ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL (JALT)
Vol.9. No.1 2025

Price of Being Good: A Freudian Reading of Eman's Self-destruction in Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*

Angabeen Kanwal
Department of English Language and Literature Qurtuba University D.I.Khan
kanwalangabeen05@gmail.com
Naina Shehzin
Department of English Language and Literature Qurtuba University D.I.Khan
nainashehzin786@gmail.com

Abstract
This analysis explores the psychological conflict in Eman and highlight his self-sacrifice in Wole Soyinka's play *"The Strong Breed".* It examines how Eman's moral goodness become an instrument of his own destruction which was presented as compassion and moral responsibility toward other people. This analysis uses quantitative textual analysis as a methodology and applies Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic framework such as id, ego, and superego as an interpretive lens. The center of the focus of this analysis is Eman's rejection of being a carrier and rituals, his attempt to build an independent identity, his relationship with his wife Sunma,, his reaction to Ifada's ill condition, and his acceptance of being a carrier at the end. The finding shows the conflict between Ema's id, ego and super ego as his earlier rejection of being a carrier shows his impulses for freedom and survival while his denial to leave ifada behind as victim of rituals shows his excessive moral goodness. This study shows that Eman's tragedy doesn't come because he was a good human being but shows that his excessive goodness was an instrument that destroy him , demanded a complete surrender , ultimately leading to his own death. This analysis conclude by highlighting that Soyinka shows the excessive goodness as cost in a society.

1. Introduction

Wole Soyinka 's play "*The Strong Breed*" highlights a society where the purification of people' sins and evil depends on sacrificing a human as a carrier. The carrier was seen as someone who absorb or carry away the committed sins and evil in the society collectively and purify them completely. Eman who inherited the " Strong breed" was at the center of this ritual, making him as a carrier while his individual identity leds him to reject this placed role.

Eman's significance lies in contradiction as initially he doesn't accept the role of being a carrier. his life clearly shows his act of escape from the identity that was placed upon him by traditions and ancestors but when a boy name ifada who was valunerable becomes a victim of rituals and traditions , Eman ultimately takes his place and accept the role of being a carrier from which he was escaping and rejecting earlier and save ifada from the society. His tragic self destruction is not only interpret him as a heric figure but also the psychological conflict he faced need a closer interpretation.

The Strong Breed by Wole Soyinka has attracted many critical perspectives of the scholars because the play is rich with Yoruba ritual, communal purification, identity, sacrifice, and tension between individual's personal freedom and community obligation. Eman's death was not viewed as isolated event by existing scholars but they interpret it as a piece of culture, religion, psychological, and political framework.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

Dubost (2008) analyze the play as a tragic play and explore the connection between rituals, individual actions and tragic consequences.

One important thread of scholars interpret the play with the lens of Yoruba folklore and ritual.Saikat Guha's analysis (2016) title, " Wole Soyinka's Re-deployment of Yoruba Folklore in *The Strong Breed*" , where the scholar examine the link between Yoruba culture and Soyinka's drama, highlighting the re-imagination of indigenous folkloric characteristics present in drama. This reach places a significant position showing the role of "carrier" which was not separated from the rituals present in the play. Eman's death was not interpreted as an isolated event but it is viewed as linked to society practice and as an act of removing the evil and sins committed in society.

Umezurike (2018) interpretation highlights the psychological dimensions of Eman and Sunma with the lens of fear, angst, the uncanny, and the conscience.

Balkaya (2020) further developed the importance of ritual activity in his paper " The Ritual of Sacrifice within the Culture Boundries in Wole Soyinka 's *The Strong Breed*" . In his study he explored the relationship between sacrifice and cultural boundaries, personal freedom, self identity. He argues that cultural practices plays a vital role in shaping person's identity and destiny.

Another thread of studies shifts from ritual to social identity of Eman as an other. Alebrahim (2021) in " An Analysis of Postcolonial Thematic Aspects In Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*" explore the play with the framework of otherness, hybridity, resistance, discrimination, and identity issues. In her studies she examines the link between broader struggles regarding identity, postcolonial domination and play's ritual structure. In this interpretation Eman's act of escaping from his inherited identity is viewed as an important aspect.

