

Dynamics of Individuation and Self-Realization in Preethi Shenoy's The Rule Breakers

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Article Received: 03/05/2022, Article Accepted: 23/05/2022, Published online: 24/05/2022

DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2022.7.2.35

Abstract

C.G. Jung, the Swiss philosopher, psychologist and a disciple of Freud suggests the theory of personality of self and the individuation process as a procedure towards self – realization or actualization. Jung's analytical psychology emphasizes the primary importance of the individual psyche and the personal quest for wholeness. Jung identifies individuation as the achievement of self- actualisation through the process of integrating the conscious and the unconscious mind. This paper explores the study of Preethi Shenoy's novel, 'The Rule Breakers' through Jung's theory of individuation and self-realization. The paper also focuses on the individuation crisis leading to self- actualization of the female character Veda, who transcends through sacrifice and risks to achieve self-realization.

Keywords: Unconscious, Conscious, Individuation, Self -Realization, Achieving Wholeness

Introduction:

Preethi Shenoy is one among the top selling authors in India. She is a postmodern writer and a TedX speaker. She is also on the Forbes long list of the most influential celebrities in India. She has received the Indian of the year award by Brands Academy for 2017. She has given lectures in many premier educational institutions and corporate organisations. She was a keynote speaker at Birmingham Literary Festival and also an artist specializing in portraiture and illustrated journalism. Her short stories and poetry have been published in many

magazines. Her works include *Life is What You Make It* (2011), *Tea for Two and a Piece of Cake* (2012), *One You Cannot Have* (2013), *It Happens for a Reason* (2014), *Love a Little Strong* (2018) And *The Rule Breakers* (2018). Shenoy's writing has a perfect blend of elegance and dignity. She covers major themes such as single parent, young modern women, motherhood and the plight of educated women in India. As a young novelist she has inspired the young generation of Indian population. Through her writing she creates a positive atmosphere by promoting traditional values and importance to familial bonds and friendship.

Individuation;

Carl Gustav Jung was the first and foremost practising psychologist. Most of his writings are oriented towards his innumerable tips of self-awareness and to live a better life. As a psychologist his contribution to the field of psychology is great. He mainly emphasises the importance of individuality and the deliberate purpose, meaning of one's inner and outer life at both the conscious and unconscious levels. The ultimate goal of an individual is to integrate the conscious with the unconscious. The conscious being our superior strength and the unconscious becomes our inferior weakness. The process that integrates both the elements of the psyche with having both personal and collective dimensions is the individuation process. According to Jung the method of self-development is the process of individuation. In an individual, the personal conscious has the ego with past memories and emotions, whereas the collective conscious stays deeper in the psyche which consists of archetypes in the form of places, images accumulated by life- experience. The key type of archetype is persona, in other words one's social mask. The Shadow refers to the darker side of one's conscious level and the self represents the integrated completely developed mature person with wisdom, generosity with total conscious and self-actualised individual. Individuation is an attempt at realization of the self and it is an instinctual force that continuously pushes one towards wholeness and realization of one's own particular meaning in life.

Preethi Shenoy shares the idea of Carl Jung's individuation process in her novel, 'The Rule Breaker'. A detailed look into the character of the female protagonist Veda enlightens as to her sufferings that lead to the self-identity process. The female protagonist Veda is basically a silent, submissive, docile character and she identifies the tougher side of her own nature by the process of individuation. The bitter experiences lead her to self-realization, bring her to have deeper level meaning of life and breaks the shackles of norms spun by the society and moves towards an integrated life.

Veda is a young obedient girl from an orthodox conservative middle class family from Joshimath near Himachal Pradesh. As the eldest daughter of Rajvinder, Veda is loved by her parents for being obedient and responsible. Her affection and care bring her closer to her siblings. Being a voracious reader of various kinds of books and novels makes her smart and studious in her academics. She excels in her academic studies and aspires to become a professor of English and works in the Delhi University. She excels in all her subjects and literature and very much appreciated by her professors.

Rajvinder being an orthodox father puts the condition that Veda would continue her studies only till her marriage is fixed. He does not bother whether she graduates or not. Her prospects are circulated in the matrimonial circle and she is fixed to Bhuvan, a young IT professional from Pune. In the third year of her graduation, her wings are clipped and dreams are shattered in the name of marriage. Veda's life in Pune takes a drastic turn. She moves to a tiny flat in the big city of Pune.

Alienation and Frustration:

In a short period of time, she loses her amiable father-in-law and blamed as bad luck and cursed by her mother-in-law, who strongly believes that her daughter-in-law has brought bad omen. She blames Veda for not performing Pooja and maintaining religious sanctity. Padma Devi, Veda's mother-in-law takes much pride and solace in humiliating and insulting Veda. She vehemently disagrees to Veda continuing her studies and spending time in the college library. She does not allow her either to study at home. Veda is always cornered by Padma Devi in doing household works and this makes Veda's life hectic and hell. Her mother-in-law's sharp stinging words hurt Veda.

