

A Textual Analysis of The Seeker of Nothing by Kabir Munjal in the Perspective of The Hero's Journey by Joseph Campbell

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ABSTARCT

This study is about The seeker of Nothing by Kabir Munjal who described a journey of a man who was not actually living in the dynamic way but only breathing. Self-blame, anger, and meaningless existence are the outcomes of a tragic incident that happened to him seven years ago. This study highlights his journey to the Mountains of Templetron for the delivery of the valuable artifact and how this object proves as a spiritual awakening for him. The purpose of this research paper is to find out the journey of the protagonist Andahar through the Campbell's three-stage framework which is separation, initiation, and return. Through all these three stages, the researchers analyzed Andahar's struggle to fight with his inner turmoil for the peace of his mind and heart. The hero's journey gives the idea about the personal quest of every individual's journey from unknown to known and to find the meaning of his/her life.

Key words: The seeker of nothing, the hero's journey, suffering, spiritual awakening, transformation

1. INTRODUCTION

Every single human being on the Earth is the main character of his own life. This is the very idea Joseph Campbell gave in his theory of "Monomyth" or "The Heroes Journey". Generally, the term monomyth was used by James Joyce. The word Monomyth can be broken down into two morphemes i.e., mono and myth. The word mono means "one" and the word mythos means "story". Because of his extensive reading on mythology, he concluded that hero's myths originate in the psyche and all the myths are universal to all humans and follow similar patterns. In his book "The Hero with a Thousand Faces", Joseph (1949) presented the structure of a hero's journey. After his theory, many modern writers picked an idea for their screenplays and movies. Moreover, video games were designed from the monomyth idea. His theory gives an idea of universality that a hero's journey is not only for legends and superheroes but it can also comprise a common man.

His theory has three main stages on which the journey of the hero applies, 1. Separation 2. Initiation 3. Return. In first stage, the hero gets an invitation, and he separates himself from the ordinary world and in second stage, he frequently refuses the call but decides to listen and at the third stage, the hero must return to the ordinary world with his reward. Furthermore, these three main stages have sub stages too but not every myth or story falls into these seventeen sub stages.

In his book, (Joseph, 1949) describes the pattern as “a hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural world....”

The main character of the novel *The Seeker of nothing* is Andahar who is living a life of anger, guilt, and self-blame. A tragic incident happened in his life which made his life meaningless and he is socially deprived. He spent seven years of his life in self-blaming and misery. By applying three stages of (Joseph, 1949), the researchers have tried to find out the journey of Andahar from unknown to known. Throughout the novel Andahar struggles to find the real purpose of his life, he goes through the many physical and mental hardships which shape his journey and at the end give him the meaning of his true existence that he still has some purpose, and he deserves to live like the way he lived before the tragic incident happened in his life.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The researchers have inspected some previous works related to the idea of Monomyth known as the hero's journey. The theory of the hero's journey has broader scope, and it can include many ideas in itself.

By the name ‘the hero's journey’, many authors considered that it only be related to the superman, spider man, star war character Luke sky walker, Harry Potter series, Neo from The Matrix, Frodo's heroic journey in Lord of The Rings and many other acknowledged super characters. On one hand, Campbellian monomyth represented the male as a hero, but the researchers have found a distinct way which has broken the stereotype. By analyzing protagonist's in ‘for whom the bell tolls’ Ernest Hemingway and the heroes in ‘joseph campbell's journey’ (WILLIAM, 2021), this study has shown the female protagonist who exemplifies the campbellian monomyth. This study also raises question on Hemingway's macho image. Furthermore, the movie “*THE WONDER WOMAN*” (2017) has also shown Diana as a protagonist who undergoes all the stages of hero's journey.

Flourishing (2023) study shows that hero's journey is all about truth seeking and self-discovery and this quest can be found in all religions including Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism where many leading personalities who followed their inner callings and returned with an Elixir to share it with their assigned communities “The boon that he brings restores the world i.e. ‘elixir’ (Joseph, 1949). Buddhist focused on mindfulness. Mindful people have better quality of life (Javaid et al., 2023). Ramzan et al. (2023) have claimed that there is an autonomous semantic level in the language of Pakistani English where there are non-local assortments.

The Hero's Journey is also applicable to an individual who embarks on the journey of trauma recovery. The researchers also overviewed a study which showed another aspect of the hero's journey, “*Trauma Recovery: A Heroic Journey*” (Keck, 2017). For the person who is dealing with traumatic experience, acceptance is hard for him and in the three stages i.e. Departure, initiation and return; he faces many challenges to become a person who could live a normal life. “Campbell's hero's journey has been used as a powerful metaphor for the recovery path as survivors of” (Keck, 2017).

