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UGLY DUCKLING TO A SWAN: TRANSFORMATION OF VERONIKA AS PORTRAYED IN
PAULO COELHO'S *VERONIKA DECIDES TO DIE*

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on Veronica, the protagonist of the novel by Paulo Coelho, namely *Veronika Decides to Die* in which she spends a weeks' time in a mental asylum. The study intends to lay its stress on the literary critical outlining of psychoanalytic theory based on the tripartite model of mind devised by Sigmund Freud. The thrust on the interplay of the conscious and the unconscious mind of Veronika to do things that she always wanted to do without caring about the world. Veronika liberates herself from the morality principle and the reality principle that was stamped on her as social taboos.

Keywords: Psychoanalytical, Immorality, Inculcation, Contentment.

Discussion:

Paulo Coelho, a world ambassador to literature, is one of the most understood and celebrated writer of the present times. As the most widely read novelists his works were translated in seventy one languages. His language and style of writing blends with the themes of the novels, allowing her characters, a space, to evolve. The changes the character undergoes, in the course of the novel, *Veronika Decides to Die* traces her childhood experiences and the experience offers an explanation for the change.

Veronika Decides to Die was published in 1998, is a moving story of a character that spends the days and nights at a mental asylum following her attempt to suicide. In the paper Coelho revisits his writing in the light of psychoanalysis by unleashing the female unconscious from a male perspective. The novel spans a week and intends to bear on the literary critical outlining of the psychoanalytical theory of Sigmund Freud. As opposed to the generally conceived notion of moving from the id to the superego the protagonist Veronika moves in the reverse direction. She breaks away the existing norms.

This study identifies the women who share the titular role in the novel and place in a new light where the psychic transformation is observed and assessed by the male counterpart. Coelho projects the self-realization of the main character as the vision of life is attained through suffering, struggle and sanctification. In this she questions the idea of existence and comes to realize that every second is a choice that we all make between living and dying.

Veronika decides to commit suicide as everything in the world is a total chaos and she couldn't do anything about it. Her failed suicide attempt brings her to Villette, a mental asylum were among the other mentally disturbed inmates where she finds a reason of her own to live on. The doctor reveals to her that she is

suffering from an acute heart failure because of the overdose of the pills she took to end her life and is left only with a maximum of seven days' time. This fact created a dual feeling in veronica's mind.

At first she was relieved as she would be successful in her decision to end her life at the end of a week's time. But as days passed by, waiting for her death turned horrible as she started experiencing the colors and hopes of life, love and death which of why she was craving for just one more day to live from the depth of her heart. The time she spent with the inmates especially with Zedka, Mari, Edward and Dr. Igor made her to realize the contentment of her life. Owing to the liberal brother hood Zedka, Edward and Dr. Igor there was a change in her attitude towards life.

She astoundingly discovers the meaning of madness is altogether different from what she thought it to be. The existing social canons about life, death, physique, mind, medicine and madness were inverted and she unflinchingly speaks of her love for Eduard and thereby she boldly torn away her decision which sheds her inhibitions and decides to do things that she always wanted to do without caring about the world.

There are three psychic as explained in the tripartite model of mind by Freud the id, the ego and the superego. The id is the source of all our desires and it seeks to satisfy the impulses for pleasure without regard for ethics or conventions. The instinctual drives of the id are regulated by the rational ego. If the former includes a destructive element that latter interferes and makes the behavioral patterns non destructive. As Guerin said "Ego serves a intermediary between the world within and world without". Freud states the superego as

"The representative of all moral restrictions the advocate of impulse towards perfection, in short it is as much as we have been able to apprehend psychologically of what people call the 'higher' things inhuman life."

(The Ego and the Id,7)

Thus the function and mental processes that are assigned to the id, the ego and the superego are governed by pleasure principle and the morality principle respectively. The dreams of an individual's existence forgo the lawless id and balances on ego by confirming oneself with the laws of the society.

By liberating herself from the morality principle (super ego) and the reality principle (ego) that was stamped upon her as social taboos she felt solace with pleasure principle (id) which adds a better meaning to her life. The superego represses all the untamed passions of the psyche and the inherent pleasure principle. The application of psychoanalytic theory based on the tripartite model of mind devised by Freud is investigated in this study gives a special thrust on the interplay of the conscious and the unconscious mind.

This paper also emphasizes the importance of the partaking role of women in the society in making the right choice. The social canon of equating women with tranquility is reworked by the self realization achieved by the female protagonist who overturns the values and morals of the society of which she is a part. As the novel progresses, Veronika under this study strongly cling on to her impulse of her psyche and claim self realization, the psychological subtleties of which are unfolded through the eyes of a male and her life gets intertwined resulting in parallel mind reading.

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