

Psychogenic Transcendence: Reflections of Maslowian and Freudian Insights in Paulo Coelho's *Adultery*

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Abstract: Man can never be satisfied with what he or she possesses. Human mind creates lacuna for more and more wants and moves in pursuing it. The value paid for this pursuit by any individual is something high. The struggle between satisfying one's own needs and pleasure or to give up to framed social, cultural and conventional convictions is inevitable in man, as most of the times, human mind craves for something restricted or things beyond limits. Under the perspectives of Maslowian proposal for fulfillment of need and attainment of Self-actualization; Freudian insights of self-regard, narcissism, ego-libido and love, the paper analyses the psychogenic transcendence attained by the protagonist Linda in the novel *Adultery* by Paulo Coelho.

Key words: Psychogenic transcendence, narcissism, ego-libido, love, self actualization

Man can never be satisfied with what he or she possesses. While man craves for needs, fulfilled needs also remain a problem to man. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory insists upon the urge for fulfillment of needs within man but in a positive or motivational perspective towards growth and progress. Rather than insisting on the urge for want, struggles and dissatisfaction; Maslow's theory focuses on satisfaction of needs and motivation for further progress. As per the theory of needs, satisfaction of one level leads on to further till the achievement of self-actualization as peak performance.

At deficiency of needs, man may crave for it, but even in its surplus presence, human mind goes in creating a lacuna for more and more wants and moves in pursuing it, is the bitter truth. The value paid for this pursuit by any individual is something high. At this endless pursuit of needs, individuals are put forth to several struggles and very significantly, the internal conflict between 'self' and 'other'. The struggle between satisfying one's own needs and pleasure or to give up to framed social, cultural and conventional

convictions is inevitable, as most of the times, human mind craves for something beyond limits or things under restrictions.

The feud is the cry of man's inability to cross the line designated in terms of morality, virtue, laws, code of behaviour and many other societal influences. Fighting against these battalions becomes impossible for man's individual desire. Fulfilling one's desire enable the individual to suspect whether he/she subjects notion of morality into question, as the norms and perspective of his/her region (physical boundaries as well as the psyche) will be different from other. Nothing is completely good and virtuous nor the other evil and vice to the core. Man is liable to fulfill his/her own desire, indulge in pleasure to the extent that it is not self-destructive or cause harmful effects on others. The image of 'I' or 'Self' exists right from birth till death in man. While the external influences in individual life is to be limited, its counteraction: the individual's self-image should not influence or disturb social framework. This mutual agreement should not be breached at any cost. Under these perspectives of Maslowian proposal for fulfillment of need and Freudian insight of self-regard, the paper analyses the characterization of Linda in *Adultery* by Paulo Coelho. Linda, a woman in her thirties is blessed with perfect life, happy family and individual recognition as a well-renowned journalist. Despite these, she feels dissatisfaction towards her life. The search for her need, struggle and salvation attained in the fulfillment of need forms the plot.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory proposes 5 stages of development with the demand for several needs at each stage and the accomplishment of self-actualization as an ultimate goal. At the base of his prism model lies Physiological needs (food, water, rest, sex) followed by Safety needs (financial security, emotional security), Psychological needs (Love,

belonging, intimacy), Self- esteem needs (respect from others, respect for oneself) and Self- actualization.

It is quite true that man lives by bread alone- when there is no bread. But what happens to man's desire when there is plenty of bread and when his belly is chronically filled?

At once other (and "higher") needs emerge--- This is what we mean by saying that the basic human needs are organized into a hierarchy of relative potency" (Maslow 375)

Linda's confession "*I have a wonderful husband who is not only madly in love with me, but also the owner of a large investment fund.--- I have two children who are (as my friends say) my "reason for living" (Coelho 1), "My name's Linda. I'm in my thirties, five- foot- eight, 150 pounds and I wear the best clothes that money can buy (thanks to my husband's limitless generosity). I arouse desire in men and envy in other women."* (Coelho1-2) and "*---every morning, when I open my eyes to this ideal life that everyone dreams of having but few achieve*" (Coelho 2), makes it very clear that all her physiological, safety, psychological and self esteem needs remain fulfilled to its excess, which would indeed make others feel envious about her.

