

# The Trope of Journey in Kavita Kane's Ahalya's Awakening: A Psychoanalytic Study

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**ABSTRACT**---Human life is a journey brimmed with lessons, adversities, joys, celebrations and special moments that will eventually guide us to our destination. Journeys are one of the utmost prevailing and accurate outfits for building renovations since they make evident our core yearnings in the outer world. Psychoanalytic criticism employs psychological principles to reconnoiter literature by laying prominence on either the psyche of the writer or of fantastic characters. The present paper will carry out a meticulous exploration of the psychological peregrination of Ahalya in Kavita Kane's novel *Ahalya's Awakening*, which is a reiterating of a eminent folklore revealed in *Ramayana* from the outlook of Psychoanalytic Criticism. The paper centers on probing how Ahalya voyages from a ratheripe kid, to an erudite and cloistered princess, to the amorous spouse of Rishi Gautam, grounded on Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Human Development.

**Keywords**-- Psychoanalytic Criticism, Ahalya, Erik Erikson, Kavita Kane, Psychosocial Development

## I. INTRODUCTION

Literary works throughout the ages were allied to human uniqueness. The impetus is that, a writer frequently reconnoiter human lives and pronounce their interior realm with all its facets. Construing a literary work implicates approaching its imaginary beings and happenings as if they could prevail in tangible life and cramming the character's sensations, contemplations and conducts. Psychology is the supreme dais on which this scrutiny can be done. Psychoanalytic Criticism practices notions of Psychology to evaluate literature by converging either the author's psyche or the psyche of illusory characters (Raiyah, 2012). Kavita Kane's *Ahalya's Awakening* delineates the inner self of the fictitious character Ahalya. It's a reiterating of an eminent folklore that has been mentioned in the prodigious epic *Ramayana*. The character of Ahalya only had an ephemeral reference in *Ramayana*, but there was undeniably much more to her, instead of barely the curse she endured (Narain, 2019). However, Kane depicts an enthralling expedition of Ahalya from the perception of that unique character. The novel offers a discernment into the state of affairs and contemplations of Ahalya which directed her to obligate the deed for which she was vexatious. It fetches a diminutive episode of Hindu mythology into the limelight, by emphasizing its significance in modern society wedged in parallel tussles of adultery, loyalty, divorce and patriarchy. Kane picturized Ahalya's journey from her infancy right up to her maturity. Throughout her journey she had a deep desire to do something different prompted solely by curiosity (Sahasrabudhe, 2019).

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Erik Erikson was a German-American progressive psychoanalyst acknowledged for his philosophy on psychosocial progress of mortals. He was a Neo-Freudian psychologist who have undertaken countless vital canons of Freudian theory, but he incorporated his peculiar thoughts and dogmas. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development focalized on epigenetic principle, which put forward the certitude that every individual endured a succession of eight junctures. The theory illustrates the influence of societal proficiencies transverse one's intact lifecycle. The key constituent behind his theory is the uniqueness of one's ego. According to his theory, when struggle ascend folks have the prospect to nurture or miscarry equally (Cherry, 2019). In the course of the current study, a critical examination of Ahalya's psychological journey all through her lifetime is accomplished within the theoretical framework of psychosocial development theory. The purpose of study is to travel around the psychosocial development of Ahalya's psyche in the course of happenstances she tackled in her life.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The present study employed psychoanalytic approach of research. Psychoanalytic approach emphases on the unconscious mind rather than the conscious mind. It is constructed on the rudimentary notion that an individual's conduct is determined by experiences from his/her past that are imprinted in his/her unconscious mind. The paper proposes psychosocial development theory, which is a pervasive psychoanalytic theory by Erikson that pinpoints a sequence of eight stages that a vigorous emerging individual should traverse from infancy to late adulthood ("Education, Society, & the K-2 Learner", n.d). The theory affords an all-encompassing framework to assess the progress during the whole life. It also tolerates to accentuate the societal nature of human beings and the imperative effect that societal relationships have on development. Erikson's psychosocial stages of development emphasize on the perseverance of different predicaments to turn into an efficacious ample person (Mcload, 2018). There are two essential factors based on the theory: (1) it is indispensable to conquer the conflict as early as feasible since it will impend a person's mindset, (2) the childhood and adolescence are adjudged as acute epochs for the junctures of psychosocial development (Cole, 2018).