According to Rogers (2023), to lead a meaningful Life, become your own hero. Expressive writing works well in exploring oneself (Javaid & Mahmood, 2023). In this study, the researchers have applied the theory from the perspective of reforming one's life in order to become a valuable person. The study also showed that the stories such as, Star Wars and Harry Potter left the psychological effects on minds and give the motive to live a heroic life.

Same lens is applied in the study of (Mohammad, 2024) named "The Analysis of the Story *Silent City* Through Joseph Campbell's Model of the Hero's Journey" and in the following research, the hero accepts the call and by the aid of supernatural's goes through the trials and problems and in the end, he achieves success in accomplishing the task and as the reward, he gets the spiritual harmony, discovery of love and self-awareness. Furthermore, in the case study of "The Boy who Lived: An Examination of the Hero Journey in J.K Rowling's Harry Potter" by (Victoria, 2010) which is a fantasy series, relates to the idea of an individual from the ordinary world to the unknown world and ends up as a master of two worlds.

In the study "Joseph Campbell's Monomyth in Agatha Christie's Novel Murder on the Orient Express", the researcher showed the courage to apply the seventeen stages of (Joseph, 1949) on the novel which has themes of mystery and investigation, but with the proper modification of the stages, the researcher proved that the investigator in the novel is also a hero and the Campbellian theory is not only for mythic heroes (Rahmi, 2018).

Christopher Vogler, a hollywood screenwriter, author and story consultant in his article "Joseph Campbell Goes to the Movies: The Influence of the Hero's Journey in Film Narrative" has drawn his life as a hero's journey by fulfilling all the stages and the writer in this article has proved how the hero with a Thousand faces (Joseph, 1949) paved the way for entertainment industry. Christopher Voglar in his book 'The writer's journey: mythic structure for writers' has represented the stages of hero's journey by the lens of Campbell's heroic journey. He mentioned by say 'For forty years, I have walked a trail blazed by Joseph Campbell, believing in the value of his work.....' (Christopher, 2007).

In another article, the workshop was organized, and phenomenological study was done on the participant. The focus was on the lived experiences of the participants and the events of their lives which showed the aspects of (Joseph, 1949) hero's journey. In these two or three weeks of workshops, the observers discovered the transformation and personal growth of the participants (Lehner Daniela, 2022).

Individuals who live their lives according to hero's journey has more meaningful life experiences rather than those who have no purpose in this life and this aspect has been discussed in the article of (BEN ROGERS, 2023) that showed that the hero's journey can make peoples' lives more meaningful.

According to Triplett (2011), Post traumatic disorder affects life to the core and a person does not see his real purpose of living in the world. This study shows that after facing trauma, the one who finds the purpose of living feels satisfaction and by the time he gets through the hard time step by step. After traumatic experience, the journey of personal growth is an aspect of hero's journey. This idea has also shown in the study of (Keck, 2017). Injustices and negative events

make people embittered (Javaid & Mahmood, 2023). Persuasion modifies viewpoint (Ramzan et al., 2023) and language skills helps get out of trauma (Javaid et al., 2023).

Campbell's Monomyth often is often applied to the mythological characters but in this article, the character of Hamlet's soliloquy "To be or not to be" has showed the journey of the hero from different stages of hero's journey (K., 2006)

Spirituality is also connected to the journey of the hero, and it goes side by side in any individual's life. Spirituality can also be defined as the journey of seeking something. In this article through the stages and substages, it has highlighted the fact that spirituality also comes under the umbrella of Campbell's search for hero's real identity (Dada, 2014)

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher has applied the theory of Monomyth: A Hero's Journey by Joseph Campbell on the novel "The Seeker of Nothing". The motive of this research is to explore the inner conflict of the character and his journey from the ordinary world to the world of trials and problems i.e. how he overcame the traumatic experience of his life and what hurdles he faced during his recovery? And it is a qualitative research approach. By doing textual analysis, the researcher is going to peep into the very soul of the text and find out the journey of Andahar through the stages of Campbell's theory. The seeker of nothing (Kabir, 2022) is the true idea of owning your life. The writer of the novel had same quest which he showed in the novel. The researcher is willing to analyze the text through the three main stages of the theory 1: Destination 2: Initiation 3: Return. These stages have substages too but not every story applies on every sub stage.

4. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

In the following section, the text titled "The Seeker of Nothing" by Kabir Munjal has been analyzed keeping in view the ideas about the spiritual awakening or transformation as described in "The Hero's Journey" by Joseph Campbell.

