Tribhuvan University

The Road Less Heroic: Subverting the Monomyth in Samrat Upadhyay's *The City Son*

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, T.U.

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts in English

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June 2024

Letter of Approval

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Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone for supporting me throughout the journey of this thesis.

First and foremost, I am profoundly grateful to my thesis supervisor, Mr. Keshab Sigdel, for his invaluable guidance, patience, and encouragement. His expertise and insightful feedback have been instrumental in shaping my research and helping me overcome various obstacles along the way.

I would like to express my gratitude towards the external examiner, Dr. Komal Phuyal, for his support, suggestions, and untiring guidance in the research.

I would also like to express my thankfulness to the Head of the English Department, Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapkota, for allowing me to precede my research on the respective text and subject matter. I express my gratitude towards other lecturers and colleagues who motivated me while working on this paper.

I owe my most profound appreciation to my family, especially my mom, whose unwavering support and love have been my greatest source of strength. Her belief in me kept me going even during the most challenging times.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge every small or big mistake I committed during this journey. They have been integral to my personal and academic growth.

To everyone who has been part of this journey, thank you.

June 2024 Asmita Dhital

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Abstract

This research analyses how the characters in Samrat Upadhyay's The City Son *subvert the traditional heroic journey or the monomyth. This study shows how the novel challenges the traditional notion of heroic quest and uses the anti-heroic traits as a frame to explore and critique the societal, cultural, and individual constructs of heroism. The concept of protagonist and antagonist is blurred in the novel. Almost all the characters move on the trail of anti-heroism guided by their psycho-sexual complexities. The study employs Campbell's concept of monomyth, Freud's concept of the individual unconscious, and Jung's notion of the collective unconscious to interrogate the characters' personalities. Through this demonstration, the research involves the character's evaluation of actions motivated by personal desires and psychological conflicts rather than objective unconscious motivations. The protagonists in Upadhyay's novel act as dictated by their unconscious, and their kind of heroism is not aimed towards the benefit of the public good, thus becoming antiheroes. This research thus delves into the depth of the ever-changing evolutionary nature of heroism and its applicability in contemporary cultural and psychological contexts.*

Keywords: antihero, monomyth, archetypes, hero's journey, contemporary literature, psychoanalysis, and the collective unconscious.

Son

"Two roads diverged in a wood and I———

I took the one less travelled by,

And that has made all the difference."

-Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken"

Introduction

The above quotation is an excerpt from the renowned poem “The Road Less Travelled” by Robert Frost. In his depiction, Frost narrates his protagonist’s dilemma at the divergences in the yellow wood (the precise moment of significant change), where the protagonist chooses the one less travelled by, thus representing one’s life choices. This ultimate decision to deviate from the mainstream towards something more adventurous and uncertain reflects the protagonist's heroic act. However, this connotation doesn't always rely on the same confirmations. Like Frost's protagonist, the protagonist in *The City Son* by Samrat Upadhyay took the road less traveled, thus depicting the mainstream monomyth while constantly subverting it. Nevertheless, this makes a tremendous difference.

This research paper explores how the narrative technique in Samrat Upadhyay’s novel *The City Son* (2014) deviates from the traditional monomyth, providing a new framework in contemporary Nepali literature. This study compares the traditional notion of the hero as conceptualized by Joseph Campbell. Then, it analyzes the characters in Upadhyay's novel and how they do not fit into the parameters of traditional heroes. The characters in this novel also go through a series of struggles, but their socio-psychological drives constrain their struggles. The principal characters– Didi, Tarun, and Masterji are characterized by absurdity, ambiguity, inconsistency, and fragmented personalities precisely departed from the archetypes (the traditional heroic characters), resulting in the exploration of The Road Less Heroic.

The city-dwelling tutor, Masterji, tempted by sexual desires, develops a relationship with his tutee, Apsara, with whom he has a son named Tarun. He neither gives Apsara full authority over marriage nor does he love his wedded wife,

Sulochana. Sulochana, who was all awaiting with chastity and love for her husband, finds the news of her husband's infidelity intolerable. Sulochana walks down the same aisle as her husband towards the city. The rage is so high that she chooses none other than her half-son Tarun to punish her husband's dishonesty. Tarun, victimized both by his infidel father and abused by his scorned stepmother, could have changed his fate and traveled the path of a heroic journey. But like Didi and Masterji, he is bound to adhere to the anti-heroic traits and pathways.

Joseph Campbell has described universal patterns of heroic quest: departure, initiation, and return, where Heroes and heroes go through several obstacles, which they finally conquer and return with the treasure of enlightenment, which is not just beneficial to the individual but the community as a whole. Meanwhile, deviations of the protagonist or any other significant characters from the very monomyth alter, invert, and subvert the monomyth, hence resulting in anti-heroic formulations. The subversion of the monomyth is popularized in contemporary literature, where the characters are often flawed by moral ambiguity and psychic absurdity and where overall identity and quest are questioned. The characters in Upadhyay's *The City Son* are no exception.

Written precisely in the backdrop of Nepali cultural and societal context, Upadhyay portrays his characters as morally flawed, culturally exploited, and psychically absurd and ambiguous. He tries to highlight darker human traits, particularly in contemporary times. Upadhyay's focus on the city, precisely Kathmandu and its vicinities, highlights the secrets big cities hide under the arms of skyscraping buildings through the characters and their psycho-sexual flaws they hide under different social masks. Instead of exploring oneself through nuanced heroic quests along with trials, victories, transformations, and enlightenment, the characters

in the novel are in a maze of personal desires, moral ambiguity, psychic absurdity, dilemmas, and social expectations. Exploring the maze of the dark and confusion in each character, Upadhyay questions the essence of heroism and redemption, thus presenting the novel as a text examining the subversion of monomyth in contemporary times and settings.

This paper juxtaposes the Campbellian's universal hero's quest with that of an individual and personal journey of many characters- Didi, Tarun, and Masterji, and thus provides the framework to redefine the traits of monomyth. It examines the implications of subversion of monomyth within the characters of *The City Son.*

This research paper tries to answer some pertinent questions: What are the implications of using an antihero as a protagonist of the novel? How do the characters in the novel invert, divert, and subvert the traditional notion of monomyth or the hero's journey? What social and psychological conflicts or traumas are explored through the antiheroes' journey, and how does it reflect the contribution in a broader social and cultural context?

This study uses the idea of the hero from the work of Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* to juxtapose how the characters in the novel do not fulfill these preconditions as antiheroes. Sigmund Freud's ideas of id, ego, and superego provide a nuanced understanding of interpreting a character's psychological complexities. Carl Jung's concept of collective unconsciousness and archetype also informs the discussion of the text. Freud's concept of death drive from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* provides an insight into self-destruction that complicates the ability of the protagonist, deuteragonist, and tritagonist to adhere to the monomyth. This study is a critical interpretation of the novel based on qualitative method.