It is grounded on Sigmund Freud's psychosexual theory. Erikson took Freud's contentious theory and amended it as a psychosocial theory. He highlighted that the ego creates optimistic offerings to development by grasping attitudes, notions and expertise at every phase of development ("Education, Society, & the K-2 Learner", n.d). The eight stages of psychosocial development includes: trust vs mistrust, autonomy vs shame or doubt, initiative vs guilt, industry vs inferiority, identity vs role confusion, intimacy vs isolation, generativity vs stagnation and integrity vs despair (Cherry,2019).

**Table 1:** Erik Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Approximate Age	Psychosocial Crisis/ Task	Virtue Developed
Infancy 0-18 months	Trust vs Mistrust	Hope

Early Childhood 2-3years	Autonomy vs Shame/Doubt	Will
Preschool 3-5years	Initiative vs Guilt	Purpose
School Age 6-11 years	Industry vs Inferiority	Competency
Adolescence 12-18years	Identity vs Confusion	Fidelity
Young Adulthood 19-40years	Intimacy vs Isolation	Love
Middle adulthood 40-65 years	Generativity vs Stagnation	Care
Maturity 60 to death	Integrity vs Despair	Wisdom

**Note.** Adapted from Psychology Notes HQ (2019), Moyer Elke (2011).

The primary data source of this study was Ahalya's *Awakening* by Kavita Kane and the secondary data sources consists of: journals, articles, references or other sources that were closely related to the primary data, which served to strengthen this study. The data analysis technique used in this study was the method of Psychoanalysis, titled psychosocial development theory of human beings. The author inferred the writing of the novel *Ahalya's Awakening* through the feminist perception (Thomas, 2019). The present study was carried out by construing the novel from the psychoanalytic point of view by examining different stages of Ahalya's life, conflicts she faced, choices she made and her state of mind to find the psychosocial development of Ahalya's disposition.

### III. DATA ANALYSIS

This section proposes solicitation of psychosocial development theory in Kane's novel *Ahalya's Awakening* by examining the psychosocial development stages of the fictional character Ahalya. In the novel, Kane presents Ahalya's life from her infancy right up to the point of her maturity (Sahasrabudhe, 2019). According to Erikson, as an individual Ahalya should go through a series of eight stages of psychosocial development. There is not only a psychosocial crisis but also a virtue will be developed in every stage of a child's psychosocial development (Cherry, 2019).

***Psychosocial Stage 1- Trust or Mistrust:*** In her infancy, Ahalya was utterly hooked upon her parents and au pairs for the whole thing resembling other children to persist for instance nourishment, affection, and balminess and fostering. They delivered ample safe keeping and endearment to Ahalya. So, she successfully developed trust in her stage of infancy. She felt safe and secure in the world. To be precise, the virtue of hope developed in her mind during the first stage of psychosocial development.

***Psychosocial Stage 2- Autonomy or Shame/ Doubt:*** During her toddlerhood, Ahalya started to exhibit a little independence in her words and behavior. “She bought an astonishingly precise logic to bear on the world around her, and the intensity of her presence, that indescribable inner radiance and clarity, drew people to her- whether it was the king himself or the courtiers” ( Kane, 2019, p.11).Explicitly, the virtue of will developed in her mind during the second stage of psychosocial development.

***Psychosocial Stage 3- Initiative or Guilt:*** In the course of her early childhood, Ahalya took initiatives and seek the cause and effect relationships of her actions. On a day before her sixth birthday, “Ahalya had memorized her first lesson, a discourse on the good habit of cleanliness, and with her hands clasped in front of her, she had repeated the essay in its entirety for her parents....Once I heard the words in my head, the lesson was easy, the little girl explained (Kane, 2019, p.12). To be exact, Ahalya had developed the virtue of purpose in her mind during the third stage of psychosocial development.

***Psychosocial Stage 4- Industry or Inferiortiy:*** Throughout her middle childhood, Ahalya initiated to progress a wisdom of proficiency and vanity in her talents. She became adept of executing ever more multifarious errands. Accordingly, she endeavor to bridle newfangled expertise.

