

Convergence of Archetypes and Mythology in the Spiritual Journey of Raju in R.K. Narayan's *The Guide*

Harmanpreet Singh

Assistant Professor, Department of English Khalsa College, Amritsar

Abstract: A human goes through various transformations in his lifetime. Some transformations are triggered by the surroundings while some emerge from within. However, these transformations can be related to the deep-rooted memories and stories, a human hears throughout his lifetime. This transformation is shown by Raju, the protagonist of the esteemed novel by RK Narayan- Guide. The purpose of this paper is to study the convergence of mythical figures of Ramayana and Jungian Archetypes which unconsciously shape Raju's course of actions.

Keywords: Archetypes, Anima, Individuation, Mythology, Rebirth, Trickster.

I. Theory

Mythology is a collection of stories about divine beings related to a specific region or culture. These stories present human beings' fascination with supernatural occurrences. These stories usually deal with the origin of the world, ultimate human concerns, or some unexplained natural phenomena. These stories can have literal meaning or symbolic meaning. But the question emerges of how these stories come into existence. Human beings tend to search for a reason behind every natural phenomenon. When they are unable to find a concrete answer, their mind creates a story of their own to satisfy their curiosity. But these stories are not just limited to satisfying human curiosity but also carry wisdom, thoughts, and experiences of humanity which give these stories a universal appeal. One of the explanations behind their universal appeal is given by the famous Swiss Psychologist Carl Gustav Jung. According to him, mythological stories trace back their origin to the primitive nature of human beings. In primitive times, the human being was just an animal whose sole focus was on breeding. With the development of the conscious mind, these primitive instincts subdued the unconscious mind but used to create turmoil in the human mind. Humans started connecting these unexplained symbols with natural phenomena like the rising of the sun was linked to the development of life and the setting of the sun with the end of life. These symbols were further linked to stories around them and gave birth to the mythological stories.

Jung called these symbols 'Archetypes'. He gave an idea about some fixed symbols that are installed in the mind of a child before he even gains consciousness. These symbols are primordial images of symbols that travel through generations(Jung, 1959, p. 42-44). These images are suppressed in the unconscious mind and activate upon the exposure of certain images that relate to these archetypes and activate them. These symbols impact the actions and decision-making ability unconsciously and make the person feel like everything is happening due to a celestial power or fate. These symbols are passed on by the generations and share their impact on mythological characters. Jung divided it into four types- Anima/ Animus, Shadow, Persona, and Self. They were further divided into twelve universal characters i.e Ruler, Creator, Sage, Innocent, Explorer, Rebel, Hero, Wizard,

trickster, Everyman, Lover and Caregiver. This gives birth to mythological stories and these stories share uncanny similarities across various cultures due to the universal presence of these archetypes.

But mythological stories in India are not just the retelling of ancient myths but are embedded in the minds and are inculcated in the day-to-day lives of people. Mahabharata and Ramayana not only function as cultural lore but as narratives that form ethical and cultural unconscious which indirectly impacts the course of their life and decision-making in various spheres of life. RK Narayan has presented the impact of these stories on the people of India subtly through his novel *The Guide*. RK Narayan in the guide has presented his protagonist's evolution from a conman to a holy man but refrained himself from showing supernatural elements. He presented the impact of mythology and spirituality in modern India. In the novel, Raju's evolution was not conscious as he had no intention of becoming a saint but it was carried out by the challenges he encountered in his life, which impacted his unconscious mind. Two important factors led to his transformation-mythological influence on his unconscious mind and the activation of archetypes. His mind is influenced by the stories of Ramayan which lies dormant in his unconscious mind. These stories when merged with the certain symbols in his mind, showed their impact through his actions. To carry out this evolution, Narayan creates an environment to trigger these archetypes. "Even the most realistic fiction is shaped by the deep structures of myth and archetype." (Frye, 1957, p. 136-137). RK Narayan has portrayed a very realistic version of India in his novel. But there is a symbolic representation of myths in everyday life subtly. He portrays Raju as a character who has access to the mythological stories when he turned into a guide, he used to show people, the carvings of Ramayana and Mahabharat. All those stories he has heard since his childhood impacted his behaviour. As mentioned in the novel by Narayan "He spoke to them on godliness, cleanliness, spoke on Ramayana, the characters in the epics; he addressed them on all kinds of things" (Narayan, 1958, p. 45). This indicates the exposure to the myths of Ramayan and its characters. These mythological stories affected his actions as he imitated the actions of those characters in his life without being aware of them.

