

# Morality over Pleasure Principle: A Psychological Study of Biblical Character Samson and Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar in Kalki's *Ponniyin Selvan*

Selvan

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## Abstract

In this article, the researcher endeavours to compare and critique the characters of Biblical Character Samson and Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar from Kalki's *Ponniyin Selvan* in the light of Sigmund Freud's three components of mind- Id, Ego and Super-ego. By applying the

psychoanalytic theory, the present study brings out the internal conflicts in the select characters. This article primarily focuses on a) witnessing both of the character's behavioural responses, such as changes in attitudes, actions in life events, pursuit of love, which has been taken for psychological investigation, b) analysing the morality over pleasure principle, which makes the characters significant in the readers' minds. The present study has hypothesized how the instinctual drive of 'Id' becomes the major cause of Senior's suicide in an open court. It also investigated how the life and death drives of the Id function in Samson's suicide are discussed. The character investigation in the above backdrop will bring a different aspect to appreciate Kalki's masterpiece by attaining 'Catharsis' in readers' minds. The scope of this study is to understand the interchanging of the masks of each character, representative of the interactions of the different personality levels, that provides the reader with insight into who each character truly is. This psychological approach will help the reader identify each individual's personality by their actions.

**Keywords:** Psychoanalysis, Pleasure Principle, Anagnorisis, Inner Conflict, Personality Traits.

### **Introduction:**

So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires. —Paul the Apostle (NKJV, Colossians 3:5).

The words of Greek philosopher Socrates, 'Know thyself is the beginning of Wisdom,' always have an admiration. According to Carl Jung, 'The Self' is the ordering and unifying centre of the total psyche (conscious and unconscious) just as 'The Ego' is the centre of the conscious personality" (Jung 3). In the anatomy of the human Psyche, though Self and Ego look similar, Ego stands for subjective personality, whereas Self denotes objective

personality. To understand the psychic structures and dynamics, an analytical study of the novel's character is essential. The hypothesis of this study focuses on how individual personality influences everyone's actions in society and how each character can be in constant conflict between the three psychic structures. In this article, the researcher concerns with the hypotheses which connect the typical biblical hero Samson with Tamil epic romance *Ponniyin Selvan's* character Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar in the light of Freud's three structures of human personality. The particular focus in this paper will be on the Id, Ego, and Super-Ego, its associated life (*eros*) and death drives (*Thanatos*), id's relation with the Ego, which will be read through the select characters. By comparing and contrasting the characters from the Holy Bible and Indian literary piece, the researcher tries to implement that all human characters tend to have the sameness of psychic personality.

Objectives of the present study:

1. To Understand Freud's three agencies of personality.
2. To study the parallelism of the same qualities in both characters with the aid of Freud's analogy of mind.
3. To interpret the biblical character Samson on the psychological grounds of morality versus the Pleasure Principle.
4. To understand the constant conflict of Id and Ego in both personalities and how their morality principle overcomes Id.
5. To study the effect of Freud's concept of psychoanalysis on each character and events around them.

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Freud's Psychoanalysis does not deal with any structural parts of a brain, but it is all about the aspects of the mind. Id functions as self-affectivity rather than mere representation. He rendered the concept of Id under the lens of representational concepts drawn from biology and evolution. Every human is born with a bundle of primitive instinctual urges (Id). Governed by the pleasure principle, which fails to distinguish fantasy from reality, each individual has an urge for the primal thinking process, such as desires and all aggressions.

In his *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Freud explains Id as an obscure, inaccessible part of our personality as "a chaos, a cauldron of seething excitement [with] no organization and no unified will, only an impulsion to obtain satisfaction for the instinctual needs, in accordance with the pleasure principle. In the id there is nothing corresponding to the idea of time, no recognition of the passage of time, and (a thing which is very remarkable and awaits adequate attention in philosophic thought) no alteration of mental processes by the passage of time. (91)

When the psychic stage of development processes, this unconsciousness subsides in every individual. Id, as a reservoir of libido, does not know society's legal ethics and norms. According to Wilfred L. Guerin, he stated that 'Many theologians define Id as a devil. Whoever does not control Ego and Super-ego is mentioned as 'Full of the Devil' (156).