The verbal attacks soon blow up to physical abuse. Padma Devi could not tolerate Veda coming late in the evening from college. She grabs Veda's hair, throws all her books in the corridor shouting at the top of her voice in demeaning words.

Veda stood there, staring in disbelief. She was aghast. She had never faced anything like this before. Her books went flying in all directions. The pages of her book store and fluttered in the corridor. To Veda, they felt like blows... She bent to pick them up. Padma Devi grabbed her hair in her fist. Veda froze in fear. Her hands flew to her head to protect her hair. Pain jolted through her scalp as Padma Devi twisted her hair and shook Veda's head. (TRB, pg. 88)

Veda had never undergone such insult and hurt. After physical and mental abuse, Padma Devi orders Veda to prepare tea for her and press her feet till she sleeps. Veda's communication gap with her husband and her disinterest towards her and Bhuvan being an obedient son makes her suffer more. Her mother-in-law's over-powering attitude makes her suffer psychologically. She loses her dignity, identity and is humiliated. Veda finds her life empty and her very existence become meaningless.

Veda felt that her dreams were dying a slow death. With each passing day, she felt as if she was fading in to oblivion. She was finding marriage and all the responsibilities that came with it a gigantic burden to bear. She felt stifled, imprisoned, suppressed. She saw no escape. It was a prison she had willingly walked into. Now she was trapped. (TRB, pg. 79)

Desperation follows as she fails in her studies. The failure in exams, the unattached attitude of Bhuvan, the taunting humiliation and insults of her mother-in-law bring Veda into a repressive situation of life. She does not find any chance to escape from the oppressive life style. Before individuation one finds the state of despair anxiety and disorder, neurosis and depression. This condition stems from infinite number of causes the most common is an un-lived life. The feeling of stagnation and nagging desultory spasmodic life follows.

By chance her meeting with one of her neighbours young Kanika, a friend of Bhuvan and Kanika's involvement in serving the slum children with the help of an NGO Sankalp impresses Veda. She slowly involves herself and becomes a part of Sankalp by teaching the young and under privileged children of the slums. Her tireless service to Sankalp and involvement with the everyday life gives new meaning to her empty life. She loves her work at Sankalp. After her deep involvement in Sankalp, her interests in preparing lessons and modules for the poor children keep her mind engaged. This gives her a chance of ignoring her mother-in-law's bothering taunts. The character development can be visibly seen when she simply ignores the negativity of her mother-in-law and instead she learns the art of ignoring. Slowly the latent potentialities in the unconscious comes to life of the conscious

Conscious Acceptance:

Jung's individuation requires the understanding of the past failure and mistakes and recognition of current condition of one's life.

1. Since the growth of personality comes out of the unconscious, which by definition unlimited, the extent of the personality now gradually realizing itself cannot in practice be limited either. (Carl Jung, **Psychology and Religion**www.academyofideas.com)

At Sankalp, Veda finds difficult to cope up with day to day hard situations and learns to understand her own ability of multi- tasking in managing the poor children by preparing them for their board exams. This hard and difficult situation makes her become more confident and compassionate. Veda exhibits in herself Jung's theory of individuality. The main aim of Jung's individuation is to achieve perfection and to overcome one's personal psychology. It involves a clear self-understanding and awareness of one's unique personal psychological realities along with one's individual strength and limitations and the same time the deeper understanding of the society and environment one lives in. According to Jung:

" Individuation does not shut one out from the world, but gathers the world to itself "(On the Nature of the Psyche, CW8, Para 432)

But Sankalp lands in big trouble after the death of a young boy Sanju. When charges against Veda, Kanika and Ron arise for investigation, for the very first time in her life, she argues against her charges and resigns her job boldly.

Veda had controlled herself up to this point. She had silently heard all the allegations that the committee was making. They were so wrong...Something in her snapped and she made a decision that very instant. She had to speak up...Veda's voice had risen and now boomed across the conference room. The anger and agony in her voice took everybody in surprise...'As for me, I am DISGUSTED by this whole committee and the investigations and the rules that you are quoting, trying to make it out that it is our fault. I QUIT. DO YOU HEAR ME? I QUIT!' shrieked Veda...Everyone in the room sat back in stunned silence at what Veda had just said. It was the absolute truth. (TRB, pp 304-306)

Self-Realization:

By doing so she identifies her voice of strength within herself. She realises that by adhering to the rules she has sacrificed her dreams, love and her career. Now knowing the tactics to bend and even break the rules and as an individuated individual integrating her conscious and unconscious, she moulds her mind that has awakened her inner self.