These interpretations gives an important foundation of understanding Eman deeply . However this study interpret his character through more specific psychological questions. Initially Means resist to become carrier and rituals of the society yet at the end he becomes the carrier. This contradiction creates the central problem of this study. The article therefore ask

1. What happens when an individual's moral responsibility toward another person becomes stronger than the instinct to preserve oneself?

2. How does the conflict between Eman's desires for survival and his moral obligation toward others interpreted through Freud's id, ego, and superego, transform his goodness into the cause of his destruction in The Strong Breed?

This study argue that Eman's tragic death occurs at a point when his goodness become excessive and stop being just a form of virtue but starts function as an uncompromising moral obligation. His initial desire for survival Forces him to reject the role of carrier while his ego tries to built a life away from the rituals and traditions but when Ifada becomes the target of the societal violence his moral goodness becomes dominant over his own desires of survival and ultimately placing himself back to the very position he was rejecting continueslly . He save ifada but lost his own life making his destruction the ultimate price of being good.

2. Methodology

This analysis uses qualitative textual methodology. The primary source is the play itself. Secondary source include articles, journals, dissertations and theory. This analysis is completely based on close reading of Eman's dialogues, actions, behavior, relationships, decisions and responses to rituals and traditions.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

This study uses Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic lens particularly id, ego, and superego proposed in The Ego and the Id (1923). The analysis doesn't claim that Soyinka construct his character Eman based on Freud's psychoanalytic framework but this instrument is used to interpret the psychological structure in Eman's character.

The id is the primal part of the psyche which is used to analyze Eman's desire for survival, freedom, and his attempt of escaping from the imposed identity.

The ego is the rational part of the psyche which is used to interpret Eman's attempt of building a life completely away from the rituals and traditions of the society.

The superego is the moral part of the psyche which is used to analyze Eman's excessive goodness and moral obligation and it's dominancey when he saw ifada as a victim of rituals.

Results .3

the id : s desire for survival'Eman 3.1

The first finding highlight Eman's desire to protect his existence. in the play Eman is portrayed as a person who attempts to escape from the society's expectations because of his inherited identity. Even before the final ritual crisis, his deep relationship with his wife Sunma shows his deeper connection with his life which he has build with Sunma. in the play Sunma continueslly forced him to live this village with her.

Moreover she also argues that he is wasting his precious life for the people who do not give value to him but see him as a stranger. Eman doesn't shows himself as someone who seek death but he tells her

" I simply have no desires to go away" (121)

This line places an important value for Freudian reading because it highlights Eman's deeper connection and attachment with his present life. His rejection of leaving is not interpret as his desires for death but showing the proof of his desires of staying in a life which he has build.

Sunma argues that he is "*wasting*" his life on those people who want him" *out of their way*" (120)

Yet Eman choose to stay in between them. His desire to live therefore exists alongside his willingness to help others and this is the first psychological conflict. He wants to protect himself but he also inherent responsibilities. This self protection can be interpreted through Freud's psychoanalytic instrument particularly id. Id represents both survival and satisfaction.

3.2 Eman’s Alternative Life: The Ego and Reality

The second finding shows Eman's attempt to build a completely different life. His act of escaping doesn't simply show his running away from society but it show his other identity. He presents himself as teacher and participate in different ways in society while staying away from the rituals and traditions of the community.

His bond with ifada shows this as he doesn't view ifada as someone who s worthless or disgusting despite Sunma's disgusting toward ifada. This can seen through the one in the play when Sunma criticize ifada by saying he useless and worthless but Eman responded by saying

"He is quite happy here. He doesn’t bother anyone and he makes himself useful” (117).

This shows Eman's ability to give he worth to whom society make worthless. He shows possession of deep morality. He teaches, helps and gives without demanding anything in return. This is important and can be interpreted through ego as he live elsewhere, work, teach, and help other people without becoming a carrier.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL (JALT)
Vol.9. No.1 2025

3.3 The Psychological Importance of Ifada

Ifada is the important aspect for Eman's psychological transformation. Initially he view Ifada as someone who is weak and fragile and he can help. The play shows a clear contrast of Eman's behaviour with Sunma's disgust. For example when Sunma says that she has " *no pity left for him"*(117) . At that Eman responded that Ifada is not accountable for his current condition and he can be useful.

This shows that Eman see people as worthy. Society see Ifada as a target for their violent ritual but Eman does not accept this logic. This conflict becomes personal. Eman does not accept Ifada's suffering , making it an important element for his own suffering.