To control the Id's dangerous potentialities, it is essential to know the other two agencies- Ego and Super- Ego, which protect the individual and society. The insight of consciousness is a spiritual instinct that is a counter pole to the animal instinct of unconsciousness. Ego denotes the principle of reality that works to obtain pleasure and avoid

pain. To distinguish Ego from Id, Ego can be defined as reason and sense, whereas Id denotes untamed passions. However, each individual transports the unconscious elements into consciousness through their actions and words under the circumstances. The third agent Super- Ego is a repository of conscience. This ideal ego directs our lives towards the morals and ethics of society. Each individual has a constant conflict between Id and Super- Ego in the aspects of their reactions to life circumstances. While Freud mentions the functions of the Super-Ego, he opines that

Acting either directly or through the Ego, the superego serves to repress or inhibit the id's drives, to block off and thrust back into the unconscious those impulses toward pleasure that society regards as unacceptable, such as overt aggression, sexual passions, and the Oedipal instinct. (Guerin 158)

Henceforth, the researcher examines the identity of Morality principle (Super- Ego) over the Pleasure Principle in the characters of Samson and Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar.

Strong men tend to struggle with Lust:

The adult adventure of Samson is mentioned in the book of Judges. His birth itself is a calling of the destruction of Philistines. Samson was one of the judges and a Nazirite of God from his mother's Womb (Jud 13: 5; 16:17 NKJV) who fought alone to save Israel from the philistines. The nature of Samson is an imbalance between Id and Superego. He fell for the female companionship. The valour of Samson was known by his strength, such as slaying the lion with a bare hand as 'Rips apart a kid' kills thirty men at askelon multiply, kills a thousand men with the jawbone of a donkey (15:15). By the time of Samson's final feat, the destruction of the temple, the narrator has lost count. We are told simply that "the number of Philistines buried in the rubble exceeded the number he had previously slain" (Judges 16:30).

Due to repeating the same mistakes of falling for lust, Samson does not succeed in delivering Israel from the enemy people, the Philistines. In the case of Samson, he goes from his Danite homeland to the philistine city of Timnah to find his wife. When their parents were against his marriage to a Philistine girl, he utters, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well” (Jud14: 3).

Ignoring good advice and taking foolish risks:

Against the will of his parents, Samson chooses the one of the Philistine’s daughter aswife.

Then his father and mother said to him, Is there no woman among the daughtersof your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife fromthe uncircumcised Philistines? (Jud 14:3 NKJV)

From the beginning itself, Samson’s life was in danger in terms of his sexual affairs and battlefield adventures. Though his birth is itself supernatural, he falls for women’s lust. He took foolish risks by marrying Philistine’s daughter, who is not faithful to him. “As she tortures and weeps for sevendays of feast, he reveals the riddle’s answer to her which was known by the sons of her people later” (Jud 14:17). He struggles between the constant conflict between pleasure and morality principles. His principle of consciousness was revealed in his actions, such as providing a feasto her people, and respect. The spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him” (Jud 14:10).

Whenever Samson heard, the Philistines are upon you, Samson! He fought against the Philistines. He repeats the same mistake by revealing his God’s given strength to Delilah. It is mentioned that “And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressedhim, so that his soul was vexed to death, that he told her all his heart” (Jud 16:16-17).

Apart from analyzing Freud's psychoanalysis only from the characters, the events also depicted their behavioural actions. Samson was raised by Godly parents, and he knew the Old Testament law of avoiding unclean foods. He took a foolish risk of eating honey from the carcass of the Lion (Jud 14:9). It is somewhat similar to Adam and Eve's instinctual urge to taste the apple from tree of knowledge. He sinned against the law and his consciousness. His instinctual urge, and desires of human consciousness represent the actions of Id in his life. His downfall became the downfall of Israelites. He could not save the Israelites from the Philistines. His loss of sight is considered a loss of moral and spiritual principle.

Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar's Hamartia:

Another character portraying Freud's idea of ID is Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar. Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar was the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the Chozha dynasty. It is mentioned that "He could levy tax on any person or fiefdom at his sweet will and pleasure. He was the most powerful person in the kingdom, second only to the reigning king, Emperor Sundara Chozhar' (Kalki I 11). He is a leader of the Pazhuvur Clan, which served the chozha clan for more than a hundred years. His only life purpose was to serve the Emperor. He and his clan vowed that if something unfortunate happened to the King either because of their negligence, they would behead themselves with their own hands.

The power of Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar was the grip of his body. He is the bravest of all warriors and bears Sixty-Four war wounds in his body. He states, "My arms are mightier than a sword or spear. His roar was like a lion's roar. The sound of his laugh made the whole region tremble. It was more of what cry than a mere laugh" (V 67). It is mentioned that

Devaralan, the Pandya Conspirator, rained blows on him to escape from

Senior's iron grip that did not slack a bit around his neck. It seemed as if he

was hitting awall of stone. His hand hurt, and he was afraid that he might soon lose action onthat hand too. Ravidasan's eyeballs were popping out, and he was gasping for breath. If the old man hold his neck for a few more seconds, he would die of suffocation. (V 68)

The glory of Pazhuvettaraiyar's clan was much known. "When the chozha army was almost defeated at the thakkolam warfront, it was Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar who gathered the soldiers running for their lives, made them fight again and changed the defeat into a stunningvictory" (V 511).

The adventure of Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar begins at the age of sixty when he sees Nandhini as an orphan loitering in the forest. Without knowing her antecedents, he abducted herand positioned her as Queen of Pazhuvur. The root of hamartia lies in his failure of lustful life with Nandhini. He bends his moral principle by admiring the beauty of Nandhini. "He was blinded by infatuation for his young wife and without his knowledge his palace had become a sanctuary for the pandya conspirators" (IV 228).

Even celestial beings will envy her beauty. If only a swayamvar were held for herall the princes in the world will vie for her hand. Even Devendra, the head of Gods, would have joined the competition. Her beauty is something to die for. If only the emperor had seen her once, she would have been made the Queen of the Chozha Empire. (1-265)

Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar's prime duty of saving the crown Prince Aditya Karikalan was failed because he was 'surrendered to her charms' (IV 255). The lustful love of Senior towards Nandhini made everyone ridicule and humiliated him.

He was insulted in the Midnight cabinet meeting by the chieftains that, I hear

that you take your young wife's advice on all political issues. People have been talking behind your back that even in grave matters concerning of the empire you listen to her advice. And you take her along wherever you go. Somebody laughed'. (I 56)

Under the masks of the Pleasure principle, Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar behaved asocial and amoral. He even tries to kill Kandhanmaran to comment about adult love of Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar towards Nandhini. As the instinct of Id increases, he starts to hate the young warriors Vandhiya Thevan, Parthibendra Pallavan and Aditya Karikalan by means of Nandhini.

Pazhuvettaraiyar then signalled the guard to follow Kandhanmaran, holding the flaming torch. The guard understood the unspoken command. He just covered his mouth with his hand and bowed to Senior. Then he follows Kandhanmaran into the secret passage...he is taking out a sharp, curved knife from his waist. And he has stabbed Kandhanmaran on his back. (I 293)

He was deeply indulged in the instinct of libido. Kalki mentions his interchanging personality of the Pleasure principle in many lines. He utters, "Old men who have married young, beautiful women always live in a hell of doubt and suspicion. They have a natural disgust for strangers. And Pazhuvettaraiyar had strong reasons for such disgust. He hated Nandhini coming in the presence of a stranger" (III-12).

