

The Max Pzoras' Character Development in Karan Bajaj's the Yoga of Max's Discontent

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Abstract

The study aims to explain Max's characteristics both prior to and subsequent to embarking on a spiritual odyssey in Karan Bajaj's novel, *The Yoga of Max's Discontent*. The protagonist, Max, undergoes a transformation from a state of existential aimlessness to becoming an individual who attains his objectives and discovers significance while embarking on a spiritual odyssey. The researcher's interest in this study is driven by the transformation in life's purpose, as human thought evolves throughout time, with potential effects that might be either detrimental or beneficial. Nevertheless, this alteration in personality benefits the protagonist. Through a descriptive and dramatic approach, the researcher closely observes the main character's personality by analysing their speeches and actions. It is discovered that Max's personality undergoes a transformation from being emotional and indecisive to becoming calm and decisive after embarking on a spiritual journey. This change is influenced by emotional factors. Additionally, Max's journey also leads to a shift from suffering and anxiety to experiencing happiness, peace, and overall well-being, which is influenced by social factors. Therefore, it is crucial to thoroughly examine the two determinants that have a substantial impact on the main character's way of life. This knowledge is essential for individuals to effectively manage the determinants they experience in their daily lives.

Keywords: *Emotional Determinants; Social Determinants; Personality Development*

INTRODUCTION

Regarding personality development, the researcher focuses on two determinants identified by Hurlock (1973) that have an impact on the development of an individual's character: emotion and society. An emotional determinant refers to the direct influence of emotions on a person's personality, such as their ability to form emotional connections with others and the way their sentiments are managed in social settings. Social determinants pertain to the level of social involvement exhibited by an individual, with both the individual and society mutually benefiting from this participation. Personality development encompasses the interaction between family members and significant others within the family life cycle, as well as the influence of the social and cultural environment. It involves the development of the ego, as described by Loevinger, which includes meaningful and orderly changes in traits, concerns, and identity. This development is often associated with growth and change, such as in the development of language. Character development in Karan Bajaj's *The Yoga of Max's Discontent* is

influenced by emotional and social variables. Consequently, the researcher has chosen to analyze this new novel.

The novel above emphasizes Max's fluctuations from a hopeless, overthinking, and surrendered man due to environmental pressure, his mother's death, and other trials that happen to him until he finally changes to a man who is loving, caring, enthusiastic, and open-minded in solving his problems. Such changes are due to his spiritual journey, traveling far to the Himalaya's mountain, India. Because the main character is able to overcome the apparent issues caused by environmental factors as well as the death of his mother, a human's thought tends to develop from time to time; therefore, the researcher is interested in raising the theory of personality development to analyse the topic in this study. Accordingly, this study explores Max's personality before going on a spiritual journey and after being influenced by the spiritual journey.

Recently, there have been writers studying character development. Erwindriani (2012), using the formalistic approach to analyse Scrooge's character development, found that the main character undergoes a slow development of character coming from his consciousness of his evil. Aqmarina (2014), using an objective approach, finds that the main character is developing from an arrogant to a caring rabbit doll. Shasita (2017), using psychoanalysis theory, finds that an individual cannot be detached from its society's custom, in which they should be well-mannered people to be a good member of society as well as in family. Hasanah (2018), using the Characterization Theory of Kenan and the Structuralism Theory of Chatman, finds the result of the changes in the main character's personality from the characterization, plot, setting, and point of view. Sagimin (2019), using interpersonal relationship theory by Harry S. Sullivan, finds that somebody's personality development can be seen through the association between an individual and others. Az Zahra (2019), using an objective approach, finds that the character of Anne Shirley's development from a cruel girl to a mature teenager is caused by two factors: internal factors, which are her own motivation, and external factors coming from the people around her and her new environment.

