

# Examining the Notion of Woman as Other through an Archetypal lens in *Escape* (2008) by Manjula Padmanabhan

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## Abstract

*Escape*, written by Manjula Padmanabhan, explores the violence perpetuated against women in the dystopian brotherland that resembles much of the Indian landscape. Padmanabhan, through *Escape*, portrays the unequal sex biases and collective patriarchal ideologies involved in creating a single-sex world, resulting in female genocide, gender discrimination, and the extermination of women in the novel. These collective ideologies of society, as presented by Padmanabhan, contribute to the idea of woman as other and unwanted, pushing their status into extinction and myth.

This research paper explores how the notion of the collective unconscious within society contributes to the archetype of the collective shadow, which marginalises the specific sections of the population and rationalises violence against them. Padmanabhan's portrayal of the idea of a single-sex world, and of women succumbing to the status of other under the collective evil ideologies of men-resembling Indian patriarchal structures-allows for an exploration of the idea and representation of the single-sex world across various myths and cultural beliefs, including Indian ones. These narratives, shaped by a toxic socialization process, rationalise and further contribute to the status of woman as other.

**Keywords:** Collective unconscious, Collective shadow, Single-sex World, Patriarchy, Female Foeticide, Postmodern India.

**Research Areas:** Archetypal Criticism, Feminism, Science Fiction Literary Genre.

## Carl Jung

Carl Jung, 19<sup>th</sup> century psychologist and founder of analytical psychology, pioneered archetypal psychology that contributed to the understanding of layers of the human psyche found in primordial images, symbols, myths, and culture altogether emphasised the individual conscious and unconscious levels. Jung sheds light on both conscious and unconscious dimensions of the human psyche, while the personal consciousness of a person consists of emotions, memories and personal history which may become complexes of an individual upon being repressed. The collective unconscious Jung describes is the embedded deeper psyche of a human being which is reflected as archetypes in myths, fairy tales, literature, culture and religion.

## Archetypal Psychology

Carl Jung's theory of individuation implies the process of becoming a whole self through balancing one-

's own fragmented parts of psyche. Jung's theory of individuation helps in understanding one's own unaware and unexplored parts of the psyche that shape human personality. The core of individuation lies in the self, this process enables one's ego (the conscious self) to meet the unconscious self of human psyche that constitutes the deep underlying thoughts, emotions and desires that make us whole and true self, which Jung believes is necessary for an individual to attain self-realization.

Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious can be understood as inherited consciousness acquired from preexisting forms, symbols, or ideas that are shared across human cultures and can be found in myths, folklore, literature, art and religion. These preexisting symbols, ideas or themes are termed 'archetypes' that are common to mankind and have been passed down from one generation to another.

According to the phenomenologist, psycho therapist, Roger Brooke (1991), archetypes and archetypal images are the primordial dimensions of the psyche that are triggered by universally appearing situations in life. He, also in his analysis, emphasises the psychobiological dimension of archetype as a required theoretical anchor in defining cultural and historical dimensions of an archetype.

### **Shadow Archetype**

Carl Jung in his describes the parts of human psyche which includes, Ego one's conscious self, centre of human mind that reflects everything a human aware of at surface level, while Persona is the social mask one wears to balance his personality with the external world and conflict, this is commonly seen as human beings always try to fit in the society he or she lives in, but over reliance on social mask would harm one's own personality distorting his or her own identity which leads to shadow of our ego, while Anima and Animus is the feminine side of masculinity and masculine side of femininity, Jung describes it is important to balance all the parts of psyche in order to reach highest form of self which is also known as process of individuation.

Shadow, the unconscious part of the psyche plays important role in shaping one's personality. We as human beings need to integrate the shadow into our lives, shadow is often associated with the evil contents of a human being, while it is not necessarily evil, as in order to gain greater consciousness, one must meet their shadow. Shadow is considered dual, which implies in order to realize what is good one must realize and acknowledge what is bad in our personality, failing to do so Shadow becomes projective and stay in dark leading to the defense mechanisms of or consciousness or ego like projection of unacceptable aspects of self onto others, and rationalization of those aspects, not being able to get rid of the unwanted aspects of shadow, the shadow gets projected and becomes collective shadow harms society and mankind in many ways, as Dr Andrew Powell, in his article titled, Psycho implications of shadow describes "Jung saw with dreadful clarity how the collective shadow falls on humankind and spares no one." (14, Powell)

### **Collective Shadow, Gender violence, Indian women**

Woman is often associated with the Mother Nature for her ability to create or reproduce. Many cultures that are deeply patriarchal in their roots consider women as biologically weak and inferior. Carl Jung, in his lectures at the Tavistock Clinic (1968), describes how the body is an embodiment of the shadow of the ego, as the Ego is always defined as something that is found at the unconscious level of the psyche, rendering it something unknown and needing to be brought to light. The very statement of Jung is contradictory to shadow, as we can see our bodies. Thus a body can be deciphered as beyond visual perception, in the same manner a woman body is beyond what is visually perceived and understood.

