some phone numbers are present in the preconscious and can be recovered on exploration.

The unconscious mind is still viewed by many psychological scientists as the shadow of a “real” conscious mind, though there now exists substantial evidence that the unconscious is not identifiably less flexible, complex, controlling, deliberative, or action-oriented than is its counterpart. This “conscious-centric” bias is due in part to the operational definition within cognitive psychology that equates unconscious with subliminal. (Bargh

The unconscious comprises the largest portion of one’s personality. It includes the large part of mind which is easily accessible to consciousness, under it comes many things such as our instincts and drives. Some things which are unbearable in reality like the traumas associated with our emotions and memories are kept hidden inside our unconscious mind.

‘The unconscious mind is a repository from which one’s personality has emerged. Dreams are the indirect outlets of the unconscious mind. Therefore in the psychoanalyses method, dreams are the royal roads to the unconscious mind.’ (Sibi 75)

Freud has compared the unconscious to an iceberg because as the visible part of an iceberg is comparatively very smaller than the hidden and submerged portion of it which represents the unconscious part of human mind is larger than the conscious one. The water represents the things of which are not under our awareness and we haven’t knowledgeable of and which cannot be incorporated into our behavior, it comes under the unconscious mind.

“The ego deals with the demands of reality, the id and the superego as best as it can. But when the anxiety becomes overwhelming (according to Freud), the ego must end itself. It does so by unconsciously blocking impulses or distorting them into a more acceptable form. The techniques adopted by the ego are called the ego defense mechanisms, and Freud his daughter Anna and others have discovered quite a few of such. These include: denial, repression, asceticism, isolation, displacement, turning against the self, projection, altruism surrender, reaction formation, undoing, introjections, and identification with the aggressor, regression, rationalization and sublimation.” (Freud 7)

Sigmund Freud analyses of human behavior is based on these principles of id, ego and superego and are in connection with conscious, subconscious and unconscious mind the effects and influences the actions and the personality of its beholder’s.

Rama mehta’s ‘Inside the haveli’:

Rama Mehta’s novel “Inside the Haveli” (1977) is an amusing and influencing representation of the lives of typical Rajasthani Rajputi families. Through this novel Rama Mehta won the auspicious Sahitya Akademi Award in 1979. Rama Mehta being an active socialist also took over the cause of women. She has written a number of works which disclose the feminist perspective in her works. In her works she has used her personal experience to unveil the reality of the orthodox society of Udaipur city.

Here in this particular novel the phenomenon of alienation, loss of identity, double consciousness, and the quest for identity will be further analyzed and explicated. The protagonist’s Search for ‘I’ has been the crucial and constant issue that encouraged and engaged the philosophers perpetually.

The novel *Inside the Haveli* confers how Rama Mehta has represented her personal experiences in her writings. One has to abide in his intellect that the demonstration of personal incidences are always enhanced by various forms of tone, which can be the writer's approach towards his or her experiences. There are some forms of revolt and protest in this work. Mehta has succeeded in organizing this autobiographical work in a narrative and comprehensible manner. In this regard, Anita Desai remarks "I remember the surprised delight with which I first came upon Rama Mehta's novel and encountered the freshness of her prose, the simplicity and tenderness of her evocation of an ancient and traditional way of life and the understanding she brought to it"

It can be noticed that in this work of Rama Mehta the major concern from humanistic perception is the search for self, i.e. 'I'. We can describe this work as a study of double consciousness and alienation also. There is a feeling in the protagonist of 'not belonging' to that particular place but yet trying hard to live there with an identity, while also reimagining and a feeling of nostalgia for her Mumbai which represents the atmosphere of freedom and self dependency.

Psychoanalytical elements in 'Inside the Haveli':

'Among the critical approaches to literature, the psychoanalysis has been one of the most controversial and for many readers the least appreciated. In spite of that it has been regarded one of the fascinating and rewarding approach in the application of interpretative analysis. (Hossain 41)

Psychoanalyst Freud argues that, literary texts express the undisclosed, the unconscious desires and the anxieties of the writer. The characters in the literary works can be analyzed from a psychological opinion. Characters here are regarded as the projection of the writer's psyche. Sigmund's theory of psychoanalyses is to an extinct functional in understanding the accurate intentions and nature of a particular character, be it a real one or from a work of fiction.

In the novel 'Inside the Haveli', Rama Mehta discloses her own experiences through her protagonist 'Geeta' who encompasses the various phases in her life, from the life in a metropolitan city like Bombay with no obstructions to a life in Udaipur city, full of orthodoxies.

Geeta, while she was in Bombay, lived a life of carefree nature, environment allowed her to mingle with boys of her same age and there were no obligations and obstructions put on her at her parent's home. She was free on her will. This phase of her life indicates that her id was free here, as there was no need for compromise, so the need of ego and superego to dominate id was not necessary here. Her id plays a vital role in her early life. She often feel nostalgic on remembering her life in Bombay.