Sugeha (2021), using an objective approach, finds that the main character's personality developments are influenced by people around him, in this case, Zeena and Mattie. He experiences a view of the changes in his character: hopeful into hopeless, responsible into irresponsible, faithfulness into unfaithful, and happiness into unhappiness. Sitinjak (2021), using psychoanalytic theory, finds that Donald's superego undergoes new vision in that positive impact of Tony influences in breaking the doctor's idealist temperament. Faraditha (2022), using a descriptive method, analyses the personality development of Harry Potter and finds that the personality development of the character occurs slowly during the story. Asmiaty (2022), using the theory of plot by Kenan and Griffith, shows that Isabella Linton undergoes character development from a characterization as well as a plot point of view. Lah (2023). Using a psychoanalytical approach to analyse the novel, the study finds that the main character has several personality traits that, together with the journey of his life, experience personality development altering from someone always unaccompanied, anxious, and downhearted gradually becoming someone self-confident, with a desire, eagerness to start his day, and strong ambition for a better future.

Thus, two of Hurlock's eight determinants, that is, social and emotional determinants above, are the gaps in this study since Erwindriani with her formalistic approach, Aqmarina, Az Zahra, and Sugeha with their objective approach, Shasita, Sitinjak, and Lah with their psychoanalysis theory, Hasanah with her Kenan's

Characterization Theory and Chatman's Structuralism Theory, Sagimin with her Sullivan's theory of interpersonal relationships, Faradhita with her descriptive method, Asmiaty with her Kenan's theory, and Griffith's theory of plot, are excluded from Hurlock's determinant theory. Finally, the researcher chooses social and emotional determinants because practically everyone knows that the two determinants make significant changes to a person, and scientifically, they develop the study of literature. Besides, through social and emotional determinants, the researcher answers the research questions, such as how Max's personality is described before going on a spiritual journey and how it is after being influenced by the spiritual journey. This study then meets the requirement of novelty.

METHOD

The method used in this study was the close reading method, which refers to literary analysis focusing on the specific details of a passage or text to discern deeper meaning. The meaning derived from the close reading was the reader's interpretation of the passage or text. A close reading should never be the first reading of a text. Before focusing on the details of a text or passage, it is essential to understand the text as a whole (Pickering, 2019). Thus, the researcher analyzes the problem fully from the text in the novel without looking at things beyond the novel, such as the author's life, the society in which the author lived, and the historical background. Likewise, the researcher used descriptive and dramatic methods in analyzing the novel through Hurlock's determinants influencing the development of a person's personality, by which the researcher meant to present the character mainly through description and discussion as well as through reporting the character's speech and actions. Thus, by describing, discussing, and reporting the character's speech and actions, the researcher presented and analyzed how Max's personality was described before going on a spiritual journey and how it was after being influenced by the spiritual journey. Further, to get clear data to analyze, the researcher used Hurlock's determinants as a primary method to analyze Max Pzoras' character development in the novel Karan Bajaj: The Yoga of Max's Discontent.

Data and Source of Data

The data are qualitative in that the researcher analyzes them deeply by elaborating on the main character's previous personality as well as the latter one. The source of data was the novel by Karan Bajaj, The Yoga of Max's Discontent, from which the researcher quoted words that had things to do with personality development as well as social and emotional determinants. Thus, not all items in the novel were worth quoting here.

Data Collection Technique

There was a way of collecting the data: interview, observation, document, and survey (Miles and Huberman 1984, p. 8-9). Since this study was a literary study, therefore, observation, documenting, and surveying the data were worth applying here. By observation, the researcher meant to read the whole novel first and find the problem, and after that, the researcher got the related theory. By document, the researcher meant to classify the data into social determinants and emotional

determinants. By surveying the data, the researcher means to analyze the classified data.

Data Analysis Method

The data analysis method referred to the research question and the explanation of the research question (Miles and Huberman 1984, p. 14). Firstly, the researcher took a look at the research questions about Max's personality before and after going on a spiritual journey. Secondly, the researcher gave an explanation of Max's speeches as well as his actions regarding his personality development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Max's personality before going on a spiritual journey The researcher analyzes this through emotional and social determinants. The former refers to emotional and indecisive personalities, while the latter refers to suffering and anxious personalities. As to his emotional personality, the researcher gives an example of his emotional character when Max is easily triggered to fight against a man who asks Sophia for money. He suddenly "grabbed the man's neck" (Bajaj 2016, p. 5). Though the man is found to be a weak man, Still, Max lets go of his neck and pushes him back with force. The researcher strongly believes that this way of solving the problem is an emotional one, as Max's fight proposal against the man for the man's wish for money can be silenced by another way instead of fighting. However, he seems to be uncontrollable. Then the fight between him and the man occurs. Thus, this kind of emotional action is included in the emotional determinant because it is an aspect of personal adjustment that affects personality development.