Life and human psyche are complex. They begin their part of play in Linda's life since her interview with a writer who claims, "*I haven't the slightest interest in being happy. I prefer to live life passionately, which is dangerous because you never know what might happen next.*" (Coelho 2) Maslowian conception that the happy mind moves and craves for the next stage of adventurous and passionate life gets reinstated here again. These thoughts by the interviewee influenced Linda to the greater extreme of self- doubt. Linda begins to feel that she doesn't deserve anything she possesses and she might lose everything one fine day. Linda begins to lose interest in her perfect and happy life, indeed she begins to crave for adventurous life. Her desire for adventurous life gets kindled further when she meets her ex school boy friend Jacob Koneig, a politician at present.

Linda, reputed journalist, a woman with self- identity and happy family, craves for Jacob's attention. She misunderstands her mere passion for love and goes in pursuing it very hard. In her pursuit, she undergoes several psychological conflicts which are discussed later with Freudian insight. In the perspectives of Maslowian pursuit, Linda could be found subjecting

her self-esteem needs and her psychological needs of love and belongingness which she possesses already into doom. Mere illusion for passion disrupts her self-worth; she feels jealous about the reputation held by Marianne as Jacob's wife, being invited for parties and as a philosophy teacher at the university. Linda is in no means less equal to either Marianne or Jacob, but under this false illusion for passion, she considers them superior on underestimating her worthiness.

If he continues on his brilliant path, he will one day be president of the republic. --- But who wouldn't like to say that her husband was president of Switzerland--- The future of Konigs looks bright, while all that lies before me at this precise moment is the road and the prospect of a picnic while wearing a hideous pair of jogging pants. (Coelho 85)

Linda fails to understand her husband's support in treating her emotional instability which she discussed with him earlier. It is for which, he has taken Linda for an outing. Instead of realizing this, she compares her state with materialistic recognition of Konigs. Even at this stage, she remains blessed with husband's care, but she fails to recognize it. Individual may attempt for self- progression but comparing oneself with the other, and desiring to step into someone else shoes are not advisable.

The moments of Linda's craving for Jacob's attention and her intimacy with him are interwoven with her guilt of deceiving her husband and family. The perception at Linda involving in intimacy with Jacob will arise several questions, 'Shouldn't the man fulfill his/ her own passion?' and 'Is the individual justifiable in mortgaging other's (family, social) welfare for his/ her own need or desire?' The conflict between 'Self' and 'Other' begins. The psychological trauma experienced by Linda draws one's attention for Freud's perception on self- regard, narcissism (extreme self- centeredness) and love.

Freud's essay 'On Narcissism: An Introduction' states "*Narcissism would not be a perversion, but the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self- preservation, a measure of which may justifiably be attributed to every living creature.*" (Freud 2) The essay even claims for the feeling of narcissism as a common trait of living beings and human development. While Freud asserts narcissism as the investment of libido in ego, where individual gives importance for oneself; he even speaks of 'ideal ego' conceived at the maturity of balancing between individual desire and

conventional restrictions, external influence. The ideal ego (conscience) acts as an internal sensor in individuals. Freud insists very clearly that ideal ego replaces actual ego of primary narcissism, that is, man cannot give up pleasure but instead tries to find other means of achieving it.

The discussion makes it very clear that the regard for self is the concrete base and the means of fulfilling it appraises man to be narcissistic and normal personality. Under the drafted moralistic conventions that sermonizes adultery and extra-marital affair as a sin, it could be acclaimed that ideal ego is voiceless in Linda. Further Linda's ideal ego is seen dominated by narcissistic libido.

Characteristics traits expressed by narcissistic personality could be better analysed from the study of US physician John P Cunha. Behavioural changes marked with Linda's narcissistic libido are acute feeling of boredom and emptiness in life. Linda's satisfaction at the needs, lack of opportunity to crave for anything itself makes her feel bored. Sophistication is misunderstood by this poor creature for emptiness. Linda is vulnerable to life's transitions. She is afraid to face the changes to be imposed by life. *"Would I be capable of facing the world alone if my husband died?--And if I died, who would look after my children? My beloved husband. But he would surely remarry,..."* (Coelho 3) Narcissistic people do not possess empathy for others. *"I have an enemy to destroy and a goal to achieve. A man. It isn't love (or is it?), but that doesn't matter. My love belongs to me and I'm free to offer it to whomever I choose, even if it's unrequited."* (Coelho 98) Thus Linda plots cruelly against Marianne to remove her from Jacob's life. She moves to the extreme of purchasing drugs and hiding it in Marianne's classroom draw to get her caught by law. Narcissistic people develop envy for others and wish to be envied by others. Such attitude of jealous and self-pride occupies an inevitable part in Linda's psychogenic struggle too. Linda is found to be taken away not only by Marianne's social status, *"She is a visionary, intelligent--- she can build the career she wants---"* (Coelho 102), but also even by her appearance frequently. Linda's confession on meeting Marianne for the first time in a social gathering that awaits Jacob's victory in election, *"What a woman! Blond, blue-eyed, and wearing an elegant black cardigan with a red Hermes scarf-- I try not to look surprised."* (Coelho 92), *"I can't quite look into the*

blue beacons that are her eyes. I notice only that she doesn't wear much makeup. She doesn't need to." (Coelho 93) and her psychic disturbance to the extent *"She is precisely the kind of woman I would like to destroy pitilessly."* (Coelho 102) on hearing Jacob's praise for his wife, express her admiration reaching the zenith of jealous upon Marianne .

