

Deeper into the Wilderness of Feminine Psyche in the *Scarlet Letter* and *Raja Gidh*: A Comparative Analysis of Ghazalian *Aq'l* and Freudian *Ego*

Abstract:

The present study is aimed at exploring psychological conflicts in the female protagonists of Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter and Qudsia's Raja Gidh. This study, in the parameters of psychoanalytical interpretation, explicitly describes the profound influence of aq'l and ego on Hester and Seemi, as they cross the ethical restrictions of morality, become tortured by remorse, and finally try to compensate for it. Hester attempts to recompense her sins through charitable services due to her strong belief in redemption through good works; whereas, Seemi undergoes a strange psychic experience and suffers from failures, leading to her death. This study focusing on the application of Ghazalian aq'l and Freudian ego provides an exhilarating opportunity to advance our knowledge of literary analysis and contributes to this growing area of research by probing into the depth of the human mind.

Key Words:

Psyche, conscious, aq'l, ego

Introduction

The manifestation of life through myriad modes makes literature the philosophical interpretation of life with its exploration of multiple facets of human nature. Man, holding a universe on a micro-level, has been the subject of curious scientific and philosophical investigations for ages. There is no denying that the relationship of literature, with psychological theories on one hand and philosophical outlook, on the other hand, is so intense that the disciplines of Psychology and Philosophy have been considered numerous branches of the same tree. Similarly, in the domain, English Literature, the subject of human nature has been studied through various viewpoints philosophical, psychological, religious, anthropological and developmental - each with its own lens and focus of attention. However, much uncertainty still exists about the effectiveness of these explorations. In view of all that has been mentioned so far, a need has been felt to unravel some of the mysteries surrounding human mind and its impact on behaviour with a broader and more comprehensive outlook. Hence, the present work seeks to explore the intricacies of human mind, as portrayed through Hawthorne's Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and Qudsia's Seemi in *Raja Gidh* (1981). The theoretical framework for the present study has been provided by two renowned sages, i.e., Ghazali, the illustrious intellectual of Islamic world of eleventh century and Sigmund Freud, the brain of twentieth century. This study also seeks to provide an exciting opportunity to advance our knowledge of literary

analysis, contributing to this growing area of research by probing into the depth of the human mind. Of vital significance is the fact that although literary characters survive every interpretation, yet each era uses its own mode of explanation to gratify readers' craving for conceptual understanding. The theoretical framework comprising Ghazalian notion of aq'l and Freudian ego, gives a reader an exhilarating prospect to probe into characters' psyche to pursue a psychological understanding of their behavior, thus enhancing our in-depth cognizance of Literature.

The *Scarlet Letter* (1850) has been highly praised as one of the classic novels in American Literature. Hawthorne's insight in delineating the hidden recesses of the unconscious mind is superb. The entire novel basically contemplates the psychological transformations that occurred in the central characters and the circumstances that led to the changes in behavior. Perhaps no other American novel lends itself so well to an exploration of the human mind and its various dynamics. Pfister (1991) considers this novel as an appalling penetration into the prohibited zones of consciousness. Since Hawthorne's favorite study seems to be the unveiling of man's innermost impulses and affections, so he does not consider it just a novel, but "a tale of remorse, a study of character, in which the human heart is anatomized" (p.27).

Hawthorne's uniqueness lies in the fact that he belonged to the age where human psychology was not as developed as was the case in the succeeding ages, but his psychological explorations confirmed the later findings in the realm of psychology. In a similar vein, Hawthorne's manner of dealing with characters' inner life mystifies James (1941), when he praises his characters as "glimpses of a great field, of the whole deep mystery of man's soul and conscience. They are moral, and their interest is moral; they deal with

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something more than the mere accidents and conventionalities, the surface occurrences of life” (p.295). The entire theme of *The Scarlet Letter* fundamentally contemplates on the psychological transformations that occurred in the central characters and the circumstances that led to the changes in behavior. Thus, this novel has been converted into a tale of craving discordant with the authoritarian rule; a legend of a never-ending tussle between the natural impulse and the sense of right and wrong, neither of which can be existent without the other.