Narrowing a woman's identity to their body image and mechanisms and attributing a sense of inferiority is not justifiable, although many patriarchal cultures and societies consider man as biologically superior. This imbalance in the society created an inferior image of women in men's minds unconsciously leading to shadow in the society which has not been identified and acknowledged since ancient times, leading to gender inequality and also perpetuated violence against women. This aspect of gender inequality is so deep-rooted in the society, which is rationalised instead of being addressed, leading to the collective shadow projected onto women in many ways. Thus, this dark side of culture which is not clearly identified has led to chaotic situations for women. This also shows how integrating the shadow into the cultures and identifying its roots is important for balance and order in humankind as Robert A Johnson in understanding the dark side of psyche describes as the reason for chaotic situation and disorder in the society is contributed by us human being's ignorance which is stated as, It is not the monsters of the world who make such chaos but the collective shadow to which every one of us has contributed.

The primary resource of this research paper, *Escape*, written by Manjula Padmanabhan, is a dystopian work that incorporates themes of female genocide, gender discrimination and violence against women in the context of postmodern era. Padmanabhan, through her imaginary desolate landscape that has an uncanny resemblance with Indian Landscape, tries to establish the gender binaries that perpetuated the extermination of the Vermin tribe (woman tribe) by the generals who try to create a landscape deprived of women with a collective ethic towards a brotherland. The generals or rulers of the country replace women with drone culture that fulfils the duties of women which is to do household chores and feed men, which were the works generally allotted to women. It also mentioned in the novel why women are replaced by drones: because they are not servile enough to men like drones 'the drones are what vermin tribe should have been: servile, dumb and deaf'(225, Padmanabhan). Generals uttering vermin should have been this and that, showing their failure to take control over women's identity that's beyond reproduction and creation. Through this, Padmanabhan tries to show how women's identity, their biological capacity, has always been defined and controlled by men. Ironically when the general and his regime could not take control over the gender binary, they moved towards brotherhood, that collectively tried to exterminate the women, their breeding rights and denied their need for creation and replaced the women reproduction system with cloning system that duplicated men. Generals felt women are not needed. Manjula padmanabhan vividly depicts the gender inequality prevailing in Indian society as a result of established institutions, societal norms and cultural practices that are othering women and are leading to imbalance in the society and violence against women.

### **Factor contributing to Collective Shadow-Female Foeticide**

Manjula Padmanabhan tries to picture the grim reality of gender-related violence ensuing on women at higher rates in Indian society, where women are at high risk of threat, violence, and extermination in many cases surrounding dowry killings, honor killings and, most importantly, female foeticide to a level that it can be considered as female genocide. All these genocides are a result of the idea that dwells and is practised in cultures that perceive women are subservient to men; this idea of inferiority contributes to the suppression of the other- women. The gender imbalance that had been created lies in the preference of boy child over girl child, therefore leading to sex-related abortions. Manjula Padmanabhan through her dystopian vision of India subtly depicts how about 50 million daughters are missing who have been exterminated as result of new established tyrannical order that exterminates women through advanced technologies that find women and eliminate them. This aspect which Padmanabhan presents in the novel

has uncanny resemblance to the situation of women in contemporary India, where people with the help of modern technologies that determine baby's sex and would abort if it's a girl child, the fact that this sex related abortions are taking place in India irrespective of caste, religion, rural, urban, educated or uneducated families, shows the amount of stigmas attached in rearing a girl child, these stigmas often stem from cultural beliefs and practices leading to depriving agency of women and exposure threat and violence as gender is longer a matter of biological preference it has become a factor that more or less tied to power determination due to the gender binary in male dominant patriarchal societies. The situation Manjula Padmanabhan depicts in novel of missing women 50,000 daughters, and extinction of women leading to land without women is not just not a mere fiction anymore but it is rather closer reality as the campaigning of Rita Benarjee reveals over 50 million missing women and girls. India revealed that many of these were killed before the birth in conscious sex selection made by parents. The women and girls all over the world are facing irrespective of west or East, they have been subjected to violence and threat, the root of this violence and non preference of women lies in the ideas that have been passed down from generation to other by our ancestors through the medium of cultural beliefs, practices, and myths which is directly or indirectly ruling our subconscious minds leading to the collective opinions and ethics which sometimes may have been contributing to the injustices in social structures as we evolve, thus it is necessary to identify those beliefs, practices and ideas that have become universal and is leading collective shadows that have become hindrance for the balance of the society.

The Collective shadow that C.G. Jung explains is comprised of collective manifestations of groups, institutions and cultures. These mental contents or manifestations lie in our psyche, and come to the surface through individual phenomena. This individual phenomena brings our unconscious mental contents to the surface, and many times these mental contents of our shadow psyche are unwanted, yet disavowed contents are away from our consciousness, Due to this shadow phenomenon of an individual, it gets projected out onto others. By projecting these unwanted mental content onto others, we project unwanted emotions like ambition, greed, anger and violence on to others. Jung offers a way to identify and integrate these shadow aspects of psyche: is to have an individual role that allows one to recollect or re-own the projections of the psyche onto others and the world (Gabriel, pp291). Therefore, Carl Jung emphasizes on self assessment and recollection of shadow projections before it shadows groups, institutions and cultures, and societies that already part of the collective shadow.