I want to try the bow and arrows today, she announced, her tone soft. Her brother guffawed loudly and Vashisht raised an eyebrow. But why? You have never shown any interest in archery before. But I have to know! Why is that a prince is taught archery and not a princess? Besides, Ma said I should! ... Ahalya was struggling, but she was not one to give up easily (Kane, 2019, p.14)That is to say, the virtue of competency had developed in her mind in the fourth stage of psychosocial development.

***Psychosocial Stage 5- Identity or Role Confusion:*** In her adolescence, a conflict emerged in Ahalya’s mind centered on developing a personal identity. Her parents regarded her beauty more important than her intelligence. But she wanted to explore more knowledge through higher learning and to become a learned Rishika.As she approached the age of 16, the fate of Ahalya’s lessons had been a matter of debate. While her mother had come around to the idea of her studying further, till she married, she would not agree to sending her daughter to an ashram....An ashram is meant for higher learning, Ahalya reasoned. I can’tremain in the palace and acquire the knowledge of the world. I don’t want to be some cloistered princess who just looks pretty and does nothing! I want to study (Kane, 2019, p.22)

After that incident Ahalya pleaded to everyone in her palace to continue her studies. At first they refused her wish and argued that she is a princess, not a scholar. But later they decided to send Ahalya to the ashram of Rishi

Gautam in the pretext of higher studies. But in reality they send her in order to hide her because they acknowledged about King Shambar's plans to attack their kingdom. Thus, her desire to emerge a strong sense of self-identity was refused. So, Ahalya remained insecure and confused about herself in the fifth stage of psychosocial development. Specifically, she cannot develop the virtue of fidelity during the fifth stage of psychosocial development.

***Psychosocial Stage 6- Intimacy or Isolation:*** During her early adulthood, Ahalya experienced a major conflict of forming intimate, loving relationship with Rishi Gautam. "She found herself imagining a man whisking her away to a life of love, happiness and knowledge" (Kane, 2019, p.97). He had given her an unbelievable confidence. Ahalya felt a completeness that she had never experienced before when he is beside her. Afterwards, she left from the ashram in the absence of Gautam, with her brother Divodas and returned to their palace. "She felt the prick of tears. She had been so foolish. She had gained so much knowledge but no wisdom. Gautam had tutored her to become a Rishika, but she had little control over her emotions and desires. But was it a sin to fall in love with the man who was her god- her very spirit, her divinity, her idol?" (Kane, 2019, p.108). Her parents were in a hurry to plan her swayamvar with an assignment that the first person who goes around the three worlds shall win her hand. Her parents and her brother expected Indra will win the match. But, Rishi Gautam had fulfilled the assignment unintentionally. He had done it through circumambulating the cow and calf and the Shivling, thus he had travelled around the three worlds. Finally, Ahalya and Rishi Gautam got married. To be precise, she developed the virtue of love during the sixth stage of psychosocial development.

***Psychosocial Stage 7- Generativity or Stagnation:*** In her middle adulthood, Ahalya grapple to foster things that will remain alive after them. The initial stages of their married life were cherished in love. They had four children. Gurukul, new students, new books, kids, chores all of these kept Ahalya and Rishi Gautam very busy with their life and this sometimes made them unhappy. One day Ahalya revisited her palace to attend her brother's wedding, where she realized the fact that she is nothing, but a disappointment by her mother's words. Helping Gautam with his work and life, Ahalya had left back her desire for education. Thus, Ahalya felt shallow involvement in the world; she felt a sense of stagnation. Even though she had contributed four children into the world, her inner consciousness was not yet satisfied. Because her ultimate dream was to become a learned Rishika rather than to become a wife or a mother like other women. At that situation, Indra Shakra entered into Ahalya's bed disguised as Gautam. Ahalya had realized him being Indra, but her loneliness and stagnation made her move closer to Indra who was like Gautam. Rishi Gautam caught them in a private moment and cursed Indra for his deed. Gautam leaves her with a blessing or curse of finding herself. "May you remain invisible to the human eye but visible in your mind's eye, surviving on air and lying in ashes till the time you receive your blessing, your enlightenment, Ahalya he said softly. In that quest you shall receive your salvation- the deliverance you searched for so long all these years" (Kane, 2019, p.328). To be exact, Ahalya could not develop the virtue of care in the course of seventh stage of psychosocial development.

