

Inner Exploration in Ajay K.Pandey's Novel *A Girl to Remember*

OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript ID:
ENG-2021-09044278

Volume: 9

Issue: 4

Month: September

Year: 2021

P-ISSN: 2320-2645

E-ISSN: 2582-3531

Received: 28.06.2021

Accepted: 05.08.2021

Published: 01.09.2021

Citation:

Ponmalar, SK. "Inner Exploration in Ajay K.Pandey's Novel *A Girl to Remember*." *Shanlax International Journal of English*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2021, pp. 45–50.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/english.v9i4.4278>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

S.K. Ponmalar

Assistant Professor in English

Raja Doraisingham Government Arts College, Sivagangai, Tamil Nadu, India

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2387-2461>

Abstract

This paper focuses Ajay.K.Pandey's views on the inner exploration and the tremendous change of the protagonist in his novel A Girl to Remember, using the ideas of the famous Psychoanalyst Carl Jung, the novelist restates the idea that every human being has two sides of personality, good and bad. He narrates the story of the demon that lives within the protagonist and how he skilfully silencing the angel and winning over its dark temptations through the inner exploration. This novel is an attempt at exploring the role of some female characters who are responsible for making the protagonist's life extraordinary by guiding him in his inner journey and finding a destination.

Keywords: Inner journey, Self-discovery, Psychological dilemma, Uncontrollable desire, Transformation

In seeking inner peace, parts of the people in the world are searching to attain it from holy places, self-help books, spiritual retreats, etc., but they fail in their attempt. While seeking outside, they forget to search the place, which is within. Instead of analyzing ourselves, our thoughts, expectations, and disappointments we tend to the exact opposite like searching outside. This contradiction leads to instabilities of controlling one's mind which results in tightness, worries, agitation, self-doubt, uneasiness, and lack of peace. If one is ready to tranquilize his inner thoughts and attempt to transform himself definitely, it is possible for him to create a positive change in his life. One should be ready to face even a negative experience with mental strength monitoring the emotional changes and the positive outcome. This process or experience is named self-discovery, inner exploration, or inner journey.

The theme of self-discovery is often dealt in the majority of the works in Literature. The inner exploration guides a person to identify his potential, which helps to achieve his goal. The inner exploration is necessary for a better personal life and society, and it helps individuals to gain strength. Through their experience, people develop healthy and strong minds. The literature discusses the psychological dilemmas of people who belong to different societies and reveal the mind and heart of humanity. Because of economic development, values are often murdered and so the present generation is in search of identity. Selfishness can be changed with the transformation of the self, which in turn the society can be changed. Psychoanalysis plays an important role in an individual's life because of the emotional stress they experience in different phases of life. So self- exploration and self-discovery endows the identity of the self and shows a life of virtue.

According to Aristotle, "Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom". As Carl Jung has explained, the introvert's activity and attention are directed internally to one's own inner world, which is the actual world. They neglect

the influence of the outer world.

All of us take the roles of extrovert and introvert as we relate ourselves to the world around us and the world within, but we tend to follow our own standpoint over the other balancing both worlds. In the words of Avatar Mahajan,

If one feels emptiness, inadequate and unfulfilled inside then more other success will magnify this inadequacy. Similarly, if one feels fulfilled in love and complete in the inner world, achieving outer success will make him happier and fulfilled. Hence, to achieve happiness, it is important that we achieve the balance of both worlds and focus on outer success. (Mahajan, 2014)

Indian writing in English is renowned throughout the world for its depth and profundity, especially in the theme of the inner journey. Modern Indian writers like ChetanBhagat and DurjoyDatta tell the stories of their own experience what many writers hesitate to pen down. Ajaykumar Pandey is also a powerful writer who boldly attempts to write what he saw and learned in his life in a country where social prohibition, social image, and social media change the course of lives. Ajay K Pandey is an Indian writer, born on July 8, 1984. He grew up in the modest National Thermal Power Corporation township of Rihand Nagar, studied engineering in Electronics at IERT (Allahabad) and MBA at IIMM (Pune) before taking up a job in a corporate firm. Travelling to different places has taught him different cultures and people, and makes him wonder how despite all the differences, there is a bond that unites them.