Literature Review

Samrat Upadhyay highlights the subject of restrictions and taboos in his novel. The selection of tabooed subject matters makes his work controversial, as those shaded areas represent the darker side of the human mind. This novel deals with infidelity, incest, and different social and economic dimensions connected to relationships.

Commenting on the novel, Lesley Mason writes, “Nepal isn’t some ancient Shangri-la, but a 21st Century city with the entire hide bound moralizing and secret sin of the rest of the planet, *The City Son* is undeniably effective”. She hints at the sexual deviations as a part of urbanization and modernization. Further commenting on Didi’s character, she writes,

> It’s hard to see the motivations that lurk beneath Didi's character. Perhaps those early descriptions are meant to signal that withhold hate her, that everything that follows is designed to be vicious revenge upon all those who have wronged her. But equally, she has been wronged, and while the form of her domination of her husband's son cannot be remotely sanctioned, it could be underlain by her own desperate need for love and physical connection that she has been denied. (Mason)

Didi was the victim of infidelity by her husband. In an attempt to suppress this rage, she becomes a suppressor herself. Nevertheless, she always had the choice about what to do. Instead of taking revenge for her husband's dishonesty, she revenges an innocent boy, Tarun.

Athira views the novel from the perspective of degrading morality. She writes, “At the core, *The City Son* deals with a taboo subject. Something very disgraceful and disgusting; something that destroys many people in the process" (Athira). Upadhyay's

morally exploited and culturally challenged narratives represent contemporary issues amidst individual challenges in the modern world.

Lesley Mason views that the woman that Upadhyay has chosen as a heroine “will transpire his anti-heroine." Didi, a protagonist of the novel, is presented as a scorned mother whose primitive motifs are influenced by her rage of revenge and desire to punish the infidelity, which makes her an(anti)hero fighting for her (not so) righteous deeds.

Tricia Springstubb views Didi’s absurd incest relationship with her stepson as what “arrows to the city to reclaim what is hers." Even the incest relationship of the woman is used as an agency to punish the wrong of the male. She adds, “As in most of his work, Upadhyay explores the tensions between old and new, including arranged marriage, the caste system, the role of women, and the prohibition against sex before marriage” (Springstubb). The time witnessed constant tension between the old and the new, where people were not able to completely abandon the old or fully accept the new.

Oindrila Mukherjee views the superficial scandalous relationships in Upadhyay’s novel as often foreshadowed by the deeper complexities of individual characters and their deviation from normalcy. She states, “As ever, Upadhyay uses sex and so-called transgressive relationships (those between people of different classes or groups, relationships that defy convention), in order to reflect on the established, often intricate social order” (Mukherjee).

G. B. Thapa, in his graduate thesis, analyzes the behavior of significant characters in Upadhyay's novel. He writes, “The novel shows how a child is groomed into a sexual relationship, easily mistaking love for sex” (Thapa 33). He shows how

the novel exposes the theme of identity crisis in the victims of abuse and maltreatment.

On a different note, Bimal Kishore Shrivastava views the characters as a victim of psychological problems. He writes, “The central character of Upadhyay’s novel, *The City Son*, Didi, and her stepson seem to have been influenced by adult neurosis and infantile neurosis in the novel” (Shrivastava 770). He claims the complexity of Didi’s personality towards Tarun is a residue of the Phaedra Complex— a complex psychological phenomenon where the stepmother develops sexual feelings towards her stepson.

The book has yet to attract more academic responses. Most book reviewers and researchers have tried to study the novel psychologically. They have hinted at the Eros and Thanatos that shape human behaviors. But none of them attempt to see the inherent desire of quest in the characters. In each of the characters, there is a sense of identity crisis and a desire for its quest. However, the protagonists get lost in the maze of sexual desires and fail to go through the struggles of an archetypal hero. So, she gets blurred in her representation as a hero.

The City Son doesn't have a clearly presented hero or villain as in traditional literary works. This study shows how the anti-heroic characters lack vision, bravery, morality, empathy, kindliness, and will to sacrifice for the communal good, though they continue to struggle and move ahead.

Analysis

The City Son represents social and economic shifts influenced by the New World. The novel was written in 2014 when Nepali society was struggling to make a social and political transition in the post-civil war context.

People from different ethnic groups, women, queers, and other minorities raised their voices to ensure their dignity in the new Republican Constitution of Nepal. Technological advancement was on the rise. Access to the internet and global culture heavily influenced people's lives. A decade-long civil war caused a massive migration of people to urban areas and cities. This shift, however, resulted in a change in family dynamics, altering family structures, social values, and attitudes in people and their way of economic practices.

Masterji, an educated tutor from the village, goes to the city (Kathmandu) for better opportunities. There, he marries a girl, Apsara, his tutee, and becomes the father of a son named Tarun, while he almost abandons his first wife back in the village. The novel is a testimony to how old values are abandoned and new values are not properly established. The social chaos is reflected in the characters' personal dilemmas.

Campbell's typical hero's journey undergoes three phases—departure, initiation, and return. The departure is the call for adventure that ventures the hero out of his comfort zone and into the unknown world. The initiation includes facing challenges, trials, and traits in the journey and getting the ultimate boon. The return includes returning with the boon/ enlightenment one gets to the ordinary world. Joseph Campbell defines the hero in the following way: “A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man” (28). However, the protagonists in Upadhyay's novel are somewhat deviated. Her quests are likely to be fulfilled as heroic, but the result, in contrast, is an inversion.

This inversion of heroic quests led our protagonist to adhere to an anti-heroic quest. Antiheroes are morally flawed, socially absurd, mentally unstable characters in

contemporary literature. They often are the central character who lacks conventional heroic traits of idealism, morality, courage, and bravery. They somehow resemble the qualities of villains. However, their characters are even, in some cases, compelling and sympathetic to the audience. The antiheroes challenge traditional notions of heroism by providing realistic human characteristics reflecting the complexities and contradictions of real life. The antiheroes are morally exploited characters guided by their ambiguous psyche and disrupted morality.

At the very beginning of the novel, we see the protagonist's (Didi) call for adventure, similar to a Campbellian Hero's call. “A stranger comes to the village and delivers the news” (Upadhyay 3). This forces Didi to take the adventurous journey to step out of her cocoon to bring something good for herself and her sons." The first stage of the mythological journey———which we have designated the "call to adventure"——— signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown” (Campbell 53). But from the very start of the novel, something noble isn’t supposed to happen. “A sickly feeling has started in Didi’s stomach. She doesn’t want to hear this woman” (Upadhyay 4). The protagonist doesn’t want to hear the news; she tries to ignore this strange woman. Even before the journey starts, she has a feeling that something might not be as right:

> What's going to happen to my boys? She reflects. But it's too late, and she knows it. She's not at the start of this momentum; she's already in the middle. The boys are going to suffer. Other people, unknown faces she hasn't yet met, are going to suffer- people who are now suddenly connected to her.
> (Upadhyay 5)

The call to an adventure and then refusal of the call is similar to that of the Campbellian Hero's quest. “Often in actual life, and not frequently in the myths and popular tales, we encounter the dull case of the call unanswered; for it is always possible to turn the ear to other interests”(Campbell 54). The challenge makes a hero of all kinds move forward to his/her uncomfortable journey to find the path of enlightenment. Didi is silent, passive, and innocent in the beginning. Raising kids, looking after household chores, and family affairs are all she has known, and she is challenged by this unpredictable news to never be the same woman anymore.

