THE QUEST FOR ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE WORKS OF HERMANN HESSE

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Introduction:

The present research work is an attempt to study the quest for enlightenment beyond opposites with the help of conceptual tools such as shadow, anima, opposites, individuation, and enlightenment which prevails in the texts of Hermann Hesse entitled Demian, Narcissus and Goldmund, and Siddhartha. In these works, Hesse paints the protagonist’s journey into the inner self to attain enlightenment. While exploring the inner journey, his protagonists find conflicts between individual and the society, between good and evil, and between the physical and spiritual elements of life.

Rationale and Significance of the Study:

Hermann Hesse’s criticism of the society through his works convinces a moral and cultural bankruptcy of the society and its materialistic attitude towards life. In his works, we find a new possibility of life through individuality and spirituality. Hesse gives more importance to an individual and his growth. The existing education system does not provide scope for inner growth of the individual. Hesse’s works deal with an individual who pursues a way for meanings in life.

The present study attempts to reveal spiritual conflict. Men are still the same at heart, and though they have managed to change their environment, they have not changed at all psychologically. The genuine spiritual quest which we find in the works of Hermann Hesse can be placed against the spiritual deception of our times.

Hesse’s works encourage new interpretations for subsequent generations and for cross-cultural audiences worldwide. The present study helps many students, teachers, researchers in appreciating these challenging and controversial texts more confidently. It provides new insights to understand the texts and to construct their own analysis. The spiritual quest which has been neglected from literary discussions may appear more familiar to the students.
Aims and Objectives of the Study:
The aims and objectives of the present study are listed below:

- This study attempts to explore the encounter of man with his shadow, anima, and self in the process of individuation through Emil Sinclair, Goldmund, and Siddhartha.
- The present research aims to probe the clash between opposites, for instance, good and evil, the social values and a chaotic world of sensuality, the self and the world.
- The aim of the thesis is to illuminate the significance of unity of opposite worlds in order to experience the wholeness in the quest for enlightenment. Hermann Hesse says that our mind is capable of passing beyond the dividing line. A man gets new insights when he goes beyond opposites of the world.
- One of the most significant objectives of the study is to bring out the inner journey towards Self-realisation. The selected novels reflect spiritual journey as the central theme. They illustrate the necessity of self-awareness through the portrayal of the individual and his continuous quest to ultimate self-acceptance throughout life.

Scope and Limitation of the Study:

The study of the theme of the quest for enlightenment is vast. There is immense scope for the study of the theme of self-realization and the reflection of the spiritual quest in literary works. The thesis explores the quest for enlightenment in the three novels of Hermann Hesse – Demian, Narcissus and Goldmund, and Siddhartha. The selected novels are studied in English translation. The selected concepts of Carl Gustav Jung – Shadow, Anima, Opposites, and Individuation which play an important role on the path of self-realization are applied to Hesse’s selected works.

Spiritual Enlightenment is an abstract concept and does not have a theoretical base. It is defined and perceived differently in various religions. Therefore, the word enlightenment is not used and illustrated as a religious conceptual tool in the thesis. In this research work, the concept of enlightenment is used in a very limited sense to understand the texts of Hermann Hesse. Here the concept of enlightenment signifies the experience of wholeness through a union between opposites. The importance of
Hesse’s third stage of humanization known as the Third Kingdom is considered as Hessean way of enlightenment.

**Hypothesis:**

The present research work is based on the assumption that experience is the best way to approach an understanding of ‘reality’ and to attain enlightenment. The unity of opposites is important to attain enlightenment in life.

**Survey of the Work Done and Need for Further Research:**

A survey of the critical works available on Hermann Hesse shows that there are a few related research works. J. Santhosh Priyaa’s research work *Journey to Self-Realization in the Select Novels of Hermann Hesse* studies the journey of Hesse’s protagonists through various paths in order to attain Self-realization. Mathew V. Spano’s dissertation *Hermann Hesse’s Use of German Romanticism and Indian Spirituality in the Resolution of His Mid-Life Crisis: A Jungian Approach to Demian, Siddhartha, and Steppenwolf* (2002) deals with Hermann Hesse’s use of German Romantic and Classical Indian literature to resolve the mid-life crisis occurred in Hesse’s life during the years 1916 to 1927. Noted and renowned critics of Hermann Hesse have dealt with the theme of enlightenment and other aspects of Hesse’s works with varying degree of emphasis. A survey of the critical work available on Hermann Hesse brings to light spiritual, philosophical, psychological, religious, mysterious and symbolic aspects.

The survey denotes that even though the copious research is done on the works of Hermann Hesse, the specific perspectives employed in the present research through the amalgamation of Jungian and Hesse’s humanization viewpoint of the theme of the quest for enlightenment have not been adequately investigated.