Anagnorsis- Flight from the Flesh:

Senior and Samson embody the Id as they involve themselves in the sexual urge and violence to kill many people. Their lust and fancying for female companionship led them to pathos in both characters. In *Judges*, it opines that,

When she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, that he told her all his heart and said to her, No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazarite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, I shall become weak and be like any other man. (Jud 16:17)

She manipulates him to divide the kingdom of Chozha. It was Nandhini who planted the idea of partition in his mind and urged him to present the compromise formula. "Pazhuvettaraiyar was convinced about her plan and only then did he decide to go to Kadambur and requested the Crown Prince to come" ( IV 246). The instinct of Id increased in him. She also tempted him to make him Emperor of the Chozha Dynasty.

'Darling, it is only because your valour and that of your ancestors that has Chozha Empire has reached this state of glory. I won't sleep till I see you on the golden throne of Thanjavur, at least for a day. If you suspect me before that happens, you may as well kill me with your sword. He said, 'Oh my dearest! Please don't torture me by your words! I can't bear it. (II 162)

At a certain point, they both recognize their supreme call. The supernatural elements or Super- Egoistic elements are presented in both stories. Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar worshipped Goddess Kali. In his dreams of him, he was warned by her.

You and your clan have always been dear to me. That's the only reason I have come to warn you now. The bride you have in your palace, Nandhini, is a poisonous snake in the guise of a woman. Her mission in life is to destroy your clan and that of the Chozha King. She is waiting for the right time. Remove her from your palace and from

your mind as well. And if you don't mark my words, your clan will be humiliated and disgraced. There will be no redemption for you. Don't tell me that I have not warned you. (V 53)

In the meantime, his moral eyes were opened and, he recognized his social and individual role in his Kingdom. By witnessing the destructive plots of conspirators, he awakened from the charms of Nandhini.

Pazhuvettaraiyar heard every word they spoke. The words fell on his ears as if they were a molten lead. His heart was like a volcano on the verge of eruption. When he came to know that his lady love, the beautiful young lady he had married, was a Pandya Queen and that she had come into his life only to take revenge on the chozha clan and that she had for the past three years been deceiving him, he was devastated. He felt insulted and betrayed. (V 65)

When the transgressing events happened in their lives, both characters renewed and woke from the obstacles of sexual aggression. Their anagnorisis made the readers get to know their personalities.

In the case of Samson,

Philistines took him, put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison...so when their hearts were merry, they said, Call for Samson from the prison, and he may perform for us. (Jud 16: 21,25)

This act made him realize his downfall of Id, and he regained his spirit in God and pleaded to God. Perhaps their repressed fears were revealing and they were unable to overpower it. "O Lord God, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me. I pray, just this once, O God,

that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes” (Jud 16: 28).

This act of consciousness brings him back to the reality principle. Their super-ego was conflicting with the Id and it was revealed in words, “Let me die with the Philistines. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life” (Jud 16: 30). As he was dissatisfied with his action, he readies to sacrifice his life. Identifying and recognizing their role call exhilarated their morality principle.

Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar spoke in a voice drained of all emotions: My dear brother, I won't entrust that work to you-the one of removing the stain of shame and dishonor. If you kill me the whole world will accuse you of killing your own brother. I don't want you to be blamed on my account. I will fulfil the vow I took before my Holy Mother Durga Parameshwari. Senior lifted the small knife with twisted blade above and aimed at his own heart. (V 510)

Conclusion:

Kalki's *Ponniyin Selvan* is fully loaded with many modern elements. One such modern feature is Freud's Psychoanalysis. By applying psychological approach to the characters, the readers will enlighten by their constant conflicts and their results in life. This comparative study fits the characters of Senior Pazhuvettaraiyar from *Ponniyin Selvan* and biblical character Samson in Freud's psychic concept. Though both of them became a victim of beast inside the human nature, Super-Ego overpowers everything. The logic and emotional understanding of their personal and social life helped them overcome the instinctual urges. In this present study it was hypothesized that understanding one's psyche will be helpful to know thyself personally. The article has been proven that the potential of spiritual call or purpose of life is necessary to activate the morality and reality principle is much needed.



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