The Heroes of the past used to get motivated by their objective persuasions; the hero goes out on a journey, achieves enlightenment, and then returns home, bringing a boon that is beneficial to him and his community as a whole. This type of archetypal journey is even explained by Carl Jung in his work *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious.* “The collective unconscious is a part of the psyche which can be negatively distinguished from a personal unconscious by the fact that it does not, like the latter, owe its existence to personal experience and consequently is not a personal acquisition”(Jung 42). As he adds, “Whereas the personal unconscious consists for the most part of *complexes,* the content of the collective unconscious is made up essentially of *archetypes”*(Jung 42). Traditional Heroes deal with the connotations of Hero archetypes, which are commonly patterned all around the globe in different cultures and mythologies under the categorization of the ordinary mask.

At the novel's beginning, we learn the name of Didi, Sulochana, through the visitor woman who serves as a mentor to call her for an adventurous journey and then by Masterji in his letter. “‘Is anybody home?’ the woman cries out again. Didi goes to the window. ‘Are you the woman named Sulochana?’”(Upadhyay 3). The character- is later replaced or subverted by 'Didi.' The narrator, the author, and all the characters

refer to the name- Didi; even her sons call her Didi. "Sometimes I feel like my heart is going to break at the thought of not being able to come home again this year. My heart is going to shatter into pieces –that's what I feel. But this separation is not for long, Sulochana" (Upadhyay 4). Except for these two references, nowhere in the novel is she mentioned by name by anyone else. As we know, names are central to an individual's identity and recognition. The replacement of 'Didi' over 'Sulochana' is the result of identity flux, where her identity and self-hood changed over time and context.

Masterji, like Didi, was not recognized by his proper name. His original name is never revealed in the novel. In *Psychopathology of Everyday Life,* Sigmund Freud views forgetting the original name and substituting it with another is rather a result of repression, where the mind blocks out certain thoughts, beliefs, memories, uncomfortable or distressing desires, or anything uncomfortably repressed related to indirect thoughts or feelings that mostly evokes negative emotions, thoughts, and feelings in one's psyche and mind (10).

In his letter, Masterji once writes, "How patient you have been with me in this absence, this *peeda* of our long separation" (Upadhyay 5). The *speed* (pain) that Masterji talks about is rather a subjective one than the objective pain of the Campbellian heroes. The pain that the Campbellian hero comes across is often aligned with his community and moral constraints. But in The *City's Son*, the characters' pain is subjective. "Their separation has not caused so much physical *peeda* as Masterji mentioned in his letter. The use of the word *peeda* may indicate the unfulfilled internal sexual desire that is depicted in the mind of both spouses. It is silently disturbing to both Masterji and Didi at the same time. Only she could not express it"

(Thapa 37). The pain both the Didi and Masterji face is the pain of sexual repression- the personal unconscious.

If the *speed* had aligned with the Campbellian Hero's journey, it would have been the "Road of Trails" or the “Ordeal." Elaborating this notion, Campbell states:

> Once having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trails. This is a favorite phase of the myth adventure. It has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals. (89)

However, the test is unlike traditional heroes, who fight with dragons or demons or are challenged by external forces. Rather, the ordeal is something internal, with their psyche and its repression.

The visitor woman who delivered the news to Sulochana delivers it in a way that produces jealousy and anger. “The boy was sucking an ice cream. His beauty made my heart ache, Sulochanaji” (Upadhyay 8). Everything from the mentor’s inspiration to the protagonist's deviation supports an adventurous journey to be taken but in a subverted fashion. Didi shows no trace of anger, excitement, or jealousy when she hears the news of her husband's infidelity. Her reaction is not normal. Didi's reaction was beyond normal, wanting to see the very soon-known stepson. "I can’t stop thinking about that beautiful boy” (Upadhyay 13). Didi used to recall the precise desire to see the boy with her husband's blood living in the city repeatedly.

Didi had been the victim of body shaming/ beauty shaming in her younger days prior to her marriage with Masterji. This body shaming in her has a deep-rooted negative perspective towards herself and the world around her, which is not precisely expressed but instead is repressed deeper down the psyche. Even her neighbor termed

her "*RamriChaina"* (not beautiful). The shopkeeper women narrated her appearance to Masterji in this way:

> She was going to fetch water. She was round, her face like a soccer ball. His heart dropped in disappointment. When she came closer, he saw her face. It was *bhadda*, flat and dark and uninteresting. Her cheeks were puffed up as though cotton had been stuffed inside. She had a dark spot on her face. (Upadhyay 17)

Didi is a victim of an emotional trauma that was suppressed in her psyche and projected into her husband's infidelity. She probably thinks that Masterji's dishonesty is due to Apsara's beauty. She seeks an opportunity to get revenge on that beauty that snatched away her love by making an innocent boy the pawn.

Didi seems absolutely fine at the conscious level, whereas something is not right at the unconscious level. Freud views that when the trauma is repressed, the individual "does not know what it is or how to describe it" (*The Ego and The Id* 6). This applies not just to a therapeutic patient but to every human mind. When light is shed on such repression and emotional conflicts, people at their best try to distract themselves from that pleasurable experience or thought, which makes the healing even more difficult. Rather, they delve into something seemingly pleasurable.

> She was ferocious in bed during those times when the Masterji visited. She was like a tigress who took immediate control. She clawed and scratched and was inexhaustible. When Masterji got tired, she rode him, with abandon, uncaring of the noise the rocking, the crunching, the moans, and the whimpers. (Upadhyay 19)

Didi's repression of her emotions, bringing them out time and again in either the form of an eating disorder or being tigress in bed and uncaring of the people, is an indication of her mental absurdity from the very beginning.

Didi even lacks conventional moral Heroic traits from the very beginning. During her father-in-law's funeral, she couldn't stop having sex, which is a subject taboo in Nepalese society. "Even when he returned for the last rites for his father, she didn't leave him alone at night. It was not the proper thing to do ———the grieving period was supposed to be pure and uncontaminated, and he felt guilty when he returned to the city" (Upadhyay 20). Didi seems to possess asocial traits even prior to her adventurous journey.

Didi arrives at Bangemudha, Kathmandu, with her two sons after she leaves her comfort zone—the village. This stage for Didi is what Campbell calls the crossing of the first threshold. The first challenge she faced was Masterji himself, the herald for Didi's call. Nevertheless, his infidelity serves as the herald for Didi, but his behavior of negligence and ignorance further serves as a catalyst for her to take the journey to adversity.