As to the indecisive personality, the researcher goes to the indecisive feeling of Max, which is shown by his slow response to the offer by Viveka about meditation. Normally, people take every suggestion for granted for the sake of his spiritual goodness; however, Max hesitates and takes long hours to discuss the offer. "Did the yogis find any answers? "After a moment's hesitation, Max switched over from Excel to Chrome and began searching the internet for information about Himalayan yogis" (Bajaj 2016, p. 32) is an indication of his slow response to the offer that he disbelieves such an offer of meditation abroad in India. He searches the intelligent on the internet instead. Like the emotional action above, the researcher regards the indecisive personality as an emotional determinant because it is an aspect of personal adjustment that affects personality development.

As to the suffering personality, the researcher takes the example of Max feeling suffering after the death of his mother. Indeed, he suffers from difficulty sleeping. "He hadn't slept well for several nights. But he felt like talking to someone who didn't know of his mother's death and wouldn't offer unwanted condolences and homilies" (Bajaj 2016, p. 21), indicating that his social life (a small society that is a family) gives a strong characterization to him that he becomes dangerously suffering, which leads him to go to India to share the suffering he undergoes and to find the true meaning of life. It turns out that society within his family is not the only reason he has to make a journey abroad to recover, but there is a big society outside the family. His suffering from breaking up with his girlfriend, Keisha, as well as from living a life in the harsh surroundings of the Bronx.

As to the anxious personality, the researcher finds that the feeling of anxiety of Max is shown by the appearance of the terrible things: fucking Anna, breaking up with Keisha, and his mother's dying face in his dream. "Have you ever had such dreams?" said Max when he calmed down. "I don't know. Maybe. "I don't dream much," she said. Max sensed something, probably her disappointment at not having a similar experience, unpleasant as it was" (Bajaj 2016, p. 180), which is an indication that Max's personality is troubled by the terrible events before and that coming to his dream is intensified by the death of his beloved mother. Thus, suffering and anxiety belong to social determinants because Max's personality is largely influenced by society as well as the environment in which he lives, which triggers him to become stressed and create fears such as death and fear.

Max's Personality after Going on a Spiritual Journey

Likewise, the researcher analyzes here through emotional and social determinants. The former refers to calm and decisive personalities, while the latter refers to happy and peaceful as well-being personalities. As to the calm personality, the researcher looks back at Max's life during his childhood, which is quite harsh: the gangs he deals with as well as dangerous housing projects by the local people, due to which he fights against people for an unimportant thing to the injured. However, after doing the yoga, he becomes calm.

"SUDDEN IMAGES. An old white priest died on a bed. People with tears in their eyes surround him. a window looking out to snow-covered mountains. An olive-skinned woman with a cloth covering her head was praying in a cornfield. A man kissing an amulet More men and women, faces melting into one another, lips muttering, eyes watering, hands folded. I've been searching for him for so many lives. Max opened his eyes. He felt strangely calm. His head was clear." (Bajaj 2016, p. 81–82).

The above quotation shows a series of sudden images that appear in Max's consciousness, such as the death of an old priest with the surrounding mourners, a snow-covered mountain view from a window, a praying woman in a cornfield, and an amulet kissing man, which represent numerous spiritual and religious concepts. Besides, the quotation means that Max has been in search of spiritual enlightenment during his lifetime, an indication of a desire for a higher purpose or meaning in life. Therefore, Max becomes in a state of considerable calmness and is clear-headed. Thus, his spiritual pursuits drive him into a state of calmness. As to the decisive personality, the researcher believes that Max's feeling of being decisive can be seen in the way he accepts the guru's suggestion of conducting yoga, which requires complicated efforts and is not as simple as the others' westerners wish to do. Through the complicated efforts in yoga activities, the countenance will last a long time.

"I've been trying to figure you out. Most Westerners who come here want easy answers. That's why I also fell into the Hare Krishna thing, chanting, love, all the simplistic stuff that gives you some happiness but doesn't last. But something in your eyes, in your going to the high Himalayas in this crazy winter, makes me want to believe that you can be more" (Bajaj 2016, p. 105).