Likewise, *Raja Gidh* has been regarded as one of the best novels of a Pakistani writer Bano Qudsia, and according to Hussein (2012), “the most popular novels ever to be published in Pakistan” (p.128). The most conspicuous excellence of *Raja Gidh* is Qudsia’s portrayal of mind with utter precision. As Qandeel (2012) remarks that it is an “ideological novel” enlightening Qudsia’s expertise of getting into the deepest zones of her character’s psyche, unveiling all the concealed gems inside. Moreover, it also throws light on some vital concerns on the densities of human psychology, giving expression to Qudsia’s deep philosophical thought. Hammad (2012) explores some romantic traits in the novel i.e. depiction of inner depths of the mind, recurrent allusions to Sufism, the stunning representation of fervent human yearnings which makes this novel equivalent to the writings of the English Romantic Age. Quite artistically, the novelist portrays the conflicts between various forces, creating emotional troubles in the characters’ psyche.

Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study

The psychological disposition of the central characters in the selected novels display similarities with the theories propounded by Ghazali and Freud, who attempt to highlight the hidden truths of the unconscious mind and their impact on behavior. Though the fundamental focus of the study is on the impact of Ghazalian notion of *aq’l* and Freudian *ego* on the behavior of female characters of the selected novels, yet a brief discussion needs to be made regarding the trifurcate model of human mind both the theorists formulate.

Ghazali has been “acclaimed as the greatest . . . certainly one of the greatest” (Watt 1953, vii) and “by general consent, the most important thinker of medieval Islam” (Bagley, 1964, xv). Whereas, the discoveries of Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, in the realm of the unconscious and the development of the scientific inquiry of psychoanalysis, heralded the beginning of modern psychology as one of the intellectual milestones of the 20th century (Schwartz & Solomon, 1974). Ghazali masterpiece *Ihya Ulum ud Din* (1993) (The Revival of Religious Sciences) is widely known for his psychological insights where he divides the psyche into three categories based on Quran, while Freudian categorization of human mind comprises *id*, *ego* and *superego*: which revealed new vistas of visions into modern psychology.

A close examination of the Freudian and the Ghazalian theory, reveals prominent similarities in “structural and topographic” (Hisham, 2014, p.332) dimensions of both the models. The human psyche comprises various structures, each possessing distinctive and highly-defined functions. Freud (1923/2010) mentions that the three components of personality (i.e., *id*, *ego*, *superego*) continuously working in a diverse course, consequently producing mental clash and disquiet and a longing for peace of mind. The precise dynamic of *id* and *superego* characterizes *nafs e ammara* and *nafs e lawwama*, the evil and celestial components of the human mind respectively, while Freudian constructs of *ego* are similar to the Ghazalian concept of *aq’l*. The human mind is prone to irrational, primitive behavior, under the influence of *nafs e ammara* or *id*, even with the presence of a neutralizing force, i.e., *aq’l* or *ego*. So, these incompatible powers, functioning on different planes, cause inner conflict and angst in their desire for mental peace. Moreover, both the models are Dynamic, suggesting that “there are forces in conflict within the individual and thought, emotion and behavior are the resultants of these conflicting forces” (Yalom, 1980, p.6).

Of vital significance is the fact that Ghazali and Freud have shown a somewhat similar attitude on various aspects of *aq’l* or *ego*. Ghazali (1993) offers a leading place to the intellect or *aq’l* which comprises reason, the capacity to discriminate correct and incorrect, virtuous and malicious, the actual and the elusive, all of which facilitate man to get closer to God (Schuon, 2006). He provides several meanings for this term. However, the philosophical definition shared with his predecessors refers to *aq’l* as the “intellect with which the true nature of things of this material world is known and its seat is in the soul” (Ghazali, 1993, p.5). The second connotation is the power to comprehend the mysteries of various learning. The unique characteristic that distinguishes a man from an animal is *aq’l*, which has the potential either to elevate him to the status of angels or debase him to the level of animals. Moreover, as Ghazali highlights, man has been endowed with all faculties for the realization of *fitrah* which can only be achieved by proper application of *aq’l* (Othman, 2016; p.23). Besides, this reasoning faculty of *aq’l*, can only be applied through knowledge. Uthman el-Muhammad (2003), mentioned four dimensions of Ghazalian notion of *aq’l*: the first is the intellect which makes human being different from animal; second is the intellect which advances progressively and develops maturity; third, the intellect which improves his knowledge with experience; fourth, the intellect which brings him closer to reality of things, beings and events.

