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POSITIVE DISINTEGRATION IN MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES: A
PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF MURIEL MAUFROY'S RUMI'S DAUGHTER

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ABSTRACT

This article adopts Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration to investigate the relationship between psychology and mysticism. This study examines a psychological analysis of mystical experience of a character (mystic) named Kimya in Muriel Maufroy's novel "Rumi's Daughter". The analysis of the study is based on the questions such as 'how the mystic's experience of the divine can be translated in terms of a psychological process of personality disintegration initiated by a conflict, deconstruction of preconceived notions and beliefs and ultimately leading towards secondary integration of personality. Results of the study reveal certain parallels between the process of personality development and mystical experience. It settles the argument that the culmination of mystical union underlies psychological wellbeing and serenity on the part of mystic. The study also shows that mystics are those rare individuals who are capable of reaching the final level of personality development characterised by self-autonomy and higher level of consciousness.

INTRODUCTION:

Dabrowski penned: "Superficiality, vulgarity, absence of inner conflict, quick forgetting of grave experience, became repugnant to me. I searched for people and

attitudes ... that were authentically ideal, saturated with immutable values, those who represented 'what ought to be' against 'what is'" (1975, p. 234). In this view, the human dexterity came up with the evolution and growth of the societies, thus, it evokes human inquisitiveness to question metaphysical endeavours, aetiological interpretations and philosophical epistemology. These peculiarities broaden up the mind frame of a person to think diversely. Yet, the curiosity to conceptualise the true meaning of life is still in a midst. Myriad vacant spaces are yet to be filled with the quintessence regarding spiritual and celestial values mystical approach to life. It is an incessant process to create a pathway by combating the thoughts that hinder the conscious approach of fading away the mental constraints of the autonomous mystical realm. It opens up the path of reality for a conscious mind and brings approaches from limit to limitless.

However, mystics always transcends the human limitations while engrossing the human's approach and mind to develop a concept of reality. Underhill (1943) argues that mystics 'creates a path of union with reality, (p. 3)'. Therefore, mysticism can also be regarded as merger of human perception with the concept of reality. Human state of consciousness is one of the examples of mysticism. While defining the concepts of mysticism, Smith (1980) points out that mysticism cross the borders of human mind, and develop a relationship of human soul with the transcend reason to seek the encirclement of God in from of their eyes, mind and soul, (p.20).

On the contrary, psychology as a discipline has contributed substantially to create an environment to accept the notion of human mind, consciousness and concepts of dispositions. These notions usually manifests the basic concepts of mysticism, and mystical struggle. Michel de Certeau (1992), Kripal believe that mysticism before the modern era was taken as the traditional norm, and people follow their elders to seek the similar paths to enjoy the faith in the fullest forms of spirituality, (Kripal, 2001, p.10). Later, with the development of psychology, these concepts were revolutionised by the influence of theories and philosophies developed by people such as Willian James, Kripal etc. King (1999) claims that the ideology of mysticism started shaping into a new form which has been evidenced in the form of state of consciousness, (p.22). He further (1999) claims that "the mystical" in terms of "altered states of consciousness" has resulted in "the privatization of mysticism" (King 1999: 21).

Thus, the first experience of mysticism has been taken as the idiosyncratic cerebral circumstances of psychological objects. Similarly, the concept of union with reality with the mirror of psychology and its perception has been grown with the developmental changes in the subject. However, it has been observed that individual has achieved the level while broadening the horizons. But, the highest level of consciousness makes a mystic to identify the reality imbedded in his conscious which can only be achieved through the un-rational way as Karen Armstrong (1999) considers the power of divine not as an object but all unescapable and invincible energy. The experience of mystic ...always seen as a symbolic

ascent through the mysterious regions of the mind” (Karen, 1999, p.253). Ninian Smart (1980) describes mysticism “as mainly containing in an internal quest, culminating in convinced manner which cannot be explained rather can be felt in mind or sub-conscious. (p.78).