The quotation above shows that all Max's partners from western countries have made wrong decisions by taking simple things for spiritual happiness; however, it does

not last long unless they sacrifice their time, their worldly business, and their harsh surroundings by doing yoga. Thus, it is evidence that Max now becomes a decisive person for the sake of his future life. The researcher regards calm as well as decisive as belonging to emotional determinants because calm is an aspect of personal adjustment that affects personality development. The emotions that reign within Max determine how he behaves or feels in various situations. Likewise, decisive is included in the emotional determinant because the emotions that rule within a person determine how he behaves, acts, or feels in various situations. Thus, the emotions that reign in a person determine how he behaves or feels in various situations; therefore, in essence, emotions can change a person's personality.

As to happy and peaceful personalities, the researcher is convinced that feeling happy and peaceful about Max can be seen in the way he welcomes a friend of his. As told above, Max's life in New York City is so harsh that he even does not have happiness in his surroundings, yet, after doing yoga and deserting from the crowded world of crime, he gets happiness and peace of heart. He welcomes a friend and feels happy about the company. *"For the last six months, I have spoken so little. I feel happy you came. Do not go away soon"* (Bajaj 2016, p. 168). Again, it is the effect of yoga that alters the thoughts of Max from being pessimistic (leading to unhappiness as well as disquietude) to optimistic (leading to happiness as well as quietude).

As to well-being, the researcher strongly believes that feeling well-being for Max is indicated by the fact that Max is no longer haunted by the saddening past events of fucking Anna, breaking up with Keisha, and his mother's dying face. Now he becomes wise. "The images from his past that had been tormenting him for months had receded. He felt Shakti's touch on his skin, a loose strand of her auburn hair below his eyes, and the smell of her sweat. He stole a glance at her determined, sure face. His eyes stung. She was beautiful" (Bajaj 2016, p. 205), describing when Max and Shakti are returning to the village after the completion of a hard Himalayan walk, during which Max feels light and exhilarated as if there were no longer burdens on his shoulders. The terrible events mentioned above—fucking Anna, breaking up with Keisha, and his mother's dying face haunting him for months—have disappeared, leading him to concentrate on the present. Thus, happiness, peace, and well-being belong to the social determinants because Max develops as a human being full of happiness and enthusiasm for the environment and situation where he is.

In a nutshell, though the following writers analyse the same topic as the researcher's, the approaches and theories are different from the researcher's: formalistic approach by Erwindtiani, objective approach by Aqmarina, Az Zahra, and Sugeha; psychoanalysis theory by Shasita, Sitinjak, and Lah; Kenan's Characterization Theory and Chatman's Structuralism Theory by Hasanah; Sullivan's theory of interpersonal relationships by Sagimin; descriptive method by Farahdita; Kenan's theory and Griffith's theory of plot by Asmiaty. The researcher uses the two determinants of Hurlock's theory that are not available in the previous writers: social and emotional determinants. Thus, this study is novel.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above analysis and discussion, the researcher concludes that the protagonist, Max, has experienced significant alterations in his personality, which have

been influenced by emotional and social factors that determine one's personality. The emotional factor significantly shapes Max's character, transforming him from being emotionally unstable and indecisive to being composed and resolute. Similarly, the social factor also plays a crucial role in shaping his personality, transitioning him from a state of suffering and anxiety to one of happiness, peace, and overall well-being.

It is true that the main character's personality development is influenced by emotional and social determinants. This is evident from the first determinant, which is the death of his mother, and the second determinant, which is a food cart man named Viveka who enlightens him about the benefits of yoga. Hence, this study is innovative due to the fact that neither of the two factors have been utilized in earlier research, and no researchers have identified Max's personality development as categorized in the aforementioned table.

Overall, the researcher is optimistic that this study presents two significant inferences to the readers. Firstly, it highlights the importance of being cautious when choosing friends, since they might exert social influence that has the potential to alter one's personality. Furthermore, in the foreseeable future, there will be writers who are inclined to expand upon this study with alternative hypotheses, as it is not without its imperfections. As a result, literary studies will progress in parallel with other academic disciplines.

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