Exploring Self-Actualization in Pir-e-Kamil by Umera Ahmad: A Journey of Protagonists' Personal Growth and Spiritual Fulfillment

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Abstract
This research explores the theme of self-actualization, and uses the characters of Imama Hashim, a Qadiani girl, and Salaar Sikander, a Muslim boy-genius from Pir-e-Kamil (The Perfect Mentor) by Umera Ahmad for analysis. It analyses how they foster the path to self-actualisation which is the fifth level of the Maslow's needs pyramid where one seeks to become all they can be. Their journey is showcased when it comes to their findings and transformation, which include faith/trust, divine love, أَمْرُ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ and the role of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in Islam. Sourcing data from the texts, the study employs qualitative and analytical research to actualize the relevance of Maslow's Self- Actualization Theory as it captures the achievement of character fulfillment within the lenses of psychological and Islamic perspective.
Keywords: Pir-e-Kamil, Self-Actualization, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as Perfect Mentor Maslow Theory, Imama, Salar.

1. Introduction

In psychological needs according to Maslow (1970) self actualization is the final stage towards the pursuit of personal fulfillment to become all that one is capable of being. It is a rite of passage toward self-realization that is very closely associated with religious beliefs, the discovery of the self, and spiritual awakening based firmly in the cultural consideration of Pakistan. Ahmad, whose work focuses on depicting realistic feelings and relations within the society and the characters' psychological depth, applies her characters to explain the role of religious self-perception and spiritual transformation. Conflicts that Imama and Salaar face while striving for their self-actualization closely depict Pakistani socio-cultural reality where religious prejudices and societal pressures significantly influence people's lives (Ahmad, 2004). While dealing with these complications, the reader sees that Imama and Salaar face not only external difficulties but also internal ones, which depict the complexity of people's dreams in the context of society.

Therefore, based on the narrative of Ahmad and using the Maslow's theory of human motivation, it becomes the aim of this study to understand how both Imama and Salaar, along with the limitations and opportunities of the environment, help the two characters to be the best they can be. The thematic focus of faith, love, and conversion to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as well as the Islamic theology which pervades the protagonists' spiritual searches situates their transformations at the intersection of spiritual growth and claims for the importance of Islamic enlightenment.

Serving as a qualitative analysis of this theoretical consciousness, this research investigates the extent to which psychology and culture explain the characters' progression and portrayal, in the light of the Pakistani novelists' modernist conception of self-actualization. Thus, this study contributes to the discussion on identity construction, development, and self-realization, as well as spiritual motifs in literature based on the evaluation of Ahmad's narrative patterns and portrayals of characters. Pir-e-Kamil proves the testament about Ahmad's capacity to elaborate the psychological depth coupled with cultural aspect and give the readers the themes familiar and subtle at the same time: the humanity, search and the processes of spiritual transformations in a man's soul.

1.1. Objectives
1.   To analyse the psychological side of the novel Pir-e-Kamil as a journey of self-actualization of the two main characters, Imama Hashim and Salaar Sikander by the application of Maslow's Theory of Self-Actualization
2.   To explore the impact Islamic teaching particularly the concept of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as a spiritual guide (Pir-e-Kamil) contributes towards the growth of spiritually evolving characters in the novel Pir-e-Kamil

1.2. Significance
The exploration of self-actualization in the context of Umera Ahmad's novel Pir-e Kamil has a lot of implications for literature and psychology. Specifically, this study offers a critical analysis of the novel with reference to the selected characters' psychological and emotional development using the lens of Maslow's Theory of Self-Actualization and thus contributes to the development of a more comprehensive literary criticism as a means for combining the methods of analysis of literary texts with the concepts of psychological theory. Moreover, it provides insights on how Pakistani literature portrays the social norms, beliefs in one's faith, and vindication of culture by giving a critical analysis of the characters Stress and Sorrows and the roles of society they consider the dominion of. This research not only helps to advance the knowledge of character development in modern Pakistani English literature but also can be useful for the further understanding of self-identity and spiritual happiness within socio-cultural setting, stressing the role of faith and perseverance in a search of individual's self-actualization.