Masterji tries to explain to her why she can't stay there. "My students will be arriving here shortly" (Upadhyay 21). Didi, in contrast, defends their arrival, "We came a long way on the bus." Again, Masterji complained about not having enough food in the room, "'There's not even food in the house to eat"' (Upadhyay 22). Didi again defends her stay, "'Food is here'"(Upadhyay 22). Didi is in the role of a victim, whereas her husband—guilty of infidelity and second marriage shows no trace of shame or guilt. Instead, he wants his first family to return or at least not to disturb his way of life. The ignorance of Masterji makes her determined to take damaging revenge.

Didi could have flipped out her way, punishing Masterji for his deeds, considering divorce for herself, and then bringing out some common resolution for both families that could sustain themselves without the aid of man, but unfortunately, this could not happen. “Didi doesn’t eat, just watches. Her eyes are especially reserved for Tarun on whom she bestows small, encouraging smiles” (Upadhyay 23). She already had her plans over her head. Thus, everything changed ever since Didi arrived.

Didi in the city had been continuously crossing her thresholds, coming closer and closer to her destiny. Within a very short duration of time, she came to become a like figure in the family. Masterji is already scared of her, while Apsara starts feeling like an outsider. Everything in the family affairs is due to Didi's alignment and associations.

> Despite his education and name, the Masterji crumples and is cowed by Didi's arrival. Every morning, Apsara rouses herself from her bed, ready to battle the day, perhaps to confront her husband or to stand up to Didi and tell her that the Masterji is also her husband, married legitimately in a temple. But her resolve is short-lived. Once she has to face Didi with her buffalo-like presence and her large, staring eyes, Apsara weakens. Didi has taken over the kitchen. (Upadhyay 25)

Didi’s new status in the family almost resembles the accomplishment of the journey.

Meanwhile, Didi’s character grows dominating day by day. Everything she dreams, desires, and thinks is coming in favor of her- the environment, the situation, the people around her. Campbell explains this situation: "Whether dream or myth, in the adventures, there is an atmosphere of irresistible fascination about the figure that appears suddenly as a guide, marking a new period, a new stage, in the

biography"(51). Unlike traditional heroes, her guide is not a mysterious figure, sage, or old woman with precise wisdom but an ordinary, morally absurd, and psychologically ambiguous character like herself.

Everything starts befalling under her control. Even her prey, Tarun, has started falling into the trap. "The person Tarun is beginning to feel the most connected to in Bangemudha is Didi" (Upadhyay 44). For Didi, the road of trials formerly includes her assimilation into a new family dynamic, where she and her two sons are re-established in Masterji's life.

Gaining acceptance and resonance from her stepson, Tarun was still challenging. Further, playing a new maternal role and hence gaining authority over Tarun by substituting Apsara is the most challenging thing Didi has ever faced. The complex family dynamics make this even more challenging when Apsara and Tarun leave Bangemudha and start living in Kupondole. She then has to face a number of trials and ordeals to gain Tarun and walk along her way to the ugly road of complex family dynamics in her initiation stage.

Though morally flawed, Didi is seen as a character with strong determination and clarity of her intentions. This part of her is more vividly understood once we delve into the animus part of her. According to Jung, Animus is basically the masculine aspect within a woman's psyche, which is a derivative of the men she encounters in her life. The animus part of the woman is responsible for how she views, interacts, and behaves with male members around her and also portrays the masculine aspects of her personality such as rationality, assertiveness, and critical thinking (Jung 70-71).

Didi becoming Didi is undoubtedly the result of the men she encounters, including her father, brother, and husband. Her dominance and assertiveness are over

Tarun and everyone around her, which is the unconscious upthrust of her animus. She has this part of him (Masterji) inside her, and with time and context, it delves back to reality. She had been abused, and then she turned out to be an abuser.

Tarun's attachment or attraction towards Didi makes her mission easy. "On the way back home in Mahesh Uncle's car, as they pass the Ratna park area, Tarun glances toward the direction of Bangemudha. He thinks of Didi's *malpua*, and suddenly his mouth waters"(Upadhyay 55). While Didi is still on her trials and traits to gain Tarun's full ownership and authority over his life- mind, body, and soul, Tarun is on his quest.

Didi's sudden arrival at Bangemudha, their distance with Masterji leading Apsara to abandon him, is all Tarun's call for adventure. But Tarun's call couldn't be as aesthetic as it could have been. Whenever Tarun visits Bangemudha on Saturday afternoon, Didi leaves no trace of influencing him. She showers him with all her love, "'My beautiful son,' 'Look how beautiful our Tarun is.' Didi's love is often passionate, which can also be seen in her actions and words. Didi's fingers caress Tarun's face, his chin. 'I think he's the most beautiful boy in the whole world,' She says, her gaze fixed on him" (Upadhyay 45). Didi's behaviors are likely to be part of her conscious will but more likely to be that of an unconscious, the repressed emotions that are not just lustrous but something beyond.

Didi's son Amit was stunned by the complexities of her mother's odd behavior. The rage for Didi loving Tarun more than himself and Tarun getting all the love and care that was his creates repression and frustration in Amit. Later on, this comes out as harassment through words and actions against Tarun in various ways, "But Amit's grudge against Tarun and Didi is growing" (Upadhyay 47). He beats, slaps, and harasses Tarun in all possible ways, and whenever Didi comes to save him,

his rage increases even more. “Ta *machickney,* you think you can come here and do whatever you want?”(Upadhyay 79). He scolds Tarun in rage and jealousy. While scolding his voice soften in a whisper he says, “She’s sucking your *lando,* isn’t she, my mother?”(Upadhyay 79). Amit's use of word choice and action is not even the portrayal of his conscious choice. He was deprived of his mother's love, primarily during his adolescence after they came to the city and Tarun came into their life. Amit, unaware of Didi's intention, only developed rage against them. This repressed rage and jealousy delves down through the Oedipus complex—the subtle desire of the male child to kill his father and sleep with his mother, here instead of his father, that jealousy was with Tarun.

Amit's unconscious of repressed rage, jealousy, and hatred, which comes across as a competitor of Tarun, results from his developmental psyche of the Oedipus complex. This complex is even found in Tarun, who is shifted from the love and support of his own mother towards Didi.

Tarun is being distanced from his mother, Apsara, both emotionally and physically. As Apsara starts insane, Tarun turns towards Didi for his unfulfilled motherly love. Once in Kupondole, Apsara didn't return from work, and Tarun went through all the turbulence. His thought turns toward recalling Didi for help, “Tarun cries out for Didi, silently, and the rusting stops, only to start sometime later” (Upadhyay 58). The challenge he faces while living with Apsara destroys him mentally, and thus the child's inclination towards the secondary caregiver; here, the Didi seems natural. “He has had his own mother all this time, so why would he say such a thing? Yes its true: when he thinks, *Mother,* he thinks of Didi” (Upadhyay 111). He had substituted his mother figure as Didi, even though Apsara was always there with him. She runs insane because of Didi. Because of her, they leave

Bangemudha. Every miserable thing that has happened to them since Didi's arrival was because of Didi herself. Tarun was still a child and could no longer differentiate between wrong and right. He delves into something he lacks in his mother: the sense of pleasurable love and care.