Mendaglio, S., & Tillier, W. (2006) also discusses the theory while contrasting the phenomenon with Dabrowski's approach to investigate the psychological state of individuals, and argues that “researchers should emulate Dabrowski's approach in future investigations.” Previously, many researchers such as Ackerman, C. M. (2009); Gilbert, E. (2009); Mendaglio, S. (Ed.). (2008) etc. have applied Dabrowski's psychological theory of positive disintegration and identified the substantial outcomes related to personality developments. Dabrowski (1996) elaborated the concept of developmental process in the following ways;

Emotional overexcitability ... introduces controlling, inhibiting factors to psychomotoricity and sensuality. Imaginational overexcitability enriches them by elements of fantasy, humor, and prospection which tends to diffuse and control the primitive drive aspects of enhanced psychomotoricity and sensuality, by transferring the energy of the impulse to a different and broader territory. (p. 74)

Previously, Gellman has conducted a substantial contribution to experience mysticism and defines it as “a super sense’, or sub-super sense showing the tranquilities and certain modalities, (Gellman, 2005, p. 138). The concept of sub-consciousness remains different from in different religions. For example, the very concept of ultimate reality has different shapes in different cultures and religions. These different shapes work with the similar notions and create constructive and paralinguistic dimensions of mystical experience. In this view, Gimello (1978) argues that mysticism keeps such characteristics based on cultural, religious and traditional differences. These characteristics occur in different shapes, and in different languages. Key characteristics are given below;

- i. Reflective sagacity of unity or contact
- ii. Conscious cognizance based on the mystic or spiritual expedition.
- iii. Sensation based on the involvement with language.
- iv. Modification of instinctive teaching
- v. Ecstasy and sense of completeness.

From this viewpoint, “mystical experience” can possibly be demarcated as a direct contact with Ultimate Reality that is noticeable by a sympathetic of brilliance. This study focuses on the work of Muriel Maufroy e.g. *Rumi's Daughter*. The major focus is to unveil the mystical experience embedded in the discourse presented in the work through the female character named Kimya.

In addition, the study provides a novel approach to see the mystical experience through the psychological and mystical angle.

Theoretical Framework

The study is qualitative in nature. It adopts Kazimierz Dabrowski's (1902-1980) theory of personality development which shows the formation of various levels envisaging the individual capabilities measure the materialization and focus on the sub-consciousness. The theory includes five levels of personality development showing the different stages of human mind's integration. For example, it starts with the primitive integration which is followed by some of emotional, and mental activities. In addition, imaginal activities subservient to biological drives move parallel to the final reintegration of personality.

The first stage comprises the emotional, and mental responsibilities whereas final re-integration includes the self-possession. It also includes the autonomy and authenticity levels of consciousness which has been proposed by Dabrowski. Dabrowski also explains the personality ideals while illustrating with mystic experience. However, it suggests that there is no automatic transition of individuals from one to the next stage. Rather, some remain in the first level throughout their lives; others may find themselves in the second stage. Dabrowski's theory comprises the numerous characteristics. These characteristics are given below;

1. Sequential development which is shown through the many levels of consciousness in the form of corollary of the fusion of capabilities based on the rational and expressive competences and purposes. Persons with advanced awareness are allowed to brand selections.
2. During the developmental process, people who are individually focused may achieve the third level presented by Dabrowski. Dabrowski (1996) argues that self-awareness and transformation may provide the emergence of personality ideals.
3. Dabrowski's theory contains of five levels with numerous sub-levels. "Standards seemed to signify dissimilar stages. The extent amid the stages of an assumed marvel developed by far more noteworthy than any of the phenomenon" (Dabrowski, 1977, p.xii).
4. Conflict grips important position. The expansion pledges as a result of conflict. No progression or growth is possible without it. Conflicts exert varying impacts on people in accordance with their psychic make-up. However, in the individuals with higher developmental potential, they trigger progression and tendency towards self-transformation.
5. The theory also adheres to the idea of breaking the existing structures and replacing them with the idealized ones. In the final level, conflicts are resolved and the Self achieves autonomy and authenticity.



Figure 1 Dabrowski's Five levels

Level I: Primary Integration

Level 1 indicates the primary integration of a person who is accustomed to his environment and people move unconsciously with the biological needs focusing on the primitive drives to fulfil their instincts. These instincts are further elaborated as “intelligence neither controls nor transforms basic drives; it serves the ends determined by primitive drives” (Dabrowski, 1996, p.18). However, the people quest to be engaged as lives of animals are devoid of the self-reflection phenomenon. Usually such people show conventionality, positive attitude towards life. The basic idea behind this terminology is to acclimatise themselves as per the environments and their needs.

The theorist e.g. Dabrowski (1996) divides it into two major types. For example, the negative adjustment and negative maladjustment. Former indicates the observance of the people to social norms without paying any heed to it, whereas lateral shows person's disrespect for the standards but selecting a humiliating and nasty attitude. These kinds of people are found in the forms of criminals and psychopaths who are true representatives of negative maladjustment.