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1.3. Research Questions

1. How does the psychological journey of self-actualization of the two main characters, Imama Hashim and Salaar Sikander, in the novel Pir-e-Kamil align with Maslow's Theory of Self-Actualization?
2. How does the concept of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as a spiritual guide (Pir-e-Kamil) in Islamic teaching contribute to the spiritual growth of the evolving characters in the novel Pir-e-Kamil?

1.4. Research Gap

Despite the fact that a number of critics have already offered a detailed analysis of Umera Ahmad's novel Pir-e-Kamil, a reigning paradigm relies mostly on the religious, cultural, or social angle. Yet, there is a lack of scholarship studies that focus on the protagonists on a pathway in heroic self-actualization through the prism of the Maslow`s psychology of needs. It has been established that there is a lack of sufficient precedent for analysing the characters of Imama Hashim and Salaar Sikander for their personality development and spiritual fulfillment in the given aspect of their psychological process. Also, the Islamic aspect that primarily focuses the guidance through Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and the analysis of the characters using psychological theories in the current society are lacking in the scholarly studies. This study aims at helping to address this scarcity by offering an exploration of self-actualization in Pir-e-Kamil from both psychological and Islamic perspectives so that a multifaceted appreciation of the heroes' character development may be offered.

2. Literature Review

In their research work, Parthan and Helms (1985) elaborated different dimensions of Students' states Identity and racial attitude of Black University. The participants included 166 Black students and Cross' Model of Black racial identity yielded five states. Forms of consent permission were also gotten despite the use of the questionnaire. Besides, the kind of research implemented in this paper was quantitative and analytical and the study was conducted using base research. On the collected data, multiple regression was used in order to obtain statistical results. They identified the property that there was positive attitude of Black towards Self-Actualization while there was negative attitude towards inferiority complex and anxiety.

Organo-genetic needs for Maslow are the last and final that reflect the need for self-actualization which is the top level of motivation for human beings that is the desire to become all that they can be. This has been a focal area of research in psychology to explain how aspects such as motivation, satisfaction of needs, and personality development help in the achievement of the objectives and goals of self-actualization (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Various researches have been made on spirituality as well as the spirit of self-actualization. For instance, Koltko-Rivera (2006) has provided insight on how spirituality and existential reasons entail identity and essence by defining the purpose and the utmost human self-realization, which corresponds to Maslow's view to some extent.

Jalil (2015) discussed Bradley Cohen in the movie called Front of The Class applying both Maslow's theory and film theory. The subject matter of the study was Cohen's quest for self-actualization as affected by Tourette syndrome but who finally became a teacher. The study was methodological in nature, descriptive and qualitative, with the goal of determining process and antecedents that may have led to change in Cohen's status from frustration to fulfillment.

Malik (2013) did the comparative study concerning Jane Austen, a British writer, and Umera Ahmad, a Pakistani Urdu writer, and comparing their approach of portraying human traits, moral system, and Islamic as well social issues. In this qualitative and analytical study, Elizabeth Bennet of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice has been compared with Imama Hashim of Umera Ahmad's Pir-e-Kamil, and the study has shown that notwithstanding the social, religious and cultural similarities between the two ladies, they felt more or less in the similar way.

Fattahi and Afrasibi (2017) had comparative research in which the authors discussed the phenomenon of Self-Actualization based on the two pro-standpoints of Islam as well as Psychology. They compared and contrast the concepts of Self-actualization mentioned in Islamic teachings and those allowed by the humanistic psychologist pointing, for example, that while the former revolves around the belief in Allah, the latter one is humanistic. Islamic orientations limit free will and stress on intellectual elements such as belief, On the other hand, humanistic psychology fundamentally approves boundless free will and states that biological aspects are also essential in order to achieve Self-Actualization. Nevertheless, the strands of general similarity pursued and found at both domains can still be clearly identified – the striving for the smoothly developing healthy organism and the tendency towards the achievement of the personal perfection.

3. Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature and the primary source is the text of the novel Pir-e-Kamil written by Umera Ahmad. An analytical approach has been used with the elements of critical thinking, characterization and assessment of facts and information in answering research questions. This research analysed Self-Actualization as a whole, leaning on the Maslow's Theory of Self-Actualization while addressing the main characters of the text, Imama Hashim and Salaar Sikander. The researcher has employed an analytical approach in analysing the text with a view of establishing how both the characters actualized Maslow's needs' hierarchy and attained the pinnacle of Self-Actualization. This research uses Pir-e-Kamil a text as primary data and other research articles,

books, and other documents that revolve around the concepts of psychological or Islamic self-actualization as secondary data.

In the context of introducing the application of Maslow's theory into the work, the research also explores the characters and their changes. As Imama Hashim plunges into the demons' world, she denies herself home, property, and fiancé for spiritual satisfaction and love of life accomplishment. Likewise, Salaar Sikander's character is falsified as he struggles to know the truth of life and the hero faces many challenges before his self-actualization. Importantly, the focus of the study is set on portraying spiritual growth of both the characters and the fact that they reach the state of Self-Actualization allusions are made of Maslow's theory and the Islamic Kamiliat (Perfection) concept.

3.1. Delimitations and Limitation

The study selects only the main characters of the novel Pir-e-Kamil written by Umera Ahmad and finally the theory that is employed for the analysis is the theory of self-actualization of Maslow. It excludes other characters and the influence of the environment not covered by the events of the novel. The focus is on the text and other sources to the extent that the data from surveys or other research, or other general psychological literature is not considered.

This study is limited, by the fact that only a single literary work Pir-e-Kamil was taken into consideration while exploring the concept of Self-Actualization, therefore the richness of ideas implied by this concept could be presented more elaborated. Furthermore, the interpretation also somewhat limited by the fact that textual interpretation is a subjective process and special cultural/religious background of the novel. The conclusions and generalizations of the findings may be limited to the specific literary pieces and the psychological exploration of them.

4. Discussion and Analysis

Umera Ahmed's novel Pir-e-Kamil intricately weaves together the spiritual and personal transformations of its protagonists, Imama Hashim and Salar Sikander. Set against the backdrop of Pakistan, a country deeply rooted in Islamic tradition and cultural complexities, the novel explores their individual quests for truth, identity, and self-fulfilment. Imama and Salar's journeys towards self-actualization are profoundly influenced by their encounters with Islam, their evolving relationships, and the challenges they face in reconciling their beliefs with societal expectations.

Imama Hashim the female protagonist introduces herself as a young woman caught in between the Qadiani upbringing and the internal struggle of faith. From a young age dreaming to be a doctor, and more specifically an eye specialist, Imama undergoes a drastic change in life after coming across with the verses of Holy Quran and the motivating speeches of Sabiha. These encounters make Imama to begin thinking and analysing what she has been told and this makes her convert to Islam.

Thus, the tawhid, or belief in the oneness of Allah, and the claim that Muhammad (ﷺ) is the final Prophet are the doctrines deemed to be the most essential in Islam. Imama's transition from an aristocratic but tormented Qadiani, to a practicing Muslim woman, is shown by her giving up her family and material wealth to recite the Kalma Tayyaba. This turning point shows the readiness of her finding out the truth and living the rest of her life as consistent with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

Nevertheless, self-actualization is not easy for Imama as he faces various obstacles in the process which are prejudice, rejection from the family and giving up social life. These difficulties simply showed her determination and steadfast in following her desire to get a spiritual salvation by becoming a Muslim. Despite the hardships that are depicted in the difficulties faced by Imama, she can be considered to portray some of the aspects of a self-actualization that includes independence, self strength and a purpose arising from her newly found faith.