You are the Best Wife is Pandey's debut book based on his life events and lessons. He has authored bestselling titles *Her Last Wish*, *You are the Best Friend*, *A Girl to Remember*, *An Unexpected Gift*, and *Everything I Never Told You*. Each of his stories has an inspiring message from real- life experiences, which create engrossing characters. According to him, romance is all about love and emotions, and close to reality, readers can be connected to the story by the natural way of storytelling.

In every part of human history and across cultures, sexual desire has been of attention to the public and, now more recently, to the medical or psychological field. Neel, the protagonist of the novel *A Girl to*

Remember, has sexual desire. He is diverted when he sees the naked legs, which violates him to think something bad about women's appearance. Being a slave to his body, he never listens to his conscience. The female characters such as his student, Ananya, his brother's wife, Neha never allow him to realize the fact that a woman is not just a body; they are also the reason for his opinion on women. Other female characters such as his mother, his student, Pihu, and Pihu's mother Annu are the best women in Neel's life who turn Neel's life extraordinary. They are his guides who help him have an inner journey and find a destination in it.

Neel's problem begins when he was a child. Neel's mother worries about his behaviour and she is blaming herself for that. At the beginning of this story, we are admitted that Neel is a womanizer. When he was eight years old, he started to fascinate women's legs. Regarding this he says,

Watching school girls passing by in their varied length skirts gave me a strange satisfaction. I always watched their legs. They were all beautiful, differently. Some were extra exposed, some exceptionally fair, and some used to be hidden too much by their extra-long skirts. I don't know why, but those legs always caught my attention. (52)

Though a woman can play many roles in her life, the toughest role is the mother. Though she wants to be a perfect mother, readers are about to blame his mother, who is blind to her son's immoralities. But the chapter XII makes us to have a positive view of Neel's mother. She shares Neel's behavior from his childhood, portraying how Neel was a favorite doll for all the ladies in his childhood. When he was in class six, he had etched a nude figure on the classroom wooden desk. She says, "He had always been fascinated with women's leg" (81)

Neel's way of selecting a gift in his childhood is unusual. He demanded soft toys, Barbie dolls, or a dollhouse instead of bicycles, race cars, roller skates, chocolates, and ice cream. In his teenage, his curiosity for bad movies, erotic books, and adult magazines was increased. And he wanted to choose Biology in class eleventh, but his father forced him

to take mathematics. Moreover, Neel chose a couple of friends, who had the habit of smoking and taking abused drugs in his graduation years. So the bad Neel turned worse. He has become stone-hearted. When his brother Nikhil married Neha, everything took a turn for the bad. Neel himself accepts how he spoils the relationship by saying,

I did not notice any other body parts. Only the long and beautiful legs, which were extra exposed with the short dress. Those legs in high heels were all over my mind. I imagined them walking in the house. There was something magical in them. (68)

Neel has an illegal relationship with Neha. He used to visualize Neha like a soft doll for his satisfaction. Her seductive body and his uncontrollable desire give new heights to spoil the relationship. As he is facing women who are ready to fulfill his desire, never allows him to have a positive view of women and their physical appearance. The most important woman in Neel's life is his mother. She too notices the changes in Neel's behaviour but cannot find a solution in her move. She never supports Neel for his immorality, but she never wants to leave his son as he wishes. Neel's mother says about Neel's behavioural changes as,

His comments were sharp and the slangs he used made one cringe. He only thought of women as bodies and their existence, for he was solely to satisfy men's need. (84).

As a mother, she tries a lot to pull Neel out of the depths he had fallen into, but she fails many times. She also tries to find the reason by asking many questions such as "Why he could not think of women in any other way? Was it because he never had a girl so close to him who could change him?"(85). Neel's mother's questions are answered when Neel meets Pihu, his student. Neel's mother wishes to have Neel as a changed man. Her desires become fulfilled with the help of Pihu. Neel is not comfortable with Pihu in the beginning. As Neel is attracted to women's legs, he does not find any special attraction towards Pihu. Neel looks at Pihu's leg as it is peeking from under the skirt had no curvy appeal. They seem more like a pair of bamboo sticks supporting a thin frame. "Her bamboo thin, unattractive legs failed to draw

my attention. I silently thanked the heaven above for making her so average looking."(43)