In the Freudian model, the structure of personality that deals with the real world has been termed as *ego* or literally the “I” (Friedman & Schustack, 1999). It works on the reality principle. Freud considers *ego* as the conscious part of the human psyche which develops out of a modification of the *id*. According to Harper (1959), “the *ego* is the mediator between the *id* and external reality” (p.27). The demands of the *id*, which merely aim at pleasure gratification, get balanced through *ego*’s attempts of providing

appropriate satisfaction. Since the ego performs the most difficult task, as Hockenbury and Hockenbury (2011) observe, it needs to be “strong, flexible and resourceful” so that it might reconcile the conflicts arising in between the instinctive demands of the id and ethical restrictions of the *superego* (p.424).

Thus, *aq'l* and *ego* comprise the conscious parts of the psyche with rational thought and reconcile the profound levels of the psyche and the outer reality. The Freudian ego develops out of a modification of the id, playing the role of a mediator “between the *id* and external reality” (Harper, 1959, p.27). Moreover, *ego* provides a socially acceptable outlet to the immediate demands of id which aim at pleasure gratification.

The Demonstration of Aq'l/ Ego in Hester

The invisible narrator of *The Scarlet Letter* textures Hester’s psychology into the very fabric of his narrative. Her story, wearing a veil of mystery, unveils itself quite artistically. Through his insightful psychological vision, Hawthorne has represented Hester’s emotional distress in the middle of great adversities, which subsequently climaxes in her spiritual respite and contentment. In her character depiction, Hawthorne displays his highest psychological astuteness and vision. By probing into the deepest recesses of her consciousness, Hawthorne explores her thoughts at every stage. Of vital significance is the fact that her name retains certain psychological inferences. According to Lei (2015), her name refers to the “purification of the human soul and the exploration of human nature” (p.216). This analysis offers an indication about the struggling forces between *nafs e ammara / id, aq'l/ego* and *nafs e lawwama /superego*, establishing the very core of this novel. Thus, the considerable influence of *aq'l* or *ego* on Hester’s psychic life, makes her choose certain ways to mediate in between the strains of *nafs e ammara* or *id* and the pangs of *nafs e lawwama* or *superego*. McMartin (1995) indicates its role as an instinctive drive which delays gratification until it can be properly fulfilled (p.21). Time and again, the subtle working of Hester’s *aq'l* or *ego* has been revealed. Since she has been punished for her audacious attempt to gratify her desires and passions caused by *nafs e ammara* or *id*, so sometimes the forces of *aq'l* or *ego* compel her to repress the evil passions to prevent further disgrace.

Hester’s Refusal to Reveal the Identity of her Co-Adulterer

Hester tries to maintain a balance between her *nafs e ammara* or *id* and *nafs e lawwama* or *superego*, choosing not to reveal the name of her secret lover. While making this decision, she has been governed by her *aq'l* or *ego*, desiring to protect Dimmesdale from further pain. In the very first scene, when bearing the contempt of town’s people, she stands at the scaffold and is asked to expose the identity of her co-adulterer by Governor Bellingham, Reverend Wilson and Reverend Dimmesdale, her *aq'l* or *ego* stops her from revealing the name of Pearl’s father. As Hawthorne mentions her obstinate behavior in these words:

“Speak, woman! Speak and give your child a father!” “I will not speak!” ... “And my child must seek a heavenly Father: she shall never know an earthly one!” (TSL p.88).

It can be inferred from these lines that Hester vigorously chooses not to give the name of her secret lover, because of the fear that his stature and believability will be lost, the action controlled by Hester’s *aq'l* or *ego*. To protect the honor and prestige of Reverend Dimmesdale, she refuses to disclose his name, despite extreme pressure from authority. She reveals unimaginable courage, endures unbearable misery and decides to stand alone. Here Hester develops as a self-sacrificing, undemanding lover, surrendering her destiny with no indication of criticism. Dimmesdale acknowledges her greatness by complementing, “wondrous strength and generosity of a woman’s heart!”(TSL p.88)._In this way, her *aq'l* or *ego* forces her not to expose her co-adulterer to public disgrace and social ex-communication by creating a balance between her sin and people’s judgment.