**Methodology and Theories Used:**

The thesis presents the context of theoretical background and its study that helps to critically analyse and interpret the theme of the quest for enlightenment beyond opposites based on the amalgamation of Carl Jung’s individuation process and Hesse’s triadic rhythm of humanization in Hesse’s selected works. For this purpose, the selected novels have been analysed mainly from the thematic point of view.
Organization of Chapters:

The thesis is divided into five chapters as follows:

The first chapter is an introduction and theoretical framework of the research work. It provides the general rationale of the study of the theme of the quest for enlightenment in the selected works of Hermann Hesse. The chapter presents the aims and objectives of the study. It is followed by an overview of the scope and limitations of the study. It presents the hypothesis of the study which is followed by a survey of critical studies on the several aspects of Hermann Hesse’s works to understand the scope of, and need for, research in this area.

The chapter provides the theoretical background of the study. It includes relevant information about the deep relationship between Hermann Hesse and Carl Jung. It offers an elaboration of Jung’s analytical theory through concepts like Shadow, Anima, Opposites, and Individuation. It presents Hesse’s experience and views on the concept of opposites. This is followed by information regarding Hesse’s complex attitude to religions which lead to the discussion of Hesssean enlightenment in the form of Hesse’s triadic rhythm of humanization based on his knowledge of religion and philosophy. At the end, it offers a preview on the organization of chapters and method of study.

The second chapter explores the theme of the quest for enlightenment in Hesse’s novel Demian. It begins with the relevant biographical information of Hermann Hesse until the publication of Demian. The theme of the search for enlightenment is presented critically by applying Carl Jung’s selected concepts – Shadow, Anima, Opposites, and Individuation. The protagonist of the novel shows the courage to confront the contents of his unconscious. In this adventure, he tries to integrate split-off aspects of the psyche in the form of false persona, shadow, and anima which strengthen his ego and paves the path to achieve a wholeness of personality. Kromer is not an independent character in the Jungian scheme. He is a shadow of Sinclair. It is an aspect of Sinclair’s personality that has to be internalised. The experiences of the childhood of Sinclair are the contents of his personal unconscious. He goes beyond the childhood world of ‘light world’ and cling to dark aspects of the other world. Finally, on the way to self-actualization, he attains the stage of individuation with the appearance of Frau Eva; the Great Mother. The chapter
also examines the text in the light of Hesseean enlightenment based on Hesse’s philosophy of three stages of humanization. In *Demian*, the preliminary emancipation is focused. Sinclair finds difficulty in finding his path. Although Sinclair has achieved Jungian individuation completely, he remains on the second stage in Hesse’s triadic rhythm of humanization.

**The third chapter** deals with the theme of the quest for enlightenment which requires unity in opposites as observed in Hesse’s *Narcissus and Goldmund*. It is a critical study of Goldmund’s quest for self-realization. It presents a critical analysis of Goldmund’s inner journey to self in terms of Jung’s selected concepts. Goldmund deserts life of the monastery and embarks on a journey into nature. After performing adventures in worldly life, he comes back to the monastery. The protagonist realises the existence of dichotomy and its union in the art which assists him to progress to his true self. Goldmund attains individuation when he sees an image of the Universal Mother for the last time. The analysis of Goldmund’s inner journey towards self-realization in the light of Hesseean enlightenment shows that Goldmund falls short to achieve the Third Kingdom. His journey offers him glimpses of the third stage but he could not make it up and remains on the second stage of humanization by accepting death at the end. Goldmund’s first stage of innocence disappears when he becomes aware of the duality of spirit and nature. This awareness leads him to the second stage of humanization where he experiences a clash between dichotomies of life. At this stage, his faith in his mother image helps him to overcome the despair of his life. This faith leads him to the Third Kingdom of humanization. Here he gets a vision of the Great Mother but his inability to paint her and acceptance of death in order to merge into the Universal Mother brings him back to the second stage of humanization. Therefore, unlike Siddhartha, Goldmund seems an incomplete person on his journey though he attains Jungian individuation.