3.4 The Superego: Moral Responsibility Toward Ifada

The third finding is that Eman's moral goodness became dominant over everything when he encounters Ifada' suffering. When villagers come to get Ifada . He run toward Eman's house

" A terrified and disordered figure bursts suddenly round the corner, past the window and begins hammering at the door. It is ifada. Desperate with terror, he pounds madly at the door, dumb-moaning all the while."

"Eman: isn't that Ifada?"

Here Sumna tries to prevent him from interfering but Eman continues to insist and keep asking what is happening. When Ifada enters in terror Eman protected him . Here it shows that Eman holds a goodness and ready to help others willingly. The contrast between Eman and other people is clear. The villagers want ifada as a carrier and see it as ritual act but Eman sees only Ifada as a human and protects him.

This is where Freud's concept of superego is essential. Upon seeing ifada in worse condition his moral obligation activated and become excessive. The clear evidence is when a man come to get ifada back Eman responded

" This is my house" (127)

This does not shows a physical possession but psychological responsibility over the space in which ifada has sought refuge.

3.5 The Superego Overcomes Self Preservation

The psychological conflict become more when People warned eman about the consequences. He already knows everything. He was aware about the danger of being a carrier yet he remains stubborn. This is important because it shows that Eman is not ignorant but he made decision despite knowing the danger. This conflict can be represented as I'd which demand protection of self, ego which whispered that he has life and he can live somewhere else and can escape, and superego which demanded that ifada can not be abandoned. Eman chooses the third and this is where the article revolve around . It becomes the central argument. Eman's morality no longer remains as a personality trait but it started demanding and becoming dominant . He cannot allow another person to suffer simply because he is capable of escaping and consequences is the defeat of self-preservation.

Discussion .4

Goodness as Psychological Burden 4.1

His .s goodness transform into a psychological burden'The results shows that Eman .to help others but prevent him to focus on his own protection goodness Force him There is nothinginherently destructive about Eman's kindness toward Ifada. The destructive element emerges when his moral responsibility becomes absolute.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

As she .clearly apparent through his wife Sunma The play itself makes this tension consistently force Eman to leave the village with her. At one point she tells him *.(122)Keeping faith with so much is slowly making you inhuman"*

Sunma get aware of .the article This Statement hold a position for later argument in s excessive goodness which become increasin'Emangly dangerous for Eman himself. The paradox is shown through the Phrase " making you inhuman" . Eman is becoming inhuman because of his excessive goodness toward humanity. He cares so deeply about responsibility that he begins to disregard his own existence.

.This is where the price of being good becomes visible

Preservation-Eman's Goodness Versus Self 4.2

direct encounter Now the conflict present in Eman can be clearly understood as a The id ask for survival while .between id and superegosuperego demands excessive goodness. The ego tries to maintain a Balance but the current situation is no longer in control. Eman faced conflict that if he protect himself Ifada will suffer and if he protect ifada he will suffer . Here his goodness was increasingly dominant so Eman chooses ifada over his own self. He didn't chose death . He also wanted to survive, to live his life that he constructed with his wife but he chooses goodness over everything which ultimately shows him the cost of possessing excessive goodness.

Goodness as Defiance :"yaW nwO ruoY wolloF syawlA uoY" 4.3

When Eman protect ifada Sunma get angry and tells him

(127)You always follow your own way" "

s stubbornness but it re'Apperently the line feels criticism regarding Emanveals the complexity of his morality. He doesn't listen Sunma but listen to his excessive goodness. This matters because it prevents the argument from reducing Eman's sacrifice to cultural determinism. Eman made decision motivated by his morality and this is why his excessive goodness becomes a cost of his own life.

4.4 The Return of the Carrier

nd The most prominent result is that Eman accept the role of being a carrier at the e .which he was rejecting continueslly throughout the play

The playmake this transformation prominent at the end of the story. Eman was considered as a carrier at the end and the stage directions describe him physically taking on the carrier's position. His final acceptance of being a carrier can be interpreted as different . He doesn't accept this role because of his obligation linked to his inherited identity but he accepted this role because he refuses to let the ifada become a carrier and a victim of the rituals. This shows the clear paradox . Society says someone has to be a carrier but Eman's goodness says not ifada. Hence Eman's sacrifice can be seen as a rejection of rituals but he enter into the role voluntarily, showing extreme goodness and this is what makes his goodness so costly.