Level II: Uni-level Disintegration

Level II is also known as uni-level because of its involvement of a person feels no inherent norm whereas he/she could control the required demands. What action should he/she prioritise over other norms. Apart from the biological needs, the quest of demanding the needs increases. Furthermore, Parson's inner conflict increases and reaches to a inevitable level where psychic ecstasy can not be measured. However, this phenomenon gets increases with the passage of time, and an individual has no idea to handle such situation.

This type of situation usually remains above the human level of perception. Dabrowski (1996) calls it the continual vacillation between pros and cons without any solid indication of direction. As Dabrowski further elaborates that the sternness of inner conflicts at this level can move an individual to a “no exit situation. There

are severe mental disorders related through unilevel developing structure” (ibid). People who can easily manage to handle these two levels keeps the capabilities to engage themselves in third level.

Level III: Spontaneous Multilevel Disintegration

The hierarchy of third level is composed of critical perception, experience, an assessment, and attitude towards orientation of higher values, and behaviour. However, the critical values such as guilt, shame, astonishment, and oneself remain still critical within the inner conflicts. In addition, inner conflict emerged in level two also lacks the credibility to deals such issues to move in a smooth direction. Whereas, an individual move through a systematic process through the level III. Therefore, Dabrowski (1967) points out that “... self-evaluation, reflection, intense moral conflict, perception of the uniqueness of others, and existential anxiety” (ibid. p.19).

While moving through this process, an individual becomes able to mediate the feelings, emotions, and a sense of appreciation is developed in him to feel better and show a positive maladjustment.

Level IV: Organized Multilevel Disintegration

Level IV presents the dynamisms that replicate a cumulative reflection of an individual to understand the complex developmental processes. In this process, an individual deliberately superintends his psychological progress. He owns a sensitive awareness and control over himself. He is expressively authorised enough to monitor the harsh propensities.

A bright vision of life brings the place of numerous instinctive spontaneous responses. The processes occurred in level three makes the potential development in this level. Therefore, due to the systematic and smooth process, this level is also regarded as “organized” level. Apart from the fact that the random dynamisms are appropriately attuned in accordance with the set idealized choices.

Level V: Secondary Integration

This stage is commonly known as secondary integration. This level comprises all features where all levels are able to unite an individual to experience the spontaneous reactions. This level is achieved by a few individuals, and this stage makes the process of developing personality complete. According to Dabrowski (1996) “the developmental dynamisms present at level V are “responsibility, autonomy, authentism and personality ideal” (p.20).

However, level III brings the dynamics which are embryonic and endures its own expansion to the final level. An individual achieves the self-realization and feels

his psychological condition and its dynamisms. Individual's perfect choices are prioritized to bring the change in his/her behaviour accordingly.

Analysis:

Rumi's Daughter is authored by a French-born novelist Muriel Maufroy. It is one of her famous novels that has been translated into nine languages. The novel is based on a historical account of great Persian Mystic poet, Jalaluddin Rumi. Set in the thirteenth century Anatolia, the novel narrates how a mystic girl Kimya undergoes her spiritual struggle under the supervision of the great master. During her later childhood, Kimya exhibits certain behavioural patterns which take many aback. "The Christian Priest in her village always used to say that she is gifted despite the fact that he himself did not understand what sort of encounters she has had. Kimya had always wanted to study and for this she persuaded her parents to let her visit a man who lived in a cave nearby" (Sohail, 2017).

To help her channelize the eccentric tendencies, she is sent to Konya where Rumi becomes her teacher and later, Shams her spouse. She witnesses some extraordinary experiences in their company. Both serve as catalysts to her mystical struggle. Her marriage with Shams is highly symbolic of the mystical union. Initially in her childhood, she leads a routine life and develops, though unwillingly at times, a conforming attitude towards life.

Though she is by temperament an introverted child, she hardly experiences any inner conflict at this stage notwithstanding her hallucinatory episodes. In her early childhood she lives a traditional life with her family which in Dabrowskian terms indicates the first level of personality development. At this level there is a "concern for the preservation of one's line or tradition" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, p.178).

However, it does not take her long to progress into level II which is heralded by her growing internal conflict and the habit of questioning. During her time outdoors with friends, she remains mostly passive and does not take any interest in games and chats. Prompted by a penchant for knowing, she raises the broader human questions like "why am I alive? Where was I before I was born?" (Maufroy, 2005, p.1). This surprises everyone especially Father Chrisostom who is led into thinking that "Kimya is different" (ibid, p.44).