**The fourth chapter** discusses the quest for enlightenment as observed in Hesse’s well-known book *Siddhartha*. It is a critical study of Siddhartha’s thirst for the knowledge. In the beginning of the chapter, a brief introduction is given which includes comments on religious influence on *Siddhartha*. It is followed by a critical analysis of Siddhartha’s spiritual journey beyond opposites in the light of the Jungian process of individuation. In order to find his own way, Siddhartha renounces the existing ways and gurus and their philosophies and thoughts. While progressing
towards self-realization, Siddhartha understands that like a road of asceticism, a road of sense indulgence is a dead end. His pursuit of worldly pleasure turns into despair and destruction of innocent senses. It ends in suicidal disgust. In the course of time, he loses his inner voice which is symbolised by the dead songbird of Kamala. However, this despair leads him to reawaken in life. Siddhartha experiences both extremes of life – self-denial and self-gratification. He experiences both roads full-heartedly to their dead ends which prepare him for the greater synthesis of them. His transformation from the sensuous man of worldly life to saintly life as a ferryman demonstrates a spiral progression towards self-realization. Siddhartha’s innocence of the first stage has not paid attention adequately. Instead, the conflict of the second stage and resultant despair has been portrayed in detail. However, his strong faith in his quest leads him towards the Third Kingdom. At the end of the novel, Siddhartha achieves Individuation in Jungian terms and the Third Kingdom in Hesse’s triadic rhythm of humanization. Thus, Siddhartha experiences the serenity of an enlightened soul.

The fifth chapter presents conclusions based on the examination of the theme of the quest for enlightenment that prevails in the three texts. The major findings and conclusions are as follows:

1) In the selected novels, Hesse clearly postulates his beliefs in a realm that ensures the resolution of the conflict of polar opposites.

2) Hesse’s central characters Sinclair, Goldmund, and Siddhartha of the selected novels denote the inner growth on the way of individuation in their psyche and character as well. This shows that Hesse’s selected novels bear the imprints of Jung’s process of individuation which demands integration of man’s shadow, anima and union in opposites in order to be a self-realized soul.

3) Hesse was aware of the recursive process of individuation. The person may encounter with the shadow, the anima/animus, or even the archetypal self, but could not get a sense of completion of his journey.

4) Through Sinclair, Hesse sets an example of the integration of shadow. And through Goldmund, the influence of the anima has been explored in order to progress towards the goal of self-realization. The lives of Sinclair and Goldmund depict the tasks of the youth that are necessary or a prerequisite for
the strengthening of the consciousness. In *Siddhartha*, we find the completion of the journey of the process of individuation.

5) Hesse makes use of the psychological tools to communicate his philosophy of the quest for enlightenment beyond opposites. In Hesse’s selected novels, the reconciliation of opposites is the central theme that ties his works to his philosophy of enlightenment. In his works, Hesse proposes some symbols to express a resolution of opposites, for instance, the god Abraxas in *Demian*, Art in *Narcissus and Goldmund*, and River in *Siddhartha*. The dream and archetypes are another important tools used to probe the contents of the unconscious of Hesse’s protagonists in order to bring out psychological development in them.

6) Hermann Hesse’s philosophy of human development through three stages mirrors in his protagonists’ quest for enlightenment. We can observe that in Hesse’s works such as *Demian*, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, and *Siddhartha*, all three stages of human development are portrayed. However, the first stage of innocence is not depicted for its sake but to show the turmoil that follows. Instead, the conflict of the second stage and resultant despair has been portrayed in detail.

7) The third stage is introduced in all three novels but only in *Siddhartha* the level of simultaneity and totality actually maintained at the end. In *Demian* and *Narcissus and Goldmund*, only the glimpses of the third stage of the individual are shown. Therefore, along with Carl Jung’s triadic rhythm in the form of the shadow, anima, and individuation, the selected novels of Hermann Hesse follow the triadic rhythm of humanization.

8) The extreme individualism and ethical service to the community lead to Self-realization and reunification with the whole. In this regard, Hesse has an opinion that self-knowledge is essential as it brings the individual back into the community on the third level of humanization. Among Hesse’s characters, the old Siddhartha attains the third stage through his ideal service as a ferryman. However, Sinclair and Goldmund remain on the second level of humanization where their interest is in conflict and development.
The chapter also presents accomplishment of the objectives which is followed by validation of the hypothesis. MLA Handbook for writers of Research Papers 7th edition has been followed for the methodological outline.

**Pedagogical Implications:**

The existing education system focuses on the growth of people at the group level. However, it should provide scope for the inner growth of the individual. The present study contributes to bring awareness about the importance of an individual and his psycho-spiritual growth in learning process. The spiritual quest which is neglected from literary discussions can be included in the curriculum in order to produce psychologically progressed, ethically responsible and spiritually sensible personalities. Carl Jung’s theory of the process of individuation forms the core of the present study. It can be extended and applied to other genres of literature and different works of literature.

**Scope for further Research:**

Many scholars have focused on the influence of oriental religions and philosophies on the works of Hermann Hesse but the element of compassion *(Karuna)* in the connection with Buddhism and its impact on the works of Hermann Hesse have not been explored thoroughly. This perspective towards enlightenment of Hesse’s protagonists, especially, Siddhartha opens a new dimension for those who want to study reflection of spirituality in the literature of Hermann Hesse.