***Psychosocial Stage 8- Integrity or Despair:*** During her late adulthood, Ahalya became immobilized after the departure of Rishi Gautam. Her mind centered on a question that whether she lived a meaningful life or not. Then she recollected her longings, regrets, imaginings, such as the loss of her husband, the loss of her children,

her desire for learning, her physical desires, her loss of fidelity etc. She lived in a world of regretful thoughts and being motionless, senseless to the outer world. Afterwards, she realized the fact that the weakness of her mind led her into the pathetic situation. “It was her absurd dreams of passion, romance and impossible love. In sheltering those broken dreams and passions, she had tried to seek solace for her own expectations. That momentary weakness, that small slip that led to her big fall” (Kane, 2019, p.331). She thought that her transgression occurred because of a man, her retribution also happened by a man, then why should she expect her redemption from a man. At that moment she had a feeling that she was not alone, she was with herself. Later she had an encounter with Sita, wife of Ram. Ahalya shared her experiences to Sita in a philosophical tone. “I searched all these years for myself- and I only found Ahalya, the woman I was supposed to be born as: unblemished, without any faults. I had no hala in me, no sin, no crime, no guilt. What I had done was to respond to the call of life within me” (Kane, 2019, p.345). Ahalya unpretentiously revealed her psychological journey to Sita.

It was my self-discovery. It was my rebellion against myself. And it was the most difficult journey. It started off full of pain, guilt, loss, self-condemnation and confusion about my past, my misdeed and the aftermath of Gautam’s departure. And then there was this stubborn confidence in the notion of virtue and love and family and faith (Kane, 2019, p.347)

Accordingly, she touched a wisdom of integrity. “I liberated myself from it, from me, from Gautam, from the others. For the first time I felt the meaning of freedom” (Kane, 2019, p.348). Ahalya sensed a sagacity of self-actualization that she had never experienced previously.

I fought, I struggled, I obeyed, I compromised, I rebelled, I surrendered, but above all, and not at last, I think, I found myself. I found the truth that is me. I lived the life given to me as a woman with all honesty, true to my instincts and faithful to my impulses, eager and yearning, but always true to myself. Always (Kane, 2019, p.349)

According to Erikson’s theory, individuals do not perceive integrity or despair incessantly. In lieu, utmost fit personalities perceive a balance between integrity and despair, as they begin to make a sense of their lives (Cherry, 2019). Likewise, Ahalya perceived a sense of despair in the former part of her middle adulthood. Subsequently, a sense of integrity flourished in the latter part of her middle adulthood, through self-salvation. Explicitly, Ahalya had developed the virtue of wisdom, during her eighth stage of psychosocial development.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis presented above it can be concluded that the psychological journey of Ahalya depicted in Kavita Kane’s novel *Ahalya’s Awakening* can be figure out through psychosocial development theory of Erikson. According to Erikson, temperament of an individual progresses in a foreordained succession in a sequence of eight stages; from the phase of infancy to maturity. The present study illustrates Ahalya’s psychosocial improvement from her initial stages to later life and the psychosocial catastrophes she confronted in every phases of her life, based upon the theoretical framework of stages of psychosocial development. In the first stage of psychosocial development, Ahalya conquered the conflict between trust and mistrust, in the second stage she succeeded the conflict between autonomy and shame, in the third stage she defeated the conflict between initiative and guilt, in the fourth stage she have overcome the conflict between industry and inferiority, in the fifth stage she could not conquer the conflict between identity and role confusion, in the sixth stage she succeeded the conflict

between intimacy and isolation, in the seventh stage she could not defeat the conflict between generativity and stagnation, in eighth stage she conquered the conflict between integrity and despair. If a person successfully resolved the critical crisis of integrity vs despair at the point of late adulthood, he/she will attain a wisdom referred to as ego integrity, which is a sense of coherence and wholeness (Cherry, 2019). As a result, the study recognized the fact that Ahalya acquired a sense of ego integrity by discovering the truth of herself and self-salvation at the final stage of her life.

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