'Geeta enclosed her eyes and let her mind wander. Two years ago when she left her parents' home in Bombay, she did not know that she was leaving behind a way of life in which there was a free mingling of men and women.' (Mehta 15)

But soon her psyche has to change its route as she entered the city of Udaipur. There at her in-law's place in the beginning she has to compromise on some conditions, her ego started dominating her actions.

Even before her arrival in Udaipur, her mother had instructed her on the manner she should behave and the rules and regulations she has to follow in Udaipur.

'Keep your head covered; never argue with your elders; respect your mother-in-law and do as she tells you. Don't talk too much.' (Ibid 16)

Now her conscious mind which is in touch with reality strives to manage the balance between the needs of her id and the superego goes on to the way which is acceptable to society. Here Geeta has to act in accordance with superego otherwise the society or her in-law's may not except her way of actions and attitude and she may have to face the denial from the community. She has to cover her face, in spite of whatever her id wants at that moment she has to follow her ego unwillingly also.

There were some dreams in Geeta's mind that some day she may return to Bombay with her husband and will settle there, as he said this to Geeta just after their marriage. It was always present there in her unconscious mind. It was not in conscious because whenever she thinks of returning to Bombay a feeling and emotions accompanying trauma

struck her as she knows it well that her husband will not leave his parents here alone, and this dream dies here. The unconscious includes a large portion of human mind which is always hidden as it brings trauma and the person is not able to stand up with it.

‘Geeta looked vacantly at the floor. There was nothing more to say. But at the same time the dream of leaving Udaipur died in her heart. She realized that her husband was too rooted in the traditions of Udaipur. To leave his parents would be impossible for him at a time when his father needed him. And yet, deep down she felt relieved. At last she was sure that her life was to be in the haveli.’ (Ibid 54)

Here we can clearly notice that how her dream became a part of her unconscious mind. There was no possibility of her dream to come true so it shifted from her conscious mind to the unconscious not to make her feel distressed and traumatic at present time but it hides somewhere in her unconscious mind not to bother her.

Geeta’s superego also instructed her here that it will not be right to force her husband to leave his parents and live a carefree life far away from the orthodox society of Udaipur. She unwillingly obeys her husband’s decision to stay in Udaipur only. Her ego strives to maintain balance between id and superego.

‘Geeta sat on a mat, a shawl wrapped around her shoulder; her hands were spread over the crackling twigs. She stared at the little flames that erupted each time a twig was added to the fire. The flames lit her face but her eyes were remote as if she was somewhere else, and there was weariness in her expression.’(Ibid 88)

The preceding lines indicates that Geeta is vanished somewhere in her thoughts and her mind seemed to be in connection with her unconscious mind making her feet uncomfortable and unsatisfied. Her unconscious thoughts and desires are provoking here. In this scene she is staring to burst out. But her superego restricts her in revealing her anger.

There are some situations where we can see that superego gets dominated with id.

‘Stop lecturing me, I am fed up with all the pretence that goes on here,’ said Geeta in a high pinched voice, at last releasing the irritation she felt. ‘I hate all this meaningless fuss! Don’t tell me what I should do with my own child!’ (Ibid 32)

In these particular lines we can evidently perceive the anger of Geeta discovering a way to brought out the hidden frustration and feelings, which is buried since for a long time within the unconscious mind. Here her ego was no more able to maintain the balance between her id and superego and in the end id manages to dominate her psyche. Its exposure is not acceptable in society and community.

‘I know the men have no problems in this world of Udaipur; you are all pampered. You lead your lives and think women are mere chattels,’ replied Geeta with anger. ‘In fact, I don’t even see any point in being here. I may as well go and stay with my parents. You won’t miss me; there are hundreds of people to take care of you.’ Geeta’s cheeks burned with emotions and her tone was bitter. She no longer hid her feelings.’ (Ibid 54)

Geeta’s outburst of feelings and emotions are noticeably evident here. Her conscious mind is disturbed by her desires and instincts. Her id is leading her actions here.

There is one more character in the novel whose desires and instincts moved her so much that she acquired the way which is socially unexpected and unacceptable. Lakshmi who was a maid in the Haveli, escaped from the Haveli leaving her newborn child helpless.

‘Let the child starve to death. That will teach her father to control his long, poisonous tongue,’ shouted back Lakshmi, brushing aside the tears defiantly from her cheeks. And then she banged the door at Pari’s face.’ (Ibid 81) Lakshmi is not interested even in her newborn baby; she is derived with her desires and instincts at an extinct that she doesn’t care for society and its rules and regulations. She is totally captured by her id, and the ego and superego are absolutely submerged somewhere in her psyche. Her behavior was not accepted by the society and it always regarded her as an uncultured and a characterless woman. This proves that if a person follows his or her instincts and desires over the ego and superego, the person will be unaccepted by the society.

Conclusion:-

Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli* gives such an elevating experience. Understanding its characters and writer by applying the theory of psychoanalysis gives a accurate and thoughtful image of the characters and the writer also. There are the experiences of novelist in the novel which deals with her intentions with the past. After reading it one can understand the psychology of the novelist and the way she looks at the world around her. Freud's theory of psychoanalyses facilitates us to steal a look from the unconscious instincts and drives that motivates a person to act in a definite way.

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