The Strong Breed and the 4.5 Exploitation of Goodness

society that destroy and use people who hold greatest The play finally mirror the The society wanted someone as a carrier who is willing to carry away the .morality sins and evils and Eman was willing to do that and here his excessive goodness make him vulnerable. This shows an important element that the society does not destroy Eman despite his goodness but it is able to use him because of his goodness. His goodness becomes an instrument to use.

Freud proposed the inner conflicts but this play also show that why conflicts become the reason of destruction. The society around Eman had no goodness and morality in then but Eman has this characteristic which become the price leading to his own death

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

The Price Becomes Lite 4.6ral

his father reveals his physical s conversation with'Eman ,Near the end of the play ,When his father told him to return . suffering too which was because of his decision Eman responded

I have been looking for the stream all .My throat is burning" night" (145).

His .again as a price of being good s physical suffering'This line shows Eman Eman .goodness is no longer a concept of morality but it becomes a physical suffering .paid the price of his goodness with his body

4.7*"I Know How I Must Do This"*: The Final Choice

s father tell him to 'at the end of the play when Eman The strongest evidence appare Eman responded by saying .take the longer way and return

"But you said … I take the longer way, you know how I must do this" (145).

This lines shows that Eman was aware what he is doing and there's another way but he chooses the path that leads to become a carrier. He make this decision because of his dominant goodness.

Destruction-Goodness as the Mechanism of Self 4.8

s goodn'Emaness does not create his destruction but if Forcea him to make a decision that places him into the role of being a carrier. At first Eman wanted to save himself . He rejected the inherited identity. He also saw Ifada as someone who is weak which become the victim of rituals but Eman rejected this and protected ifada by placing himself on ifada's position and ultimately he becomes the victim of his own goodness. In this way the play shows the price of being good.

Eman's Goodness and the Tragic Irony 4.9

Eman saves the person whom community see as . There is an irony present in the play useful for carrying away theirs evil and sins but by saving ifada Eman become useful s logic is still there but just'Here is shows that the society . for the very reason redirected . The was still existing and sacrifice also occurred. The body no matter who's is it still bare the society's burden . The difference was that it was Eman now not ifada . Hence it shows that Eman wins ethically but lost his life . Eman achieves moral integrity at the cost of physical existence. His goodness therefore has a double result that saving morality but destroying self. That is the precise meaning of the article's title.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined Eman's psychological conflict in Wole Soyinka's The Strong Breed through Freud's id, ego, and superego. The analysis shows that Eman's desire for self survival initially leads him away from the carrier role while his morality forced him to protect Ifada. His superego become dominant over other aspects leading him to accept the role he once rejected.

The study argues that Eman's goodness becomes destructive when moral He saves Ifada but loses his .responsibility demands the complete surrender of self own life making his sacrifice the tragic price of being good. Eman's tragedy thus lies in the conflict between the desire to preserve oneself and the moral refusal to let another suffer. His goodness is his greatest virtue but within a society that exploits sacrifice and it also becomes the instrument of his destruction.

References

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

Alebrahim, M. k. (2021). An analysis of the postcolonial thematic aspects in Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed. The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, 12(4), 468-474

Th .(2020) .A .M ,Balkayae ritual of sacrifice within the cultural boundaries in Wole Soyinka's The Strong Breed. Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Dergisi, 60(2), 717–732. https://doi.org/10.33171/dtcfjournal.2020.60.2.20

g BreedSoyinka's The Stron .(2008) .T ,Dubostas a tragedy of hope. Commonwealth Essays and Studies, 30(2), 22–34. https://doi.org/10.4000/ces.9132

Original) .Norton .W .W .(.Trans ,Strachey .J) The ego and the id .(1961) .S ,Freud .(1923 work published

Guha, S. (2016). Wole Soyinka's re-deployment of Yoruba folklore in *The Strong Breed. An International Journal of World Literature and Culture*, 2(1), 24-32

.Oxford University Press .The Strong Breed .(1964) .W ,Soyinka

egion of the uncanny iKindred phenomena from the r .(2018) .U .G ,Umezuriken Wole Soyinka's The Strong Breed. In E. Nwabueze (Ed.), Wole Soyinka and the poetics of commitment (pp. 329–335). CNC Publications.