Tarun, too, could have flipped out things and pursued a Heroic quest like the Campbellian heroes who suffered from such an adverse childhood. Campbell recalls a hero's childhood in this way: "In sum, the child of destiny has to face a long period of obscurity. This is a time of extreme danger, impediment, or disgrace. He is thrown inward to his depths or outward to the unknown; either way, what he touches is a darkness unexplored" (301). He could have fought for his mother, and himself had he known the differentiating power between right and wrong. "The myths agree that an extraordinary capacity is required to face and survive such experience"(Campbell 302). Had he overcome Didi's dominance, Tarun could have been the Heroic character.

On the other hand, Didi crosses all her thresholds and is getting closer to her destiny. "She deep kisses him, her tongue darting in and out of his mouth, her lips sucking his tongue. Her hands are softly massaging his privacy" (Upadhyay 76). The quasi-incestuous relationship is growing stronger and stronger, and now she has even stopped fearing it, and neither does she have any obstacles as before. The complex family dynamics turn out to be the new normalcy. "Masterji knows what Didi does with Tarun, but there's nothing he can do about it"(Upadhyay 94). Masterji and Amit even know about the incestuous act between the two, but none could speak against her actions. "The Masterji goes to his bed, pulls his blanket around him, shivering a bit even when it's not that cold. He doesn't meet Didi's or Tarun's eyes. He must smell their intimacy on the bed" (Upadhayay 94). Even though things were transparent, the

primary tormentor, Masterji, could do nothing about it besides accepting fate, where fate is none other than Didi herself.

The obstacle Didi faces in pursuing the quasi-incestuous relationship is slowly fading away. She seems to have stood a more prominent position than that of her society, morality, and the law and culture that prohibit incest and quasi-incest. If this stage is called the Heroic quest like the Campbellian hero's, then this would have been 'Apothesis' or the 'Ultimate Boon.' "Like the Buddha himself, this godlike being is a pattern of the divine state to which the human hero attains who has gone beyond the last terrors of ignorance" (Campbell 139). Apothesis is the state of a higher state of being or understanding of the Heroes when they rise beyond normal human instincts of pain and pleasure and achieve their higher self.

The hero ought to bring enlightenment that rises above her ego, gaining a higher state of being. In contrast to this traditional heroic form, the antihero in Upadhyay's novel brings misery to her life even though she is gaining what she wants. She gains her ultimate boon, i.e., an incestuous relationship with her own husband's blood. "Silently they move toward each other and embrace"(Upadhyay 87). In the intimate moment when Didi says she will be jealous if he brings someone in between them, she won't tolerate it. Tarun agrees with her terms of conduct and says he won't. "This jealous world will try to tear us apart, Tarun, do you understand? You won't let it happen, will you, son? Will you let anyone come between us? For which he replies- 'I won't let anyone come between us'" (Upadhayay 91). Didi gained full authority over Tarun, turning him into a puppet or a battery-operated machine whose control is always in Didi's hand.

In his young days, when he had persistently built the habit of following girls and women in the street up to their homes and doing nothing but return home, Didi

somehow got a hint about Tarun's activity, and on inquiring about him, Tarun tried to prove his innocence by self-harm.

> He stands on the bed and bangs his head against the wall. When she doesn't budge, he bangs harder, repeatedly. The sound resembles the *thud-thud-thud* of someone hammering a nail. His forehead is sticky with blood, but he's determined not to stop. He needs to show her his repentance. She needs to know that he'd rather hurt himself than see her unhappy with him. She still doesn't turn, and gritting his teeth, he bangs even harder. His head feels like a pumpkin, ready to crack open and shatter into pieces. (Upadhyay 100)

Tarun, at this point, has completely surrendered himself to Didi. Tarun's instincts are dominated by the pleasure principle (Eros) and the death drive (Thanatos). "The opposition of ego or (death) instincts and sexual (life) instincts would then disappear, and the repetition-compulsion would thereupon also lose the significance we have attributed to it" (Freud, *Beyond Pleasure Principle* 35). His self-harm act is the result of his unconscious desire, his coping mechanism for emotional pain, internal conflicts, and unresolved trauma. By giving physical pain to self, he was trying his best to give himself relief from the psychological pain.

During the return phase, Didi wants to escape with her boon (relationship with Tarun) and return to the complex family dynamics without any obstacles. The marriage of Rukma with Tarun comes with the challenge she faces to escape the return threshold and her boon (the quasi-incestuous relationship). For Tarun, the marriage with Rukma falls under his quest—the meeting with the Goddess. "The ultimate adventure, when all the barriers and orges have been overcome, is commonly represented as a mystical marriage of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the world" (Campbell 100). But since Didi has made things so complex

and confusing, Tarun thinks marriage with Rukma is his challenge of the quest—Women as the Temptress.

> Where this Oedipus-Hamlet revulsion remains to beset the soul, the world, the body, and women, above all, become symbols no longer of victory but of defeat. A monastic, puritanical, world-negating ethical system then radically and immediately transfigures all the images of myth. No longer can the hero rest in innocence with the Goddess of the flesh; for she is become the queen of sin. (Campbell 113)

Didi already felt threatened by Rukma's arrival since she couldn't give up on Tarun, whom she gained through a lot of effort and at the cost of losing morality. Tarun himself was moving forward to carry the incestuous relationship, which he was denying to give up.

> Tarun scours the city, looking for an appropriate place: a simple room for a few hours a week, if that, so nothing fancy, nothing that'll call attention to itself, an expense that he'll not even need to record or justify. It'll be better if it's a place close to where Didi works and lives so she won't have to travel on a bus or in a taxi. He can't assign one of his office staff to look for a place because he doesn't want any questions or suspicions, so he canvasses the city himself. A place close to where she works will allow her quick escapes. (Upadhyay 143)

Didi's success in the magic flight is juxtaposed when Tarun, even after the marriage with Rukma, manages to meet her in secrecy and thus maintain their relationship.

There is an apparent refusal of the return (to normal family dynamics) for both Didi and Tarun once they are at the peak of the pleasure-driving incestuous relationship. "Even the Buddha, after his triumph, doubted whether the message of

realization could be communicated, and saints are reported to have passed away while in the supernal ecstasy"(Campbell 179). In contrast, our protagonist and deuteragonist characters were not ready to delve back down to normal family dynamics. Thus, they refuse the call of return at their best. Didi won the battle not of something divinity but with something that breaks societal construct and morality.