Linda's attitude of self-pride is also evident in many circumstances. The moment Linda recollects her schooldays, she exaggerates *"---the boys were always hitting on me, no matter how hard I tried to fend them off. The other girls were green with envy--I rejected almost everyone---*" (Coelho 69) Linda, being quite angry and annoyed at Jacob's rejection, claims that she could love anyone and consoles herself on saying that rejection is quite common in love. She adds justification to her state on recollecting, *"How many men have fallen in love with me in the past and not been loved in return? ---when they see me again, there is still a glimmer of failed conquest in their eyes. They will keep trying for the rest of their lives."* (Coelho 98) Such unique pride in being the object of many men's attention both in her teen age and also in her thirties reflects frequently in her attitude. The moment Linda was called to address the gathering in the party organized by the local television, she expresses *"Darius just invited me to the stage---am secretly happy, because Marianne wasn't called, nor will she be. Jacob wasn't called up, either---*" (Coelho 218) Instead of feeling happy at her dignity, Linda expresses trivial pleasure at Jacob and Marianne being ignored.

Narcissistic people hold a fragile sense of self. It is this feeling that drafts the whole essence of plot. The moment Linda begins to feel low about her and to question her self-esteem, she has laid for her virtuous downfall.

Linda attains self-actualization at the moment she realized her husband's love for her. The moment she drew out of the illusion (passion, adultery), she begins to understand the reality of life and nobility of love. She attains the rationality to distinguish between love and lust. Her realization *"More than anything else, it's jealousy that eats away at my thoughts. --- I should have realized he had other women when he took the condom from the nightstand. I should have known I was just one more by the way he took me."* (Coelho 232) She comes out of her self-doubt. She regains her

self-esteem and understands her significance to her husband.

I told myself: "I'm not worthy of this man, he doesn't know who I am."

But he does know. And that's what allows me to get back my self-respect and regain my self-esteem. Because if a man like him wants to stay by my side, a man who would have no difficulty at all finding a new partner the day after separating, it's because I'm worth something; I'm worth a lot. (Coelho 257)

Acquiring Self-esteem builds Linda's confidence. She comes out of her vulnerability towards changes. She grows strong enough to face the challenges of life. She becomes matured enough to understand that love and life are constantly changing and it is only that change which marks progress. Her confession at the new year's eve, "*We want our partner to remain the person we met at the altar and with whom we exchanged rings. As if we could stop time. We cannot. We should not.*" (Coelho 281-282) and "*Life offers us thousands of opportunities for learning. ---Life is not a long vacation, but a constant learning process.*" (Coelho 285) evidence the accomplishment of self-actualization by Linda.

Freud describes 'happy love' as intact narcissism. He says it is the point where object libido (love for others) and ego libido (love for oneself) coincides. Self-actualization attained by Linda also insists upon this achievement. Linda withdraws from her selfish regard for her passion and decides to lead a life as a wife deserving her husband's love, a mother deserving her children's affection and a woman deserving self-identity and self-esteem. Such transcendence in Linda exemplifies not only her psychogenic transformation but insists upon the need for psychological stability to be maintained by every individual in life.

The deliberation could be rightly concluded with significant notification upon the right understanding about the pursuit of need and the conflict of 'I' under narcissism and self-esteem.

Man's mind craves for all that it visualizes and admires. The base of Maslow's theory itself is the craving of man's need for further progress. Though it is motivating, man must be very careful in analysing his wants and structuring his desires. Man should neither be over-obsessed with desires nor abandon them completely. The very next idea is that, man must understand the difference between narcissism and self-esteem. Self-esteem always encapsulates love and

respect for oneself as well as others. Self-esteem remains invincible by selfishness. Pursuit of self-esteem determines progress whereas narcissism marks destruction. Eventually, regard for 'self' is admissible to the extent that, it neither disturbs nor disrupts the existing social framework.

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