Veda soon comes to know about her husband Bhuvan's gay relationship with his friend Vicky:

The realization hit her with the force of a ten-tonne truck ramming into her. How could she not have known all these months? Her pulse raced. A thin film of sweat appeared on her forehead. She was suddenly aware of every movement. (TRB, pg. 291)

Unlike an ordinary woman, she handles the situation in a calm and matured way. Her understanding and perception on Bhuvan show the process of individuation. She takes a bold decision for a separation:

Wisdom begins only when one takes things as they are...so it is a healing attitude when one can agree with the facts as they are...only then can we thrive. (Carl Jung, Visions; Notes of the seminar given in 1930 and 1934, vol 1)

Veda reaches the zenith of individuation as she moves away from Bhuvan's house.

She thought about how the problems we face are only relative in nature to one another. When we have a problem, it seems big and important but when we face a bigger problem, the one we faced earlier seems so silly. That was how she felt. things had changed such a lot in the last few weeks. (TRB, pg. 313)

As a method for self- development of individuality the process of individuation offers many benefits as it makes one more capable in life. The psychological wholeness allows one to improve one's skills and character traits at their own disposal. It also multiplies the capacity to take advantage of life's opportunities and capabilities to deal with problems. The aim of individuation is 'nothing less than to divest the self of the false wrappings of the persona on

one hand and of the suggestive power of primordial images on the other' (**The Function of the Unconscious** CW7, para 267)

Wholeness of Personality:

By achieving the psychological wholeness, Veda shifts to her new residence on the first floor of her new Rocket School premises. Veda identifies all the ordeals and develops as a matured brave individual. She identifies the purpose of meaningful life. Her goal towards achievement is established in her process of her taking her life forward. She boldly faces her parents to inform her separation with Bhuvan. As an individuated person, Veda lives her fullest life by achieving wholeness and meaningful goal-oriented life.

According to Jung, "The wholeness is an ideal state where all latent potential in one's unconscious mind actualized and all the unconscious elements are brought to consciousness and amalgamated to form a fine character structure. The novel ends on a cautionary note that change is never achieved radically on the contrary it has to be conscientual and gradual. As Jung says in his, **Men and his Symbols** (1964)

The individuation process is more than coming to term between the inborn germ of wholeness and the outer act of fate. Its subjective experience conveys the feeling that some supra-personal force is actively inferring in a creative way (162)

Veda's journey is full of unexpected ways but she is not annoyed by the obstacles. The speedy experiences teach her to make herself calm and totally a regenerated matured person. She writes about her separation with her husband Bhuvan:

I am separating from Bhuvan and we will be filing for a divorce soon. It is a decision we made jointly, and you can't imagine what a relief it is, to be making your own decisions about whether you want to stay in a marriage or not... You know how, over the last few months, I have faces such a lot. Life has thrown all kinds of things at me and I have grown as person. I feel I have so much more compassion now- more than I did when I got married and moved to Pune. (TRB, pg. 317)

From the Jungian point of view, it can be said that Veda actively participates in the process of individuation resulting in self-actualization by achieving the wholeness and the meaningful goal of life. She is the perfect example for Jungian theory of individuality. As a female protagonist, she is conscious of the unconscious. Her up and down experiences in life bring many messages and transformation about her journey of life. Her physical and mental experiences provide her with an opportunity and perspective to know herself and also the world around her. Her experiences teach her individuated self and by breaking the rules woven around her, she overcomes her fear of loneliness and frustration.

Conclusion:

Individuation resulting in self-realization also creates an opportunity to create a balance between the inner and outer peace of mind and forces a constant growth towards more maturity of mind that learns hidden aspects and valuable lessons of life through many unexpected incidents. Veda after moving to the new apartment attached to the school finds she satisfied and achieves wholeness in life. In her letter to Vidya she explains: “We all change, Vidya. Things happen to us and we change as people. Our relationships change. And as long as this growth makes you a strong person, a more compassionate person and a kinder person then that is all that matters...When I think about it Suraj and I have lost Bhuvan. But I have found myself. That is priceless. If there is one thing I have learnt from my experiences, it is this- speak your mind. Have the courage to go for what you want and stand up for it.” (**The Rule Breakers** 320-321)

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How to cite this article?

Nasreen Khadiri,**Dr.R.Venkataraman,Dr.V.JaisreAssociate**, Dynamics of Individuation and Self-Realization in Preethi Shenoy's *The Rule Breakers*”, *Research Journal Of English(RJOE)*7 (2), PP: 249-255,2022, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36993/RJOE.2022.7.2.34>