Neel feels Pihu is so familiar to him for the reason that her brown eyes are almost like Neel. The circumstances which make this meeting are Neel's preferential treatment for Ananya. There is a complaint against Neel in the school that he handled tuition for Ananya, a student at her seventeen. It attracted him towards Ananya only because of her beautiful legs, which are the worst weakness of Neel. He says, "The owner of the long legs turned towards me" (31) and Ananya never wanted to pull down her skirt, not even an inch. It added fuel to Neel's desire. Later they started to have a conversation on Whatsapp which made the relationship horrible. She pinged him with some mathematics problems but always let the conversation more interesting. Neel himself notices the behaviour of Ananya in the classroom. Neel says,

With the passing day, more and more of her thighs started to show in class, it was like offering blood to a thirsty shark. What added misery to my woes was that the shark had been hungry since a year (32).

As we know about Neel already, he never forces himself on any girl but he might be imagining them naked in his mind and saying and doing what his senses found bliss in. Likewise, his imagination goes wild every night when he chats with Ananya. Later, Ananya wants to meet Neel in his staff residence for tuition. Though Neel is not ready, as they are not supposed to meet students in their house, leave aside girls' students. But Ananya does what she wants with the recommendation of her mom. Ananya provoked Neel with the wrong intention whenever she gets chances. But Neel never crosses his barrier as a teacher, and he does not want to go to the extreme level of his desire. But the staff members and students make this situation pathetic by their well-known rumours. "Rumors are carried by haters, spread by fools and accepted by idiots" (87). Neel becomes a hot topic of the day among the people on the school campus. DAV school has a reputation for its strict rules and regulations. The school says the reason for his resignation is not acceptable to take tuition for a particular student. And one among the

students makes a complaint against Neel for this preferential treatment.

Pihu helps Neel to get accommodation in her own house. She forces Neel to come and stay at her home. As Neel is her favourite teacher, she convinces her mother of this. Pihu's mother Annu is an independent lady who lost her husband due to a genetic disorder. Neel notices she had the same brown eyes as he and Pihu. When Neel met Pihu's mother, he wonders how Pihu is unlike her sophisticated and well-mannered mother. Neel's inner demon tries to come out when he meets this gorgeous lady. He starts to think about her physical appearance often. He cannot believe that she is a mother to a seventeen-year-old girl. He likes Pihu's mom more than Pihu. Neel's mind says, "A house with two females and a male tenant, I thought aloud. The perfect plot for an erotic movie, I kept smiling foolishly at my own thought. Pihu's mom kept wandering in and out of my mind." (24).

Neel's attraction towards Annu still exists in his mind, and his cruel mind wants to maintain himself as Pihu's favourite teacher to get the love and money from Annu. So he agrees whenever Pihu wants to spend time with him. He expects Annu's company always. They go for a movie and have dinner together. Pihu enjoys it for Neel but Neel enjoys it for Annu. Annu's appearance is always simple as it is said, "Simplicity is the best makeup." Neel's inner demon got fuel to its desire when he meets Annu. It is shown when Pihu asked Neel what he thinks about her mom. Neel says, "Your mom is very helpful and efficient, Pihu. Manage things quite commendably, I replied out loud, putting the demon in my head to rest." (24). Later Neel notices Annu spends nighttime on her terrace every Saturday. So he begins to spend his time every night and he is waiting for that Saturday. As his plan becomes successful, he is trying to control his demon on that night. Annu's appearance is very contradictory to her stage of widowhood.

Almost around midnight on Saturday, a gorgeous single mom in shorts and a t-shirt walked up the stairs to the terrace. It was difficult to believe she had a daughter almost seventeen years old. Her skin defied any rules of age, and she glowed in the dim light. Moreover, how could she dress in

something so modern! (117).