Hester’s Profound Insight into Human Soul

As Hester progresses through various stages, starting from *nafs e ammara* or *id*, moving to *nafs e lawwama* or *superego* and finally culminating in *aq'l* or *ego*, her long-suppressed feelings are substituted with thought as she wanders through her survival, penetrating the questions that most people never ask about. Hawthorne, while analyzing her ability to penetrate the depth of human heart, mentions:

“the scarlet letter had endowed her with a new sense. She shuddered to believe, could not help believing, that it gave her a sympathetic knowledge of the hidden sin in other hearts. She was “terror-stricken” by the revelations that were thus made. What were they? Could they be other than the insidious whispers of the bad angel” (TSL p.108)?

These insinuations regarding the hidden evil in supposedly earthly saints of her own sex, surprise her and it turns her life from desire and emotion to thought, as Hawthorne writes:

“there seemed to be no longer anything in Hester’s face for Love to dwell upon; nothing in Hester’s form, though majestic and statue-like, that Passion would ever dream of clasping in its embrace; nothing in Hester’s bosom to make it ever again the pillow of Affection” (TSL p.197).

Her trials and ordeals turn her into a stronger personality with enormous instinctive power. Turner (1961) views this insight as to the result of her sin, which makes her look at others' weaknesses with warm sympathy. However, her awareness of sin in other fellow beings does not destroy her belief in the goodness of human nature.

Hester - Preventing Dimmesdale from Chillingworth's Revenge

Furthermore, her *aq'l* or *ego* makes her force Chillingworth to release her from the pledge of silence. She now realizes her unconscious contribution in Chillingworth's scheme of revenge against Dimmesdale's moral and physical sustenance, so she asserts her wistful desire to Chillingworth:

"Forgive, and leave his further retribution to the Power that claims it! I said, but now, that there could be no good event for him, or thee, or me, who are here wandering together in this gloomy maze of evil, and stumbling at every step over the guilt wherewith we have strewn our path. It is not so! There might be good for thee, and thee alone, since thou hast been deeply wronged and hast it at thy will to pardon. Wilt thou give up that only privilege? Wilt thou reject that priceless benefit?" (TSL pp.209-210).

Her *aq'l* or *ego* makes her stronger as she finds herself no longer incapable of dealing with Chillingworth as she was in her first meeting at the scaffold; she even does not hesitate to accuse Chillingworth to cause Dimmesdale to die a "living death" (TSL p.206). Moreover, she tries to persuade him to leave him alone, by asking, "Hast thou not tortured him enough? Has he not paid thee all?" (TSL p.208). Even she requests him to avenge upon herself and to stop his persecution against Dimmesdale, if not out of the feelings of kindness or mercy, but for his own soul. This moves Chillingworth to the extent that he pities her and says "Thou hadst great elements" (TSL p.209). On the realization of her failure in convincing Chillingworth, she eventually declares "I must reveal the secret" (TSL p.209), so that Dimmesdale might identify his real enemy in the guise of a well-wishing friend. All these attempts are the outcome of the forces of *aq'l* or *ego*, working strongly inside Hester's psyche.

Hester – Justifying her Hatred for Chillingworth

Time and again, the acute working of Hester's *aq'l* or *ego* has been revealed through her "ugliest memories" of the "long-past days in the distant land" (TSL p.212) which she spent with Chillingworth, making her repeat to herself that, "Be it sin or no... I hate the man" (TSL p.212). In this way, she truly justifies her hatred on account of her conviction that Chillingworth's sin is greater than her adultery. As she utters, "Yes, I hate him! He betrayed me! He has done me worse than I did him" (TSL p.213).