The theory of Jungian archetypes can be related to Raju's character, as he shows the combination of archetypes in his character. Campbell's assertion that "myth... is a public dream, and dream is a private myth" (Campbell, 1949, p. 49) shows how epic narratives persist in societal structures. Raju shares similarities with a few symbols like the Trickster, the Anima and the Rebirth.

Firstly, the Trickster archetype is an extreme primordial symbol, which shows duality in the personality to the end. Jung (1968) described the trickster as 'subhuman and superhuman' simultaneously (p. 267). A trickster can perform trickery or act as a Saviour without any particular reason. Jung (1968) gave the example of the Norse God Loki as a symbol of the trickster (p. 10) archetype which shows the traits of a saviour and a trickster at the same time. It is linked to our unconscious mind and resonates with the behaviour of the animal and our primitive instincts. With the development of the conscious, it becomes dysfunctional and suppresses itself in our unconscious mind. But when it is suppressed way too long, it comes out in the form of meaningless actions. It can even become self-destructive when it emerges through our actions. "Although he is not really evil, he does the most atrocious things from sheer unconsciousness and unrelatedness." (Jung, 1968, p. 267) as explained here, it becomes functional, not because of some evil, but just to remind our conscious mind about our primitive roots and experience our relation to the animals. "The unpredictable behaviour of the trickster, of his pointless orgies of destruction and his self-appointed sufferings, together with the same gradual development into a saviour and his simultaneous humanization. It is just this transformation of the meaningless into the meaningful that reveals the trickster's compensatory relation to the 'saint'." (Jung, 1968, p. 267-268) These lines indicate how a trickster causes meaningless actions and then compensates them by doing something meaningful, and this all happened to Raju without being aware of it. Secondly, as Jung explained, Anima is an innate primitive image instilled in the mind of an entity. This image is related to the non-masculine features and ideas and is generally related to the feminine qualities. Thus to simplify, it can be referred to as the feminine suppressed identity in the subconscious mind of a man. This archetype activates on the exposure of certain symbols and is related to the suspension of logic or rationality, obsession with chaos, fascination and creativity in man as written by Jung,

"The anima is the unconscious feminine "soul-image" in a man. She is ambivalent—"goddess and witch," "saint and whore"—capable of overwhelming fascination that "breaks down our moral inhibitions".(Jung 1968, p 30). This archetype can lead the entity towards the suspension of morals but also as the pathway to wholeness due to its ability to create and destroy personas. Then there is an archetype called Rebirth which refers to the emergence of a new personality by dilution of the previous one. This change doesn't change the behaviour of the person but only impacts his functions as confirmed in these lines "Rebirth may be a renewal without any change of being, in as much as the personality which is renewed is not changed in its essential nature, but only its functions, or parts of the personality, are subjected to healing, strengthening, or improvement" (Jung, 1968, p. 203). The Rebirth concept activates on the exposure to certain images but it only happens when a character has already been through a journey that shatters all the existing personas.

These archetypes express themselves with the help of the stories of the characters of Ramayan. *Ramayana's* tellings across India demonstrate that Valmiki's and Ravan's deeds are not just stories but active archetypes in regional and family traditions. These characters share certain similarities with the protagonist of *The Guide*-Raju. Raju's course of life was dictated by the impact of these characters in some important phases of his life. His character resonated with the saint Valmiki when he used to trick tourists and then forged the signatures of Rosi but then travelled on the path of 'unwanted spirituality'. He also shared some traits with Ravan when he was unable to control his lust towards Rosi. These mythological characters are part of a long epic but we took only some part of their story to draw parallels with Raju's character.

