



AN ARCHETYPAL STUDY OF AMISH TRIPATHI'S NOVELS *THE IMMORTALS OF MELUHA*, *THE SECRET OF THE NAGAS* AND CHINAU ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the first two part of the Shiva's trilogy: The Immortals of Meluha and The Secret of the Nagas by Amish Tripathi in relation with the novel Things Fall Apart by Chinau Achebe. By the application of archetypal criticism, it highlights the common beliefs and perceptions of the characters in these novels that belong to two different civilizations. Moreover, based on the principles of Reader-response criticism the researcher generated Things Fall Apart as an intertext.

Key Words: *trilogy, archetype, perception, reader-response*

INTRODUCTION

Archetypal Criticism- An Introduction

The human mind has common ways of responding to experience which are variously known as 'innate structures' in Cartesian philosophy, 'universals' in transformational linguistics and 'archetypes' in Jungian psychology.

According to the psychoanalytical theory of Sigmund Freud, our mind can be divided into two: the conscious and the unconscious. Further, the unconscious is divided in to collective and individual. People in different parts of the world have some common beliefs, thoughts,



perceptions, taboos etc, which are universal in nature and devoid of time and space. This is what embedded in the collective unconscious mind.

The Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung (1875-1961), used the term 'archetype' to refer to this 'collective unconscious'. The contents of the 'collective unconscious' are the archetypes. This buried experiences seek expression in myths, religion, dreams, fantasies and as well as in literature.

The Canadian mythologist and scholar- critic, Northrop Fyre (1912-91) used the term 'archetype' for recurring pattern of experience, which can be identified in works of literature and human sciences. These archetypes are the reflections of primitive universal thoughts. They are the primordial images that, reside deep in our psyche and which seek an outlet in works of art.

In literary criticism, the term archetype denotes recurrent narrative designs, patterns of action, character types, themes and images which are identifiable in a wide variety of works of literature, as well as in myths, dreams and even in social rituals. Such recurrent items are usually held to be the result of elemental and universal patterns in the human psyche, whose effective embodiment from the attentive readers, because he or she shares the psychic archetypes expressed by the author.

Literature as a Vehicle

Literature, that is the work of art is one of the most important and effective medium to express the collective unconscious of the people. The symbols, themes, characters in literature reflect some traits that are common to the human experience across cultures. To demonstrate how archetypal criticism works, the researcher generated Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as an intertext. One could find how some thoughts and traits of the human are common by comparing the selected works *The Immortals of Meluha* and *The Secret of the Nagas* in relation with the novel *Things Fall Apart*.

What is an Intertext?

First, one should know that intertextuality is different from comparative literature. It is an important element of Reader-response Criticism. In Julia Kristeva's formulation, any text is an intertext in as much as it is for the readers to conceive of it. The 'interpretive community' forms it. Stanley Fish argues that reading of a text is culturally constructed. We interpret texts because we are part of an interpretive community that gives us a particular way of reading a text. Culture and other perceptions determine how we read a text, the qualities that make a



text literary do not reside in the text but in the interpretive strategies, we have learned, consciously or unconsciously before we even enter the text.

Literary texts in general are often philosophical, religious, or psychological. Intertext is something that a reader creates while reading some text. Consequently, the researcher finds some common aspects in the selected works for this research and the novel *Things Fall Apart*.

Application of Archetypal Criticism

Primarily, it should be clear that the selected works of this research *The Immortals of Meluha* and *The Secret of the Nagas* and the novel *Things Fall Apart* belongs to two different cultural literatures. The former belongs to Indian literature and the latter comes under African literature. Anyhow, we could find some beliefs, perceptions, traits and thoughts, which are common and overlap each other between these two.

The Immortals of Meluha and *The Secret of the Nagas* come under myth whereas *Things Fall Apart* is a realistic novel. Myths are the reflections of a profound reality. They are said to be the greatest falsehoods, which tells us the greatest truths.

In the novels, *The Immortals of Meluha* and *The secret of the Nagas* we could find the concept of karma. According to that, a person life is based on his own thoughts and actions. If our thoughts and actions are good then they will lead a good life. On the other hand, those persons who are suffering in their present life are due to their past life sins.