4.1 DESTINATION

"Will you get off the ship tomorrow" (Kabir, 2022)

The opening line of the novel is giving the idea of some kind of "call to an invitation" (Joseph, 1949). Andahar is living a life of an introvert who has grudges and anger in him, and those feelings are nourishing day by day. His brother Ned-Har tries to communicate with him and goes into his cabin, but Andahar does not bother to answer any of his questions. Seven years ago, after that tragic incident, Andahar must have run away with his brother in his ship and since that time, he is living in that ship in the same cabin. Andahar was a stoic and brave soldier, but his life turned into tragedy. According to Joseph (1949), hero always has some quality in him, but he denies accepting that he has some little spark in him. One day, Ned-Har asks Andahar to do a task which only he can do. He hands him over the valuable jeweled box and requests him to

deliver it to the King of Templetron. Here is the concept of “Refusal of the call” (Joseph, 1949), he refuses to accept that. He must have refused because of the inner conflict he has in him and the fear of moving into the world. Individuals who face the traumatic experience always find hard to face it (Keck, 2017).

It was difficult for Andahar to accept the call. After a few moments, Andahar accepts the request, picks up the box and sets his journey to Corcusia. There is a substage “Supernatural Aid” (Joseph, 1949) in which hero gets some help; it can be in any form, for example it can be in physical form, motivation from someone or a mentor. In Andahar’s case, a box has some magical properties and the scent of Jasmine of his lover whom he lost in incident encourages him to step out from the ordinary world to the world of knowing his real self. The first step Andahar takes is to leave his comfort zone and ready to face all the challenges coming in his way to King of the Templetron which is called as the” crossing the Threshold” (Joseph, 1949). It was bit difficult for Andahar after entering in the city of Corcusia to see everything like a normal human being due to his straight forwardness in nature. He saw many people doing foolish activities while trading in market. In Corcusia, he sees the trader beating his slave; Andahar could not resist and saved him from his master. Slave’s name is Elar and he accompanies Andahar throughout his journey to the mountains of the Templetron. This gesture of Andahar shows the kindness in his soul. Every human being has compassion in him but due to some tragedies, he hides it.

4.2 INITIATION

Andahar’s asking about the mountains of Templetron to the people of Curcosia makes him irritated because they think he is a lunatic. Mountains of Templetron are a mystical journey full of supernatural things. When they ask Filgroin about the way of mountains, he tells them ‘Only a true seeker can find the mountains....’ (Kabir, 2022). By this dialogue, it can assume that this task which Ned Har handed over to his brother will lead Andahar to self-knowledge. “Road of trials” (Joseph, 1949) in substage of initiation is in which hero must face many challenges in his heroic journey. Andahar with Elar travels through the forest which has supernatural tiny creatures and and filgroin tells “one must travel through this forest at night”. After travelling through forest, there comes the magical lake” Fonlius”. Another stage of hero’s journey is “Woman as the Temptress”. There are many mermaids in lake which are captivating them from their beauty but it is a task and, another test. Andahar must go down into the lake and there he encounters with the female “Meeting with the Goddess “ (Joseph, 1949) which is a sub stage, in which hero takes the guidance from the female Goddess.

In the matter of Andahar, there is a Female snake in the lake who tells him he has passed the test by telling him that many men come here to get what they desire but their nature of greed, temptations and selfish motives cause them fail in trial. She asks him what do you desire? Andahar replies” I seek the mountains of Templetron” (Kabir, 2022). She calms his heart and Andahar wakes up in dessert with Elar. A caravan was passing there and they got help from them and Andahar slept on camel and the dream he had was about the sub stage of “Atonement with the father” (Joseph, 1949) is basically a stage where hero encounters the hidden conflict in him. This stage refers to the reconciliation of someone’s wrong doings and an act of analyzing

himself. Andahar's dream about a cape man and the volcano was Andahar's inner conflict. In this novel "The Seeker of Nothing", volcano is symbolizing the inner turmoil, strong emotions, and power of change. When he encounters that cape man in his dream in a real sense, he is on a war with himself because the cape man is Andahar himself. When the cape man asks Andahar to kill a man you think is worthy of killing, he rages Andahar so much by bringing his strong emotions, regrets, and desires in front of him. Andahar screams and say no one is evil no one should be killed but you and then the cape drives the sword through his heart. Anger is secondary emotion and the reason behind anger is always a sadness, fear or loss of something or someone. Andahar is no exception. Then there comes the Goddess in the form of light and tells Andahar that he is the man who is free of malice and greed, and no one has come this far but only those who choose virtue over vice. It is quite clear that nature is on the side of Andahar and is helping him to recover from his old wounds. The light tells Andahar to "See the Meaning".