Moreover, she continues her justification for these feelings, attributing her hatred to the fact that Chillingworth had never "awakened all her sensibilities" (TSL p.213). When she reminisces her life with Chillingworth later, she shakes with abhorrence, as Hawthorne sheds light on her feelings by saying, "she deemed it her crime most to be repented of, that she had ever endured, reciprocated, the lukewarm grasp of his hand..." (TSL pp. 461-62). By remembering Chillingworth's lack of passion, Hester pacifies her troubled conscience: "He betrayed me! He has done me worse wrong than I did him!" (TSL p.213). Besides, the worst offense committed by him was his attempts to convince her to "fancy herself happy by his side... in the time when her heart knew no better" (TSL p.212). In this way, her *aq'l* or *ego* saves her from the pangs of tormented *nafs e lawwama* or *superego* which arose in her first meeting with Chillingworth in the prison, where she confessed that "I have greatly wronged thee" (TSL p.95), but as time passes, she starts justifying her hatred for Chillingworth on account of his evil deeds.

Hester's Disclosure of the Real Identity of Chillingworth to Dimmesdale

On failing in her attempt to convince Chillingworth, quite hesitatingly, Hester discloses his true identity to Dimmesdale as her husband. The working of *aq'l* or *ego* can be seen from the tremendous dynamism of her personality when, forgetting all her misery, she tries to console Dimmesdale. In order to save him from her former husband's evilness, she advises him, "Thou must dwell no longer with this man," said Hester, slowly and firmly. "Thy heart must be no longer under his evil eye!" (TSL p.237).

Of vital significance is the fact that in her interaction with Dimmesdale, she is more concerned with his psychological condition and inner turmoil than her own. When he asks her, "have you found peace?" instead of answering him, she asks him back, "Hast thou?" (TSL p.231), making him realize that her chief concern is Dimmesdale's pain. Moreover, she becomes so daring and fearless that she even proposes an escape to Dimmesdale. In this regard, Crews (1965) observes that by her "persuasive attempts" (p.312), Dimmesdale agrees to leave New England to start a new life with her. Thus, the realization of the real identity of Chillingworth leaves for him no option, but to flee from Boston.

Hester's Attempted Escape from Boston

Hester's attempt to leave Boston has been interpreted by various critics differently; some have considered it the result of the repressed hidden desires of id, while some others have explored it in the light of Hester's *ego*; but all do agree that she wants to leave Boston to get rid of all the disgrace and contempt behind, which she has been experiencing for the last seven years. Nevertheless,

without exposing Dimmesdale to utter humiliation, she develops her own defense mechanism against Puritan townspeople which represent the working of *aq'l* or *ego* in Hester's psychic life.

Commenting on this, Baym (1970) observes that as she meets Dimmesdale in the forest, "her emotions stifled, she comes to think more and more critically of society" (p.221). The disquieting frustrations compel her to take a certain action. On one hand, she informs Dimmesdale about the nefarious plans of Chillingworth, on the other hand, she proposes an escape from this torturous prison of Boston, which remains the only alternative to dishonor and death for Dimmesdale.

The manifestation of Aq'l/Ego in Seemi

Raja Gidh is the study of the human psyche which portrays Qudsia's tremendous skill of revealing the intricate female psyche with a thought-provoking wit (Akhter, 2000, p.513). The fundamental theme of the novel is the moral downfall of an individual, exposed through Seemi's unsuccessful love and Qayyum's sexual desire. After having spent an isolated hostel life, economically supported by an uncle, she learns the pleasures and pains of love through Aftab and Qayyum. Unfortunately, she could not ever make peace with herself or the world around her. The substantial impact of *aq'l* or *ego* on Seemi's psychic life, makes her choose certain ways to mediate in between the strains of *nafs e ammara* or *id* and the pangs of *nafs e lawwama* or *superego*. McMartin (1995) indicates its role as an instinctive drive which delays gratification until it can be properly fulfilled (p.21). Time and again, the subtle working of Seemi's *aq'l* or *ego* has been revealed. She is internally punished and Qudsia has delineated his mental confusion and suffering to reveal how she is torn apart between her yearning for Aftab's love and incompetence to achieve it. The role of *aq'l* or *ego* is to develop an understanding of the real world by seeking for the opportunities, most suitable to gratify the demands of *nafs e ammara* or *id*, without transgressing the standards of *nafs e lawwama* or *superego*. Since she has been utilizing Qayyum to relieve her pent-up emotions aroused by Aftab's betrayal, so sometimes her conscience tries to persuade her into revealing her guilt, but her *aq'l* or *ego* protects her through the justification of her act. So, the task of *aq'l* or *ego* becomes more difficult, as it plays the role of mediator in the last phase of her life.