This part of the story is taken from the life of Hindu sage Valmiki, who once was a con man and used to loot people to provide for his family. But when he came in contact with a group of saints who questioned his morality and enlightened him about being answerable for his sins. He was greatly influenced by them and left the path of sin to join them on the path of Sainthood. Raju shares some uncanny resemblance with the mythical character of Ravan as both had suspension of morals in the possession of extreme emotions. Ravan was cursed due to his attempt to seduce a celestial beauty, Rambha. This didn't stop him from abducting Sita as his extreme emotions took over his rational mind. Narayan treats these myths not allegorically but as part of the social structure.

II. Analysis

When Raju assumes the role of guide, he "spoke... on *Ramayana*, the characters in the epics; he addressed them on all kinds of things..." (Narayan, 1958, p. 45). Raju narrates epics for tourists as casually as a city guide explains landmarks (Thieme, 2007). This emergence of Valmiki's and Ravan's stories functions as a trigger to archetypes in Raju's unconscious. According to Jung, mere storytelling can "constellate" archetypal images, making them ready to influence behaviour when life recapitulates epic patterns (Jung, 1968, p. 26). Campbell would call this the moment myth moves from the page into the public dream (Campbell 1949).

According to Jung, Anima is an innate primitive image instilled in the mind of an entity. This image is related to the non-masculine features and ideas and is generally related to the feminine qualities. Thus to simplify, it can be referred to as the feminine suppressed identity in the subconscious mind of a man. This archetype activates on the exposure of certain symbols and is related to the suspension of logic or rationality, obsession with chaos, fascination and creativity in man as written by Jung, "The anima is the unconscious feminine "soul-image" in a man. She is ambivalent—"goddess and witch," "saint and whore"—capable of overwhelming fascination that "breaks down our moral inhibitions".(Jung, 1968, p 30).. The attributes of this archetype resonate with the actions of Raju from *Guide* and Ravan from *Ramayan*. In the *Ramayana*, Ravan's abduction of Sita stems from an uncontrollable passion that overrides both dharma and divine sanctions (Ramanujan, 1991). Raju's infatuation with Rosie mirrors this: though he repeatedly reprimands himself ("it was wrong"), he cannot refrain from falling for Rosie. Raju's confession: "I knew it was wrong... but I couldn't help it" (Narayan 1958, p. 89) confirm it. This is the **Anima** archetype which emerges due to the activation of certain primordial symbols in Raju's unconscious. The Anima archetype can snub morality and make a character perform certain actions driven by

extreme emotions. This is validated in the lines "The anima is ambivalent—'goddess and witch,'... capable of overwhelming fascination that breaks down moral inhibitions" (Jung, 1968, p. 30). there are several references in Ramayan where Ravan shows his obsession of owning things and his desires weakened his morality. He tried to seduce Ramba, a celestial beauty which led to him being cursed by her fiance that he will never be able to touch something he doesn't own and will incinerated in his attempt to do so. This story merged with the anima archetype when Raju came in contact with Rosi and was driven by a passion to own her. In his passion, Raju drives himself away from his societal and family duties as shown in the text "I had practically given up all interest in the shop. I was content to let it run on its old reputation and past goodwill." (Narayan, 1958, p. 105). He starts ignoring his business and pretends to be a gentry to Rosi. This perfectly aligns with the attributes of the Anima archetype and the traits shown by the character of Ravan in Ramayan. But this archetype paved the way for Rebirth when Rosi rejects Raju and finally shatters the persona he built throughout his life.