All these stupidities of Neel's thought make Neel encourage his inner demon, and he never wants to listen to his conscience. As far as his thoughts are ruined by his life due to his internal and external sources, he has to change both the sources into positive thoughts to have a positive life. He has an inner journey to realize the importance of women and the purpose of life. The journey he undergoes is never possible without Neel's mother, Pihu, and Pihu's Annu. He renews his mind when he becomes closer to these women. His conversation with his mother always makes him feel comfortable. Once they both watch news about a Radio cab driver who misbehaves with a helpless lady passenger. Neel's mother curses the driver as a monster, but Neel is thinking about the driver and trying to understand his mind frame instead of thinking about the woman who is the victim. Neel tries to hide this reality and expresses his words against the driver due to his mother's presence. Neel says, "I don't know why men look for forceful sexual satisfaction" (76). Neel's mother used this opportunity to impart life lessons to her son, who only understands his own desire. Neel's mother says, "Every human being has some desire, Neel. Sometimes, they can control the desire, and sometimes, the desire controls them" (76).

Neel's mother tries to make changes in Neel's life. She wants to be friendlier to her son. She answers all the questions from Neel's side and she starts questioning Neel. She asks, "What do you see when you see a woman?" (76). Neel does not want to tell his mother what he sees when he see a woman. But he closes his eyes and imagined them naked. He sees the body, their thighs, and legs act as the deepest energy source. He feels very bad about himself and hesitates to face his mother. But his mother asks him why Neel does not think his mother like that. And Neel's answer to her question is nothing, but she is his mother. Neel's mother gives amazing advice, which can change many people like Neel. This is a primary tool for Neel's inner transformation and the inner journey. She says,

A woman is a mother, a sister, a friend, a daughter to someone. You can understand these

relationships better when you become a father or a husband. A relationship is the mother of all feelings. You will realize that she is not just a body, she is much more than that (77).

Neel thinks others as emotional fools, comes to know about the importance of relationships. The next life changer of Neel is Pihu who plays a major role to transform Neel from a demon to an angel. Neel is not attracted to Pihu by her appearance; her behaviour and Neel's interest in Pihu's mother make him get irritated in Pihu's presence. "This girl has made my life hell" (95). This kind of avoidance in Neel becomes vanished when he realizes the true love of Pihu. Pihu tried to express her love towards Neel as a daughter. But her teenage and her behaviour make Neel think of Pihu as an unwanted girlfriend. It confuses him when Pihu, a childish girl, asks him a book *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

A Teenager was asking my permission to read *Fifty Shades of Grey*. I would have given it. What if her mom got to know that her so-called maths teacher was giving out books related to biology? (23)

This situation insists Neel think about her interest in biology rather than mathematics and there was a possibility for Neel to recall his teenage when Neel had an interest in biology rather than mathematics. He compares himself with Pihu and get a bad opinion on Pihu. Pihu believes in angels as her mother told many stories on angels and demons. Pihu considers Neel as her angel. Once Pihu, a seventeen-year-old girl asks Neel to tell her the love story of an angel and a demon. He replies thoughtfully, "There can be no love between an angel and a demon" (126). Ananya shares her view on Pihu with Neel. This makes him analyse Pihu more. Ananya says, "She has had her eye on you forever. She always talks about you, even though you never taught her" (130). He thinks about Pihu in a positive way for the very first time. His realization reflects in his words as,

Pihu was the one who offered me shelter when I was thrown out and had nowhere to go. She was really trying to help. Before I could forgive her and ask for forgiveness for being rude (133).

This is Neel's second part of his inner transformation. Annu plays a major part in changing Neel's opinion on Pihu. Annu's reason behind telling stories of Angel and demon to Pihu is her closeness to her father. She spends many sleepless nights after his death. She often asks when her father will come. To comfort her, she says an illogical story of angel and demon describing a demon that has taken her father away. So Pihu believes that one day, an angel will come, and a miracle will happen. Annu explains to Neel how Pihu loves him and she says to him, "she believes you are her angel" (137). The very first time he listens to his heart. There is another reason for Pihu's love towards Neel is Neel is looking like her father, Mangesh Parkhi who taught Mathematics and Physics in DAV school where Neel worked and Pihu studied. It is important to notice Pihu's love towards her father is clearly shown when Annu shares her worries with Neel. She says,

Pihu was closer to her father, always. Even when we knew we should take control of the situation and make her less dependent on him, I couldn't do it. It would have been cruel to them both. After Mangesh left, it was difficult for her to sleep on many nights (158).

