

#for MA English Semester II. Paper CC 08 Literary Theory and Criticism.

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## Psychoanalysis and Literary Criticism (Part 2)

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Freud has divided the human psyche (human mind/ human personality) into three parts- *Id*, *Ego* and *Superego*.

*Id* is the animalistic, unorganized and instinctual part of the human *psyche* (totality of mind- unconscious and conscious) that remains present with us right from our birth and is the source of our bodily needs, wants, desires and impulses particularly the sexual and aggressive ones. It is one of the strongest motivating forces. It is entirely unconscious aspect of our psyche, which is the source of all “psychic energy”. It is the primary component of our personality. It acts according to the *pleasure principle*. It strives for immediate gratification/satisfaction of all desires.

*Id* is basically childish and impulsive part of our personality that does what it wants, and it wants things really intensely and does not think about consequences. All of us have experienced that a child is very possessive. Everything that he sees, he wants to have it immediately. If his desire is not fulfilled, he starts crying and if they are fulfilled, he derives pleasure and this instinct remains with him till death.

Even in the grown up people this instinct works strongly. If one wants to have a thing (sweets, fruits, soft drinks etc or any other thing on this earth), and if his wish is fulfilled by any means- fair or foul- he feels pleasure. But it is not possible that all the time our wishes are fulfilled due to various factors. In that case we feel

anxiety. Our minds become disturbed and we are overpowered by depression and tension. This is due to the internal conflict between the basic desires (*Id*) and the consciousness (*Ego*), which works on the *reality principle*.

As we grow up the instinctive desire / childish desires are buried at the deepest consciousness level and our childish behaviour becomes less and less acceptable in our family / society. We have to check the demands of the *Id*. This elevation of our psyche / personality is called *Ego*.

*Ego* helps us understand the real world, which works on *reality principle*. It is that component of the psyche that ensures that the impulses of the *Id* are expressed in a way that is acceptable to the real world / human society. To understand *Ego*, we should understand the three stages of consciousness.

Consciousness can be created with awareness. The conscious mind includes everything that we are aware of. Awareness is possible when our mind is shaped so that with think and talk rationally. There are two kinds of unconscious – *latent* (capable of becoming conscious) and *repressed* (not capable of becoming conscious in ordinary way). Latent is called preconscious. Example can be of operating a motor vehicle.

The repressed is the unconscious mind. It deals with the unconscious repressed data. It is the reservoir of feelings, thoughts, urges and memories that are outside of our conscious awareness. The unpleasant contents of the unconscious are feelings of pain, anxiety or conflict. Freud links the unconscious to dreaming. It talks of symbolism in which objects of the dream represent objects in reality.

Hypnosis acts on it and brings repressed feelings and desire from unconscious to a more conscious level of awareness. This Idea allowed for the therapeutic breakthroughs to be made on the psychoanalytic level.

The unconscious moves from static to dynamic.

*Ego* develops from *Id* and insures the fulfillment of the impulse of *Id* in a socially acceptable manner. It represents reason and commonsense. It serves three masters- the external world, the *Id* and the *Superego*. It frames a set of rules and forces us to think of the risks, requirements, and possible outcomes before we initiate our action to fulfil the urges of *Id*. *Ego* does not block the urge of *Id* but the urge is fulfilled in the ways that are safe, realistic and appropriate.

It has been observed that the pleasure principle (*Id*) and the reality principle (*Ego*) are at odds. Sometimes it is not possible to fulfil our desire. In that case dissatisfaction takes place. Freud compares *Id* to a horse and the *Ego* to the rider. The horse provides the power, motivation but the rider provides direction and guidance, without which the horse may wander anywhere.

The *Ego* discharges tension, created by *Id*, through the use of a secondary process of thinking. For example, if we are in a meeting and if the meeting prolongs, we grow hungry. Our *Id* compels us to leave the meeting and eat something immediately but our *Ego* guides us and we sit in the meeting till it ends. After that we eat something. This means that we have satisfied our *Id* in a realistic and appropriate manner.

*Superego* is the third part of Freud's system. It develops our personality. It holds all of our internalized moral standards and ideals that we acquire from our parents, teachers, preachers, literary and religious books and lots of people of our society and develop our sense of right and wrong. It provides guidelines for making judgements. It has two parts-

1. It includes the rules and standards for behaviour that *Ego* aspires to.

2. The conscience includes information about things that are viewed as bad by our parents and society. Some of the behaviours that are forbidden and lead to bad consequences and punishments are to be avoided.

*Superego* gives perfection to us as human beings and makes us civilized and cultured. It suppresses all acceptable urges of *Id* and makes the *Ego* act upon idealistic standards rather than realistic principles. It is present in conscious, unconscious and preconscious.

It is to be noted that suppression of sex desire or *libido* results in frustration but it also plays a great role in human life. It (suppression of *libido*) sublimates into praiseworthy and socially acceptable achievements. It lays the foundation of the growth and expansion of culture and civilization, if positively channelized. All the institutions that we see before us, all the arts and crafts, and all literatures are the manifestations of such sublimated impulses, i.e. *Superego*.

Each component has its unique contribution to personality. The three components emerge at different points in life. For a healthy personality there must be a balance between the *Id*, the *Ego* and the *Superego*. If the balance is not maintained-three elements would lead to maladaptive personality. An individual with dominant impulsive demands (*Id*) might become uncontrollable, lawbreakers and criminals. Such types of persons do not see to it whether their behaviour is appropriate, socially acceptable or legal. On the other a person with dominant *Superego* becomes moralistic and a man of sound judgement. He will not do anything that is considered as bad or immoral by society.

*Ego* does not act alone. Its role is very tough. At the time of dissatisfaction and anxiety, it (*Ego*) mediates between the demands of the basic urges, moral values and the real world. It works as a defence mechanism and reduces anxiety.