Her introverted and self-contemplative disposition renders her unique and different. Intermittent episodes of auditory hallucinations add to her unusual behaviour.

"Kimya (herself) did not understand what happened to her in those moments, nor did she ever know when they would come" (ibid, p.1). Placed in Dabrowski's model, such mental state is characteristic of the unilevel disintegration – the emergence of inner conflict, doubts and mood swings. Also characteristic of level

It are what Dabrowski and Piechowski (1977) refer to as “ambitendencies: indecision, wanting and not wanting, or wanting two irreconcilable things at once” (p.41).

This dynamism is clearly observable in Kimya’s indecisiveness as to which line of action may be followed and her inability to discern her obsessions as Maufroy (2005) puts in: “There was sadness in her heart she didn’t quite understand...” (p.54).

In addition, another striking feature of unilevel disintegration is “... the susceptibility to social opinion, guidance of one’s behaviour based on a need for recognition and approval, and internalization of values from external sources” (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, p.41). Kimya in her mystical struggle which is in its embryonic stage, capitalizes on different sources. She is all the more receptive whether it is her parent’s thinking of Konya or Ahmed’s teaching her reading and writing or Father Chrisostom insisting on her schooling. She acknowledges and values their suggestions and decisions as reflected by her positive response to the decision of being sent away. Her inner conflict grows with time and during the next few years, she begins to experience what Dabrowski calls an existential crisis or more plainly, she views a gap between “what is” and “what ought to be”. This is an instance of the third level – spontaneous multilevel disintegration. Her coming of age develops her rational and irrational faculties allowing her to create a balance between them.

The theory of positive disintegration argues that in this level, an individual sets a personality ideal as an alternate course of action, which in Kimya’s case can be seen in the form of Shams. Notwithstanding latter’s notorious image among the people, she believes in, approves of and follows his worldviews.

In response to criticism, she remarks, “he is no devil; he is a great wind, igniting everything he touches; he is the carrier of unspoken news” (Maufroy, 2005, p.121). Her marriage with Shams is highly symbolic as it underpins a spiritual union with her idealized self. The final two levels share a common denominator particularly that of an individual becoming who he/she really is. The organized phase of multilevel disintegration is manifested through heightened sense of self, freedom and self-control.

Kimya’s decision to marry Shams indicates her self-autonomy as the novelist puts in: “She (Kimya) herself had had a taste of this freedom that day she had agreed to marry Shams” (ibid, p.183) – and incorporating the higher idealized choice. Her body language, decisions and worldviews bear witness to the fact that she succeeds in developing a seminal self-directed view of life. Psychologically, she becomes in charge of her developmental process and psychic dynamisms.

According to Dabrowski’s theory of personality development, the secondary integration often renders individuals the object of sheer criticism and disapproval

but they remain calm and confident. Kimya realized "... there was a point of stillness where, most incredibly, a dark, silent joy was waiting" (ibid, p.203). Kimya frees herself not only from need for social recognitions and titles but also from the petty foibles like self-centeredness, hatred, pride and violence. The mystical union with the Reality is reflected in her spiritual uplift whereby she attains both the balance in personality and the psychological wholeness.

CONCLUSION:

The study applies theory of positive disintegration to the mystic novel "Rumi Daughter". The key focus of the study was to identify the mystical experience of 'Kimya' the major character of the novel through the lens of positive integration theory presented by Dabrowski. The study concludes that Kimya (mystic) the major character is originally ambitious, and overwhelmed by the quest of awareness to know the answers of questions. While investigating the enigma, she becomes successful through her efforts and under the tutelage of Rumi and Shams, in throwing away the social masks, her existing beliefs and psychic structures are automatically replaced by her idealized self. In addition, she also feels the psychological development in the form of positive serenity helped her to pass through the level IV and achieved the level of self-autonomy.

The study provides insights of psychological developments embodied in human characters in the novel to understand the complex phenomenon of human mind, its reaction towards reality. The understanding of the reality can only be achieved, if an individual pays heed to each and every matter with curiosity and scepticism, more particularly while dealing with psychological matters. Finally, the theory of positive disintegration has provided a comprehensive and thoughtful assessment of personality development which can be applied to unveil the psychological diversity of people and their environment. Nevertheless, this study has obviously exposed that this theory is a valuable contribution in the existing literature in education and clinical settings, and beyond.

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