The trickster archetype is an extreme primordial symbol, which shows duality in the personality to the end. Trickster is "subhuman and superhuman" at the same time (Jung, 1968, p. 267). A trickster can perform trickery or act as a Saviour without any particular reason. Jung gave the example of the Norse God Loki as a symbol of the trickster archetype which shows the traits of a saviour and a trickster at the same time (Jung, 1968). This resonates with the myth of Valmiki as he, once a robber, becomes the rishi who composes the *Ramayana* after a profound penance (Ramanujan, 1991). Similarly, Raju is set on the path of renunciation. But this path came as the compensatory nature of the trickster archetype. "Pointless orgies of destruction...the gradual development into a saviour and his simultaneous humanization" (Jung 1968, p. 267). This trickster archetype, which is an innate symbol, lies in the unconscious mind of Raju links itself to the story of Valmiki, and tries to imitate his actions unconsciously where Raju himself destroyed himself in greed by forging Rosi's signatures and then follows the path of sainthood without even being conscious about it. In the novel, Velan acted similarly to the group of saints who invoked the spirituality in Valmiki. "I don't know why you tell me all this, Swami. It's very kind of you to address at such length your humble servant." (Narayan, 1958, p. 117), Raju is stunned when Velan calls him 'swami' after listening to his backstory. The blind trust of Velan and the villagers made him finally forgive himself and set him on the path the sainthood. His behaviour is similar to the trickster, who creates a problem only to solve it to give meaning to his life. It is this transformation of the meaningless into the meaningful that reveals the trickster's compensatory relation to the 'saint'. Thus this sows the seed of Rebirth in Raju.

Raju's renunciation of worldly titles—guide, manager, lover—coupled with his physical transformation, mirrors Valmiki's tapas. The fast becomes an unconscious penance and a symbolic death of the ego. Raju renounces worldly pleasures and his appearance starts changing simultaneously. He grows a long beard and his hair starts touching his nape. This evolution was not only outwardly but a reflection of change happening inside him. He started imitating Valmiki's path without being aware of it. Narayan doesn't show this evolution in a completely mystic manner rather it is quite subtle and ambiguous. There is a symbol of the cave which is related to rebirth as according to Jung cave is a place that acts as a place of introspection and rebirth. In Jungian terms, the cave symbol functions as a catalyst for rebirth (Jung 1968, p. 114). In the novel, the temple acts as the cave which forces Raju to introspect his actions and slowly motivates his transformation. The temple is a symbol of his unconscious mind in which he entered and merged his consciousness with his unconsciousness which ultimately formed a path to travel from chaos to wholeness. The renunciation of all worldly desires and finally practicing fast for something greater than himself relates to Jung's stages of rebirth archetype that are -"diminution of personality" (the false ego dissolves) and "enlargement of personality" (identification with the greater whole). Raju's identities of son, guide, lover, and conman dissolved and took a rebirth as a personality greater than himself.

III. Conclusion

R.K. Narayan's *The Guide* stages Raju's transformations not as a conscious moral pilgrimage but as an **unwitting mythic reenactment**. Narayan illustrates how epic memory continues to shape modern societal structures, guiding individuals toward destinies they neither choose nor fully comprehend. Certain primordial images or symbols lie dormant in the unconscious mind and relate themselves to the most appropriate moment, which then impacts the actions of an entity. In the novel guide, the stories of Ramayana and its characters lie dormant in Raju's mind, and when he encountered similar situations as those characters in his life, the certain symbols in his mind got activated and expressed themselves in the only known way of expression, which were the mythological stories he had suppressed in his mind. Raju acted as the Trickster which was linked to the story of Valmiki, and then the Anima in his unconscious mind related itself to the story of Ravan which ultimately led to the activation of the symbols of Rebirth, which transformed his identity into a new one and led to the Individuation. Individuation is a state where the conscious mind merges with the unconscious mind, which makes a person whole as Jung says "The experience of the self is the experience of oneself as a whole, and at the same time as transcending and organizing everything that is one's own." (Jung, 1968, p. 4). Individuation is achieved by the mergence of all the archetypes and personas and one has to go through a journey of discovery of self. Raju, throughout his journey unconsciously related himself with various mythological characters to finally reach the state of individuation which is synonymous with spirituality in Eastern philosophy. Mythology acted as the pathway between the primitive symbols in his mind and gave expression to these symbols. This finally led him from chaos to wholeness and he was able to break free from the chains of shadow unconscious. His transformation from a 'tour guide' to a 'guide for Rosi' and finally to a 'spiritual guide' for villagers.

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