Seemi's Supernatural Forces

While creating a story of passion and sexual attraction, Qudsia never deviates from the fact that Seemi holds a strong spiritual bond with Aftab, which bestows certain supernatural powers on her. Being an educated urban girl of moderate intellectual ability, she turns into a philosopher after losing her love as she declares: "Let me tell you one thing Qayyum when someone fails, he indulges so much into self-analysis that he becomes a philosopher" (RG p. 57).

Self-exploration and subjectivity are two sources that lead towards mysticism and spirituality. Khokhar (2000) found an intense tendency towards self-exploration, spirituality, and mysticism in her characters as she provides the apt setting of Lawrence Garden where mystic imagination is easy to be grasped and nourished. Time and again, Seemi's spiritual and mystical power has been revealed. As she informs Qayyum about some insignificant incidents of Aftab's life without being physically present at the occasion; she surprises him with her details as to how he met Aftab at the airport and how Aftab received a cut on his face in the morning while shaving. Qayyum, upon hearing this, calls her a "clairvoyant" (RG p.102).

The conflict in Seemi's personality is due to her deep and irrepensible attachment to Aftab's memories. She has craved love, admiration and understanding from Aftab but she is disillusioned when he does not turn out to be that. She deeply regrets her decision to have come to him. It is obvious that in the early phase, Seemi's quest for love is physical and emotional, but later it develops into a spiritual craving for Aftab.

Seemi's Justifications for her Indifferent Attitude Towards Qayyum

Seemi exploits Qayyum as a medium to sooth her appetite for Aftab, despite the fact that she is filled with the feelings of taking revenge for his betrayal. As she asks Qayyum to inform Aftab that they were indulged in a sexual relationship if he gets the opportunity (RG p.179). Qudsia has quite artistically portrayed Seemi's pangs of conscience, when, time and again, she asks Qayyum that "you were at fault. You developed a relationship with a dead soul. I did not deceive you.... People who love dead souls are vultures..... which hover over Parsees Tower of silence; monks, seeking life from the carcass" (RG pp.185-186). In reality, she fails to soothe either herself or Qayyum, rather remains isolated and dissatisfied by Qayyum's cravings. Her unfathomable anguish and pain, interwoven with her prick of conscience and feelings of regret, are manifested in the following words; "Such an ungrateful person like me, deserves the same fate. I never thanked for your love.... this is the high time for death. Everything vanished after Aftab's departure - every hope, every happiness - in reality, I died on the very day of Aftab's marriage" (RG p.185-186).

Conclusion

The study concludes that both Hawthorne and Qudsia thoroughly deal with the substantial impact of *aq'l* or *ego* on their female

characters' psychic life, which makes them choose certain ways to mediate in between the strains of certain contending forces, providing a balance to the pleasure-seeking demands of *nafs e ammara* or *id* and guilt-stricken conscience of *nafs e lawwama* or *superego*. They demonstrate *aq'l* or *ego*'s use of logical thinking, which intercedes between the deep levels of the conscious mind and the external reality. It also provides a socially acceptable outlet to the unrestrained pleasure of *nafs e ammara* / *id* and the restraint-seeking attempts of *nafs e lawwama* or *superego* by delaying the gratification of instinctive drives until they can be properly fulfilled. *The Scarlet Letter* offers acute insight into Hester's attempts to reconcile the repressed desires, passions and anger, present in the unconscious realm of mind; while Qudsiya's portrayal of Seemi's mind provides a penetrating vision into the tussle rousing in between the contradictory forces. However, both Hester and Seemi succeed in seeking relief through the effective implementation of *aq'l* or *ego*. Besides, both the novelists have achieved great success in delineating the working of *aq'l* / *ego* of their female characters. Although, they are not meant to explicate either Ghazalian or Freudian theory, but contribute widely in the understanding of the human mind.

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