The quest of Mountains to the Templetron is still making him uneasy and he opens the box he has with him with a key and the light of Goddess gives him the key. Andahar opens the box and there is a heavenly beautiful book inside it, but he doesn't know the language. So he asks the dessert man who help Andahar. They suggested that an elder knew this language. Now the book and an elder are the reasons of helping Andahar in his journey to mountains. Andahar and the sub stage of hero's journey is "Apotheosis" (Joseph, 1949). At this stage, hero has a reason to move more towards his quest. Andahar hands over the book to elder and there are codes of wisdom in it which are power, freedom, peace, and redemption, healing, divinity, and magic. Andahar goes daily to elder to listen about these codes and after knowing about the codes day by day, he becomes more restless; and elder says to him to listen to the silence and "see the meaning" and let go of the choices you made. Human beings are born with free will and have an authority to make choices in life, Andahar also made choice in his life and chose trauma over healing. In the last lesson, which was magic, he asked elder how he could get to the mountains of Tempeltron? Elder suggested him to listen the silence". 'Despite my exhaustion and the great temptation to give up..... most of the time trying hard to listen to silence' (Kabir, 2022), it is in nature of human being to be impatient. In this exhaustion, when Andahar goes outside at night for a short walk, he stands near the palm tree and feels the nature in peaceful way and as he closes his eyes, the cool breeze brings faint scent of jasmine with it. When he opens his eyes, he sees himself in heavenly beautiful garden and questions his existence. Behind him, he hears the voice of someone who says to Andahar "Looking for someone". When he looks behind, he sees the sage wearing red saffron rob. Andahar feels peaceful in his existence. Andahar follows sage to the edge of the mountain and when he looks beneath, he feels like he is on the top of the world the waterfall and the clouds feel astonishing to Andahar. Sage calls him by his name and Andahar gets confused. There was a story about Templetron that there was a dragon and the one who would kill that dragon could only reach to the mountains of Tempeltron. Andahar asked the sage where the dragon was, sage replied to Andahar you were fighting with dragon for four days and it was ironical in a sense. Sage asks him does he not know where the Mountains of Templetron are. Andahar stops for a moment and feels like a caterpillar sheds its cocoon and takes its first flight as butterfly. His body shivered and heart beat faster "WITHIN", he cried and the whole journey of Andahar made sense to him, and he came to know that his brother Ned-Har knew from the start about all this. The sage handed that box to Ned-Har in his meeting with sage indirectly when Ned-Har was worried about his brother. The jeweled box and the scent of

jasmine were also of Andahar's lover's help on the way in his journey to find himself, because he always blamed himself for Narcia's death. Andahar accomplished his task and found the Mountains of Templetron. Mountains in this novel 'represent the heights of spiritual awakening'. In the hero's journey (Joseph, 1949), this sub stage is called the "ultimate Boon" when hero achieves his victory.

4.3 RETURN

Return is the last stage of the hero's journey and it is about the outcomes of hero's challenging journey what he has achieved and how he will be moving to live next. From the character of Andahar, it is quite clear that he has started to "see the meaning" of everything happened to him and now the heavy load of guilt and self-blame is lifted from his shoulder. He has "Freedom to Live" (Joseph, 1949). He is aware that everything in life happens for a reason as a sage tells him "You are exactly where you need to be". Andahar is feeling light like a feather, and he is aware of everything around him. There would be no issue to him to survive in an ordinary life where he was in guilt and anger. Now he has become "The Master of the Two Worlds" (Joseph, 1949). There is only one way to learn about things and that is 'Journey' (Paulo, 1993). It can be the Journey to find inner self, journey to achieve material benefits or journey to achieve dreams. From the very start of his journey, Andahar was clueless about everything but at the last stage of his journey, he knew about everything which made his life purposeless and meaningless, and he encountered with his inner conflict and became a new person. At this stage, hero is reborn. It is up to the hero to go back to the old life or live a life of a new person somewhere else; but in Andahar's case, it is different. He goes back to his life but as a new person who has found his real meaning of living a life. He saw the meaning in everything which happened with him in those seven years.

5. CONCLUSION

Seven years in the prison of nightmares, anger, and inner turmoil, Andahar found the meaning of his life through the little jeweled box which was only an object to be delivered but the box was full of hope and faith. The scent of jasmine became the reason of spiritual awakening in Andahar. The researcher through the cyclical journey of a hero by (Joseph, 1949) has analyzed the journey of Andahar and it is obvious that hero's journey is not only for mythical heroes or legends. There is not a single human being in this world that has not experienced the tragic events in his life. The memories of tragic events in unconsciousness affect the behavior of the individuals and make life uneasy and purposeless, but those who combat with the suppressed feelings and try to find the meaning of their lives come under the umbrella of the stages of the hero's journey." 'To see the meaning' is the crux of the novel and this helped in the character's development. Lack of real purpose of living in Andahar's life is explored through the specific stages of Hero's journey and at the end, it is quite clear that there was a reason behind the hindrances which were on the way of Andahar and made him a soul less person.

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