In the returning phase, Didi seems inactive; nevertheless, Tarun has been doing everything Didi ever desires. He searches the room for their private time. He is the one who keeps himself away from Rukma from the day of their marriage. "The fifth night of their marriage, and already there's an impasse so big it appears insurmountable. She is disappointed in him, and he simply wishes it'd all go away, that she wasn't here, that he had the bed to himself. He's not meant to be with anyone"(Upadhyay 161). Didi has implanted this attorney in him from the very childhood. Further, it was Didi who didn't feel deserving and suitable during her young days, and now this sense of insecurity and low self–esteem is transferred to Tarun as his subtle anima. "The anima is a factor of the utmost importance in the psychology of a man wherever emotions and effects are at work" (Jung 70). The anima part in him guides all his unconscious thoughts and conscious activity, which is none other than the influence of Didi as a part of his inhabited personality. That night, on Rukma's approach, he even rejected her persistently but then turned the other way and masturbated. "This is the only way he can feel good right now, and there's nothing he can do to stop it. His hand moves faster. The bed creaks, but the pleasure is too intense for him to stop, and of course, as usual, he discharges quickly in his pajamas" (Upadhyay 161).

Didi's appearance should not necessarily be physical at this stage; she seems omnipotent but still influenced in almost every area of Tarun's life. Here, she appears

as his dream manifestation; the repressed feelings of pain of harassment and pleasure of libidinal instincts both persistently came along to influence Tarun's life.

Both Didi and Tarun reach a stage called Rescue, where the heroes need help from the world outside their territory for someone to come and make their escape possible. “The hero may have to be brought back from his supernatural adventure by assistance from without. That is to say, the world may have to come and get him” (Campbell 192). Rukma, outside of this territory, comes to their life to rescue both from not just their complex family dynamics but also from their mental complexities. "Society is jealous of those who remain away from it and will come knocking at the door” (Campbell 192). Rukma represents society. She came along to bring Tarun back to normal family dynamics.

Rukma has an ego ideal bigger than that of her instinctual id. She goes to the house of her ex-lover. They could have continued the relationship after her failed marriage with Tarun, but her collective unconscious of being a faithful wife comes forward. She chooses not to follow the flow of her unconscious desires, contrary to Didi and Tarun's. That’s how it portrays the differentiation between society and those who stand avid from it.

The crossing of the return threshold involves Tarun being more and more distanced from Rukma and closer to Didi. Their marriage does not play the role of obstacles to the quasi-incestuous relationship of mother-son. Hence, the distance between Rukma and Tarun makes Rukma weaker mentally, physically, and emotionally. Rukma's weakening makes Didi stronger to return to their previous relationship. "Their bedroom turns into a painful space” (Upadhyay 169). Further, Tarun too is eagerly engaged in the lustful act with his stepmother even after the marriage. Meanwhile, Rukma becomes weaker daily; she starts serving in an old age

home–Swarga, in her leisure time. Rukma's life seems similar to that of Apsara, both distorted by Didi.

> They will be in the living room, for example, sitting on the same sofa, and he'll be busy reviewing some office documents or on the phone with someone, and she'll be reading a book or magazine or pretending to. She'll want to say something to him, but the words rise to her throat and linger, then described to her chest, where they become lost in a confusing swirl. As the days go by, the silence deepens. (Upadhayay 163)

Day and night, the silence between Rukma and Tarun grows, which is crucially beneficial for Didi.

Delving back to the complexities of Tarun, it is important to remember his childhood experience when Lakhey once threatened him. He was too scared of the unknown mask, but Apsara saved him. While Apsara was carrying him on her back, he felt his penis erection. The fearful situation is even the responsible factor for the erection of the penis in adolescence. Stephanie opines,

> Those erections can also occur when a person with a penis is very stressed, angry, nervous, or afraid; when we think about how the brain interprets these emotions, that makes a lot of sense. The part of the brain that interprets sexual arousal is the same area that interprets other arousal stimuli, such as fear and anger.

This psyche could be the reason why Tarun, from the very childhood, had got the habit of arousal during times of worry, fear, and anxiety. And this influenced why he couldn't fall in lust with his wife under normal circumstances.

On the other hand, Didi is playing the role of a good mother, a good woman, and even a good mother-in-law. When Rukma visits Didi and her family in Bangemudha, she behaves very well with her.

> ‘I knew my Tarun would snag himself a beauty, the beautiful boy he himself is.’ Further she strokes her chin and said, ‘What are these under your eyes?’ ‘A newly married woman like you, you should be hearty, healthy, and glowing, but why do you like a withered flower? Is our Tarun not taking care of you?’ Her words are measured, meaningful, as though she knows what Rukma is going through. (Upadhayay 217)

Didi’s word for Rukma is instead in a tone of mockery. She knows what Rukma is going through and knows it’s all because of her. Didi is trying to build up trust with Rukma for thinking of her as an excellent motherly figure like Tarun has for her. “She’s drowsy, and the next thing she knows she’s lying on the Masterji’s bed, and Didi is massaging her forehead. Rukma closes her eyes. Then her head is on Didi’s lap, and it’s all so very comfortable”(Upadhyay 219). Didi has that access, that influence over people, whoever she meets, to pursue their attention and gain faith and trust. Rukma, on being suspicious about Tarun hiding something from her that might have been known to Didi, goes to Bangemudha to inquire. But there, instead, she falls into the trap of Didi, suddenly feeling comfortable and safe around her aura. On the one hand, she is pursuing an incestuous relationship with Tarun, while on the other hand, she is trying her best to hide the shadow of her persona.

She then becomes the master of the two precise, distinct worlds of persona and shadow-. The part where she ought to present herself in society and where she is. While our traditional heroes get mastery of these two worlds—the material world and the spiritual world—they bring enlightenment to both. On the contrary, Didi neither brings enlightenment to herself nor the world around her. She would rather bring destruction to herself first than to all the people who accompany her. "The myths do not often display in a single image the mastery of the ready transit. Where they do, the

moment is a precious symbol, full of import, to be treasured and contemplated. Such a moment was that of the Transfiguration of the Christ" (Campbell 213). Unlike Christ, Didi's transition doesn't bring a boon but misery and pain. People persistently seeking self-destruction are driven by this death instinct. Didi, along with Tarun's psyche, is driven back and forth by both Eros and the Thanatos. They both engage themselves in the act of self-destruction and self-disruption.

Didi doesn't master the world of enlightenment but the road to destruction to self and the other. "Didi's hands seek hers in the dark, cling her fingers tightly. 'Try to get some sleep,' Didi says. 'It's still dark out.' But her fingers on Rukma's haven't relaxed, and it's becoming slightly painful now. 'Sleep,' Didi whispers, and Rukma closes her eyes despite the pain" (Upadhyay 221). The 'pain' here represents the psychological pain that Didi gave Rukma, leading her to a failed marriage.

There are symbols of pale hope readers can trace in Rukma's life. "She wakes later to a grayish light seeping into the room. Her fingers are still entangled with Didi's, but the grip has loosened because Didi, judging from her breathing, has fallen asleep" (Upadhyay 221). The 'grayish light' falling in the room awakening Rukma shows the future with a dim trace of hope leading Rukma's life to awaken. The fingers entangled with Didi are being loosened, and Didi falling asleep symbolizes Didi's trap going to be loosened. Didi's sleep represents her power ending, or she has vanished. While the fate Didi brought upon both women—Apsara and Rukma seems the same, Rukma wasn't the one who would settle in what someone else had been writing for her.