The love between a father and a daughter is always stronger than a mother and daughter. Neel realizes this whenever he talks to Annu. Then Neel gets an opportunity to find Pihu's love when Pihu presents him a card. The words in that card make Neel understand the love of Pihu. The card says, "Hi sir, because of you, I believe in angel... Happy father's Day (177). He gets the answers for his entire question after seeing that card. He finds the reason for Pihu's attraction towards Neel. This is one of the major factors for Neel's inner transformation. He feels that Pihu likes him because he looks like her father. The truth differs from his assumption on Pihu. He also realizes the fact that Pihu dislikes Ananya for talking nonsense about Neel in the classroom. Finally, he says, "All because she saw her father in me" (178). Neel recalls everything when he stands before the mirror and realizes his mistakes. His inner angel comes out for the first time. He said,

The person in the mirror was still staring at me. I hated him. I hated how self-centered he was!

There was something about the eyes that I was uncomfortable with. Since my hands remained immovable, frozen, I could not reach for the eyes and see a couple more drops continued, wetting my cheeks, making way to my dry lips (179).

The most horrible thing is Neel's inability of recognizing the love of Pihu when she likes to spend most of the time with him. The love bond between them becomes stronger when Pihu is at the end of her life. Pihu's appearance becomes as bad as the disease increases its power on her. Neel understands the changes in him. He said, "I tasted the salty tears. The last time I remembered resorting to tears when I was in the class third" (179). It shows how a demon ruled a man since his childhood. The inner transformation cannot take place without the changes in the outer world, and vice versa. Later, Pihu wants Neel to marry her mother before she dies. Pihu plans everything clear and wants to see everything in place before she leaves. Neel agrees that Pihu is not an immature girl. Neel's worst weakness in women's legs becomes vanished. He begins to see Pihu as his daughter. The transformation in him is clearly shown when he said,

I went to see Pihu. She was in her bed. One leg out of the blanket. I saw a naked leg, and my gaze did not falter. I sat on Pihu's bed, close to her. I had no hesitation. There was no testosterone, no adrenalin rush, and no hormonal imbalance (184).

Neel feels happy to be a father for Pihu. Whenever she addresses him as a father, it pinches a part of his heart. Neel understands how a relationship makes wonders in human life. He believes that his angel Pihu takes his demon along with her death and helps him to understand the world. Below mentioned quotation explains the point in detail.

"An inner journey will let them gain some personal experience that will help them become wiser and more mature. An understanding of

other individuals will come when relationships are formed and knowing about political issues in society will also help them understand the world."(UK Essays)

The inner journey and inner transformation are very essential for every individual. Neel believes, "She was born to teach me an important lesson-A woman is far more than just a body" (209). This is how inner transformation comes to a man who has gone to a point of no return.

Reference

- Kabir, Rezwanul, et al. "Human Nature and Psychological Insights." *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2019, pp. 23-30.
- "What is Inner Transformation?." *Avtar Mahajan Your Personal Life Coach & Trainer*, 2014.
- Crossen, David. "Guilt is a Recurring Theme in Literature and Drama." *The New York Times*, 1979.
- "Difference Between Admission and Confession." *PEDIAA*, 2015.
- Meng, Xianhai. "The Role of Trust in Relationship Development and Performance Improvement." *Journal of Civil Engineering and Management*, vol. 21, no. 7, 2015, pp. 845-853.
- Kaur, Gurnaz. "Words to Remember - Ajay Pandey." *Tribune India*, 2018.
- Pandey, Ajay. *You are the Best Wife*. Srishti Publishers & Distributors, 2015.
- "Studying the Concept of Inner Journeys English Literature Essay." *UK Essays*, 2015.
- Verma, Prakhar. "How to Renew Yourself with Inner Transformation (Step-By-Step)." *Mission.org*, 2018.
- Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Company Limited, 1913.

Author Details

Dr. S.K. Ponmalar, M.A., M.Phil., B.Ed., Ph.D., Assistant Professor in English, Raja Doraisingam Government Arts College, Sivagangai, Tamil Nadu, India, **Email ID:** c.ka.malar@gmail.com.