On the other hand, Salar Sikander presented as rebellious youth disrupted and represented by his intellect and rebelliousness of behaviours. Formerly callous to social mores as well as divine principles, Salar's existence crises and the pursuit of purpose pave the way to anarchy and personal annihilation, charged by attempted suicides. The meeting with Imama, with whom in the beginning he behaves skeptically and even with hostility, become the cause of his spiritual transformation.

Salar's change is subtle, and occurs as a result of major experiences in his life that alter his outlook on reality, and make him think. In the USA Salar faced loneliness that shakes him to the core and makes him feel the lack of the true meaning of life – Salar faces the essence of mortal life void of spiritual substance. This point of awareness makes him turn to practice religion besides embarking on a process of self-actualization.

The climax is perhaps in Margalla Hills when Salar is left alone to fight for his own life as well as the lives of others and when he turns point of no return and stared at his own death, thus gaining a rebirth. Being mortally ill and pressured by the memory of Imama, Salar becomes the subject of repentance and, thus, spiritual regeneration. Further, in his journey towards the self-actualization, the said element is also further manifested in his determination to memorize the Holy Quran and participate in charitable activities as he gradually transformed his view on faith and roles and responsibilities of an individual.

From Islamic perspective self actualization entails the spirit washing process a complete submission to Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) teachings as well as embracing spiritualism as a cause. These two tales depict these principles as tenable as Imama and Salar go through various ordeals, self-searching, and, eventually, conversion to Islaam. In psychological aspect, both of the heroes can be characterized as the examples of self-actualization, regarding to Maslow's hierarchy of needs: they are more or less autonomous, strong and self-confident people who look for the meaning of their lives. The psychological aspects of immigrants' search for self-actualization are depicted through Imama's determination in spite of hardships and Salar's changes throughout the show. This text Pir-e-Kamil by Umera Ahmed, focuses on the processes of the character transformations of Imama Hashim and Salar Sikander within the framework of Islamic and cultural context of Pakistan. Imama embracing Islamic faith and Salar enlightenment depict the two spiritual characters' huge change for the better. Thus, the novel presents general human values, the topics of identity, faith and search, the idea significant for both religious and psychological point of view.

When both Imama and Salar are set in their respective paths, they well portray the aspects of self-actualization whereby they undergo hardships, accept their true identity, and find personal satisfaction in religious convictions. The novels show how tales of religion and redemption are still relevant in the modern world hence the importance of faith and the search for spiritual meaning in a person's life.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion drawn from the analysis of Umera Ahmed's novel Pir-e-Kamil through the lenses of Maslow's Self-Actualization Theory and Islamic perspectives is profound and insightful. Both protagonists, Imama Hashim and Salar Sikander, navigate tumultuous paths filled with challenges and trials on their journeys towards self-actualization. Their transformations, marked by spiritual enlightenment and personal growth, underscore the resilience and determination required to overcome adversity while staying true to their beliefs and principles. The novel emphasizes that self-actualization is not merely a state of being, but a conscious and voluntary pursuit driven by internal desires and guided by divine intervention. By embracing Islam and following the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), Imama and Salar exemplify how faith and spiritual guidance can lead individuals towards fulfillment and perfection. The concept of Pir-e-Kamil as articulated in the novel reinforces the idea that pivotal moments of decision, where one chooses between light and darkness, right and wrong, play a crucial role in shaping one's transformation and eventual self-actualization. Imama and Salar's journeys serve as powerful reminders of the transformative power of faith, integrity, and steadfastness in the pursuit of truth and spiritual growth. Through their stories, Pir-e-Kamil delivers a compelling message about the enduring quest for enlightenment and the profound impact of self-actualization on individual lives, resonating deeply with both psychological theories and Islamic teachings.

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