Meanwhile, her suspicion towards Tarun's supposing mistress never fades away, and she decides to find out the truth and take action accordingly. Rukma even realizes that because of this mistress or his wife, Tarun could never feel for her.

“There’s someone else who satisfies him, both emotionally and sexually. Its quite possible that he’s even married to her already. Rukma laughs in the darkness of her room. This is indeed wild. But like father, like son” (Upadhyay 225). Rukma is somehow right in her considerations; even though he is not married to anyone else, Tarun has brought a similar fate to his father,, his mother,, and Rukma. This stage of Tarun's quest can be called Atonement with Father. In this regard, Campbell writes,

Atonement (at-one-ment) consists of no more than the abandonment of that self-generated double monster———, the dragon thought to be God(superego), and the dragon thought to be Sin (repressed id). But it requires an abandonment of the attachment to ego itself, which is difficult. One must have a faith that the father is merciful, and then a reliance on that mercy. (120)

But this quest is accomplished in an inverted form. The father and son are infidels to their wives, respectively, and both bring miseries to them.

Unlike Apsara, Rukma couldn’t settle in the name of fate; rather, she decides to be the one. “She could be praying everyday that God does something so that she and Tarun may be united fully, as man and wife. But God's intervention is not even necessary. I can make it happen, Rukma thinks, I can play God. I can slip out of the way” (Upadhyay 226). The only hopefully positive character we could find in the whole novel is Rukma.“The way to become human is to learn to recognize the lineaments of God in all of the wonderful modulations of the face of man”(Campbell 360). Her words and determination and the way she comes across the challenges and obstacles in life are like that of every traditional hero Campbell discusses in his reference to a universal hero.

In the face of a normal human, she tries to find a hero within. The positive traces are shown instead in the later part of the novel. Once she realizes she is the

ultimate creator of her fate and should bring a boon to others, she even considers leaving him to unite the two lovers- Tarun and his mistress. "As soon as she has a cup of tea and piece of toast she leaves home, not in her sari but in her pants and shirt, like the old times. The clothes free her; she hasn't worn them since her marriage was finalized because she thought they wouldn't be appropriate. But who is to stop her now? She's a single woman again" (Upadhyay 227).

The fates of both women align, but Rukma doesn't want to call herself a victim but fights back her problems like a victor, like a warrior. Unlike Apsara, she doesn't decide to mourn the pain of fate, which somebody else was writing for her, but instead she decides to free herself completely.

> But the suburbs don't appeal to her either- she wants to get away now, as far as possible from this type of closed-in, walled house with its rooms of madness and entropy. It certainly didn't help her mother-in-law one bit to be so isolated; she might have been better off wandering the city streets. (Upadhyay 227)

As soon as she considered leaving everything and moving on, fate knocked on her door again. One day, on the street down the side of Dharahara, when she saw Tarun coming out of his car and walking in quite suspiciously quick way, she decided to follow him to find the truth. On seeing Didi following the same route and in the same manner right after Tarun, climbing towards the upstairs of the leased room, she thought the secret of Tarun's other wife was known only to Didi. But what she witnessed by her senses upstairs in the rooftop room shattered her completely.

Rukma, on hearing Tarun's moaning, gets confused about whether it is a moaning of pleasure or pain crying out for help. The readers know that the moaning is rather an outcry for help, for someone to come along and rescue him from Didi's trap.

On coming to know what her husband has been going through, she instead feels pity for him and, at the same time, outbursts anger. “I don’t deserve it, she’s thought, I should simply leave him, as I was about to in the first place. But when their eyes meet, she smiles, and her smile does something to him: softens him, makes him realize how strong Didi’s grip was” (Upadhyay 235). Rukma feels like giving up on Tarun, but she does not. Instead, she tries harder to push their relationship and help Tarun escape the trauma. Tarun, too, seems to come out of the trap, realizing the consequences Didi created for him.

Soon, Didi vanished away without any trace of hint. “Didi’s whereabouts are unknown. She has simply vanished. She is gone, but her spirit still lingers in Tarun” (Upadhyay 236). Hero, in traditional accord, returns to the ordinary world along with the boon. But our antihero here instead vanishes at the exact time when the hero comes back. She has left a trace of a wound in Tarun and other characters.

Meanwhile, Tarun slowly understands the consequences and is coming out of the disastrous attorney Didi gave him throughout his life. “He’s beginning to understand the depth of the dark cave in which he’s been living” (Upadhyay 236). He had been living in the darkness his whole life. Rukma came into his life as the Goddess who brought the light to show what was wrong with it. Didi ran away as their truth was discovered. She runs out of fear or guilt, or is she planning a solid comeback? Nobody has clues about it except Sanmaya, who used to repeatedly say, “‘A woman like that,’ she says, ‘will never be satisfied with the damage she’s done. She’ll come back for more’” (Upadhyay 238).

Didi’s comeback is uncertain, but the closeness between Tarun and Rukma has taken a new height ever since she vanished. They are getting to know each other more; even Tarun starts appreciating Rukma, and Rukma tries to forget everything

Tarun did with her. “In the taxi, she clasps his hands. He looks at her, shyly, as if he is just beginning to get to know her. ‘I’m glad we came to Pokhara,’ he says. ‘It was good to get away from all that noise, that confusion.’ He squeezes her hand. ‘Get away with you’” (Upadhayay 242). Meanwhile, the couple is having a great time of reconciliation. Tarun realizes he has been victimized all his life, and Rukma realizes Tarun is a victim of the incestuous trap his stepmother sets for him. She rather starts feeling pity for him. "When did it start? She's wondered about this many, many times. What was the first instance like when Didi touched him with improper desire? Tears have come to her eyes when she's pictured it. Oh, he was only a child, only a child! 'What are you thinking?’ she asks him” (Upadhyay 241).

Rukma’s consideration of leaving Tarun slowly turns into a hope of forgiveness and pitiful love. They are resolving their relationship into a new mode. As soon as the readers are provided with hope of resolution that something good might happen, the anti-climatic attorney turns the rare trace of hope again into dark nightmares.

The influence of Lakhey—the child-eating demons is twice portrayed in the novel, primarily at the beginning when Tarun was a child and now when he and his wife are in Pokhara for a vacation. “The dancer’s movements are robust, even aggressive. He is accompanied by the beats of drums and cymbals coming from the shadows. He prances from table to table, especially targeting children” (Upadhyay 242). According to the myth of Newa mythology, Lakhey has an essential connection to that of children.