Their own karma, my Lord', said Nandi, his eyes suggesting the obvious. 'For example if a woman gives birth to a stillborn child, why should she be punished thus unless she had committed some terrible sin in her previous birth? Or if a man suddenly contracts an incurable disease and get paralysed, why would it happen to him unless the universe was penalising him for the sins of his previous birth? ...

(TIOM, 95)

We could find the same concept in *Things Fall Apart* too. Nevertheless, the only difference is they use the word *chi* (personal god) *instead* of karma. If a person *chi* is good then he will be a successful man likewise, if his *chi* is bad then he will suffer in his life. When the protagonist of the novel Okonkwo achieves success all his clan only believes, it is because of his *chi*.



...At the most one could say that his Chi or personal god was good... (TFA, 8)

Likewise, one can also note how these characters Sati and Ekwefi share the same fate. We can find the parallel condition of these two characters. In the novel *Things Fall Apart* one of Okonkwo's wife is Ekwefi, her child keeps on dying one after the other. So, she begins to think it is only because of her own sins. The same is the thought of Sati when is pregnant.

...Ekwefi had nothing but good wishes for her. But she had grown so bitter about her own chi that she could not rejoice with others over their good fortune...How could she know that Ekwefi's bitterness did not flow outwards to others but inwards into her soul'- that did not blame others blame others for their good fortune but her own evil chi who denied her any? (TFA, 26)

But what if this child too is stillborn? What if my past life's sins affect our poor child? (TSOTN, 103)

A. The Concept of Rebirth

As Hinduism is based on the cyclic concept of life, they believe in 'rebirth'. This concept of rebirth is connected with the concept of karma. That is to say, if one person's karma is good it will reflect in their next birth. Likewise, if one's karma is bad then they will suffer in the next birth too. We could find this same concept and thoughts in the novel *Things Fall Apart*.

...This man told him that the child was an ogbanje, one of those wicked children who, when they died, entered their mother's womb to be born again. ...In that way she will elude her wicked tormentor and break its evil cycle of birth and death. (TFA, 25)

B. Marginalized / Outcasts

In the first two volumes of Shiva's trilogy, that in *The Immortals of Meluha* and *The Secret of the Nagas* we could find the concept of vikarma. People who are suddenly attacked by some diseases and women who give birth to stillborn child are considered as vikarma. They are believed to be the bad carriers of their fate and they are completely alienated from the rest of the people. Not only that, they are not allowed to attend any function or ceremony.

...Tarak spoke up. 'The law says no vikarma should be allowed on the yagna platform. (TIOM, 226)



In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, too we could see the similar concept. The Ibo clan call them as 'Osus'. They are separated from the rest of the people and they are prohibited to attend any assembly. They should not marry anyone and after their death their bodies are buried only in the evil forest.

...He was infact an outcast, living in a special area of the village, close to the Great Shrine. Wherever he went he carried with him the mark of his forbidden caste-long, tangled and dirty hair...An Osu could not attend an assembly of the free-born, and they, in turn, could not shelter under his roof... (TFA, 51)

C. The Concept of Evil

In *Things Fall Apart*, there is a place called the evil forest. Those who are died by some diseases are buried only there and not in the proper place where others are buried. Not only that, according to the Ibo clan, twin born babies also considered as evils. Therefore, those babies are immediately thrown in the evil forest even when they are alive because, those babies are entirely evil as per their beliefs. So, they are not allowed to live in the place where other people are living.

...Nneka had had four previous pregnancies and child-births. But, each time she had borne twins, they had been immediately thrown away... (TFA, 49)

Likewise, in the novels *The Immortals of Meluha* and *The Secret of the Nagas*, the concept of evil is always associated with the Nagas. Nagas are those who born with some physical deformity. In these novels, people are tempted to believe that, their deformities are due to the sins they committed in the previous births and they are considered as cursed people, simply evils. As we saw in the novel *Things Fall Apart*, the Nagas are outcasted from the rest of the people and they have to spend their whole life in a place called Panchavati, which is far away from the place where others are living.

The Nagas name alone strikes terror in any citizen's heart. They are not allowed to live in the Sapt Sindhu. (TIOM, 61)

CONCLUSION

Therefore, we could find the same beliefs, thoughts and practices of the people here who belong to two dissimilar civilizations. From this, it is very clear that, as human beings, we are sharing some common perceptions, which are embedded, in our collective unconscious mind.



By literature, religious practices and myth those things in the collective unconscious mind come to light and this is how archetypal criticism works.

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