> According to legend, Lakhey was captured by the attention of a girl named BalamaMayju, who lived with her elderly parents and could not do the fieldwork. She alone works the field. Lakhey felt pity for the girl. Hence, he

> disguised himself as a man and 'offered help in the field.' With time passing by, the girl, too, starts falling for Lakhey. Now, when they approach the girl's parents for a marriage proposal, Lakhey reveals his true identity, the demonic form. The girl's parents were hesitant to allow marriage, so they parents made Lakhey stand in court with the king while the king offered Lakhey permission to get married but, on accord, protected the city's children. The couple then resides in MajipaTole, while Lakhey becomes the ultimate protector of the city's children. (Shrestha)

The legend says Lakhey, once a demon, turns out to be the ultimate protector of the people, especially the children. Lakhey symbolically represents Antiheroes, neither a God nor a Demon wholly. Lakhey even represents the individuation of conscious and unconscious— the persona and the shadow.

Lakhey's mask is also the symbol of the mask people wear to present themselves as personae. The inner demon beside Lakhey's mask is her shadow. Further, Lakhey has this special connection to that of Jhyalincha, (the little boy that chases Lakhey and provokes him to dance). Shrestha further states,

> When Lakhey was granted permission to reside in the city, people wanted to test whether he would genuinely protect or harm children. To put this to the test, they sent a young boy to taunt Lakhey while he slept. When the Lakhey woke up, he got infuriated by the little boy and chased him playfully without causing harm. The dance of Lakhey and Jhyalincha reenacts this scene.

Didi symbolically represents Lakhey in this novel. In the first scene, when Lakhey chased Tarun, Apsara protected him. When his penis gets erected by the fear and anxiety, Didi misinterprets it as lust. Lakhey, in mythology, however, is a demon that turns into a good kind of demon that protects the city and the city’s children. He

wears the mask to protect the city children, while inside the mask, he is still a demon whom societal values have demonized. Didi is bound to put on the mask of her persona as per society's rules and laws. However, the inner instinct or her shadow always tries to influence the overall conscious life and activities. According to Jung, “The shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form” (Jung 20). Once the shadow is confronted by Didi and everyone around knowing her true self, the self-agitated Didi runs away from society. Though she vanishes, her imprints on other people’s lives never fade away. It is obvious when the novelist provides a meticulous description of how “[a]ll color has drained from Tarun’s face” (Upadhayay 243)

when thinking about Lakhey.

At first, Tarun seems scared of the demonic figure. He pauses and even blues on, unexpectedly revisiting Lakhey. But then, slowly, he comes to feel much easier.

> The lakhey leads Tarun to the open area in the center of the lawn, where he begins to dance with him. Tarun is hesitant at first. He looks ready to bolt. Then his shoulders loosen, and he distrustfully shakes his body. Soon, his movements become more vigorous. (Upadhyay 243)

The slow and steady loosening of Tarun's shoulders and his leaning towards Lakhey, and under the lawn's reddish lamp where he looks much fierce on looking towards Rukma and then pivots towards Lakhey have significant symbolism in itself—Tarun becoming one with that of a daemonic character— the Atonement with father. "The crowd is whopping and clapping and hollering. At one point, he turns towards Rukma, and under the lawn's reddish lamp, he looks fierce. He pivots towards the lakhey" (Upadhyay 243). Didi is physically absent in Tarun and Rukma's life, but her impression has never faded. The animus part in Tarun, which is mainly

influenced by Didi, comes along under the light of demonic supervision. Even though she is physically absent, her return is made possible through and by the part of animus living inside Tarun.

The trace of hope turns out to be an anti-climax, where Didi, even physically unavailable, lives in and among the couples as an animus in Tarun. Lakhey synchronizes Didi synchronizes Tarun. "'Even as a person casts off worn-out clothes and puts on others that are new, so the embodied Self casts off worn-out bodies and enters into others that are new'"(Campbell 221). Didi is energy, the aura that can neither be created nor be destroyed but that which always finds its way back to transform into a whole new form. The animus part of Tarun is where Didi always lived. Didi never left and will always find her way back, as Sanmaya predicted. A demon can be vanished or destroyed, but not the demons. The return phase was never accomplished like for the traditional heroes. Instead, the return of the anti-heroic mask from Masterji to Didi to Tarun turns the depth of the story into an anti-climatic subversion of the heroic quest.

Conclusion

The novel *The City Son* by Samrat Upadhyay subverts Joseph Campbell's conception of the monomyth or the Hero's Journey. Nevertheless, the protagonist Didi, the deuteragonist Tarun, and the tritagonist Masterji fill the quest of a heroic journey like that of the ancient heroes of Campbell's attorney. Some of the quests are still missing, and the quests they fulfilled are also inverted and subverted in some cases. The heroes of the traditional myths are obliged to continue the journey through the sensibility of the objective whole, which is guided precisely by the collective unconscious. The call of hero is not fascinated by his subjectivity but rather is faced by the community, such as Bewolf, Odyssey, Christ, or Buddha. The hero's journey is

divided into three stages— Call, Initiation, and Return. The call is always of some higher form, like Budhha's call on seeing miseries around to go out on a voyage for enlightenment that not just serves him but the planet as a whole. In the initiation phase, the heroes face challenges, trials, and ordeals to fight the demons and achieve the boon. In the return phase, the hero, on achieving the ultimate boon, needs to return to the ordinary world with the boon that serves the community.

The protagonist of *The City Son,* in contrast, subverts these phases. Even though she fulfills almost all the quests with the same authenticity and dedication, the result of the quest is rather altered to that of a traditional hero's quest. Upadhyay's protagonist's call is unlike the Campbellian Hero, which isn't the call from the higher authenticity –the collective unconscious but rather from her conflicts and complexities, that is, her husband's infidelity. The differences between Call in Heroes and Antiheroes are precisely in their drives that are motivated through and by the accord of the collective unconscious and personal unconscious, respectively.

Heroes on this accord are ready to sacrifice their own personal needs, wants, and desires for their community's and humanity's sake. In contrast, antiheroes are willing to shut down the world for their instincts and drive. Unlike villains, they do not fully commit crimes or destroy the world but primarily destroy themselves.

The morality principle instead drives Traditional Heroes' drives for their actions, while villains' drives are motivated by the pleasure principle. The antiheroes, however, rely on the middle of the both or rather deviate from both. They primarily seem to be motivated by the morality principle; their action and words prove this accord, but they slowly deviate from the pleasure principle and delve into Thanatos (death drive) and destroy themselves. They are involved in self-destruction, while on

the destruction of self, they do not aim to save others. Instead of bringing the boon, they bring miseries.

The characters of the novel *The City Son* are undoubtedly fascinated by self–destructive acts and impulses. Knowing the consequences, Didi is fascinated by a quasi-incestuous relationship with her stepson and fills all her quests, like a Campbellian Hero, but the result is inverted. Like the traditional heroes, she could bring a real boon to herself and the people around her. But her unconscious inner conflicts, complexities, and instincts were so high that she could not think of the consequences otherwise. Characters none of them could bring a boon to existence since the time absurdity and moral ambiguity could not serve this accord. The world is no longer fascinated by the distinct black and white (Villains and Heroes); the time witnessed the existence of different shades of gray, i.e., The Antiheroes.

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