Shadow cannot be directly seen or experienced but its identification lies in symbolic expressions in various forms of cultural, religion and political beliefs and also through myths, narratives, literature and art forms which act as sources of individual expression. In a similar way, collective Shadows also can be identified through collective symbolic expressions, shared fears, collective ethics, collective ambitions and shared anxieties. In simpler terms, the collective dark side of society that is buried from consciousness yet its persistence can cause collective behaviors and actions that lead to destruction, greed, imbalance and disorder of groups, nations and cultures.

Groups, institutions, societies and cultures often try to subordinate their shadow, represses and unwanted and unconscious expressions by emphasizing on the idealized collective ideologies that serve them best, through this process, they unconsciously project their repressed emotions is buried from consciousness yet its persistence can cause collective behaviors, actions that lead to destruction, greed, imbalance and disorder of groups, nations and cultures.

Groups, institutions, societies and cultures often try to subordinate their shadow, repressing unwanted and unconscious expressions by emphasizing the idealized collective ideologies that serve them best. Through this process, they unconsciously project their repressed emotions, desires and ambitions onto others and try to defend their identities and ideologies, thus projection collectively affects the members of a group or nation.

“An integral aspect of progress is when a shadow comes to dominate the mental life of a group or collectivity is the process of ‘Othering’” (Gabriel, 2008).

In the novel *Escape*, Padmanabhan depicts different interpretations of women that are mostly interpreted by male characters in the novel whose chauvinistic nature is subdued as normality, generalised and justified. On many occasions, the three uncles of the female protagonist, the young, the elder the middle, are seen having conversations about how Meiji’s sexual identity should be suppressed, for they fear it is dangerous to their survival and also Meiji’s survival in the male gendered order that has been established which has been titled the new order, This new order that has been established, by Generals who use technology to exterminate women, girl children even before they reach the menstrual stage so they cannot reproduce women and duplicate men through cloning technology, narrowing down a women significance and her need for existence to only sexuality and reproduction, this extreme order of patriarchy that reduces women just to her biological aspects is so deep rooted in many patriarchal cultures, when there is no significance evidence that proves men are superior to women, although it cannot be denied that they are biologically different, nonetheless women’s significance is merely justified to her sexuality and ability take to reproduce, without which she is not necessarily needed,

In the book *second sex* written by Simone de Beauvoir, she discusses women from a biological point of view, later she discusses how women are narrowed down to subservience and inferior positions, and analyzing the same from a psychoanalytic point of view, she opposes Freud’s patriarchal view of man’s precedence over women, which is yet again narrowing women down to their sexuality. She explains how Adler, unlike Freud, identified the deficiency of a system that defines human life merely on the basis of sexuality, Adler explains the human life is driven by will to power which is however is accompanied by inferiority complex, and often in this inferiority complex causes an individual to employ lots of deception to avoid the reality he fears, which is quoted in the book

“According to his system, the human drama can be reduced to three elemental factors: in every Individual there is a will to power, which, however, is accompanied by an inferiority, complex; resulting conflict leads the individual to employ a thousand ruses in a flight from reality- a reality with which he fears he may not be able to cope; the subject thus withdraws to some degree from the society of which he is apprehensive and hence becomes afflicted with neuroses that involve the disturbance of the social attitude”(beavour 64 ).

As the Adele defines the elements that drive human forces is will to power, gain superiority or dominance over other is often stems out of the inferiority complex towards other as a result, he will form behaviors that cause disorder in the society, In the novel it is seen the anxieties represented by the character General, where he feels women should have been dumb like clones and act accordingly as the instructions given by men, the idea that restricts women intellectual freedom, is seen through the text

“Drones were not adapted for independent thought or action. If they could not If they couldn’t follow the instructions they had been given, they would make no attempt to improvise”(97, Padmanabhan), drones are what Vermin tribe should have been : Servile, dumb and deaf-from: The Vermin Tribe : An



Analysis”(225, Padmanabhan), they were weak, they were unfit, they were different.(Padmanabhan 274).

We are the one and the many, when one of us talks all hear, we think as one (Padmanabhan 239). The general implements this ideology that women are not needed now as there is cloning technology that can replicate men since women are unfit and different, he wishes to create a world that has single gender world and replicate all of the men that all think, hear and be as one to create eternal men who could replace “other” which is women in this novel and the general and his clones believe women are unfit for breeding, thus they created close breeding techniques and monoculture, where men raise beyond mortality against laws of nature, and women are the symbols of mortality, thus they tried to eliminate in order to immortalise themselves as one and many, that think alike. Other male characters in the new established order have been shaped by ideologies of General including Meiji’s uncles, who believe women’s existence itself is a threat to men, which is reflected in the quote in the text

“Meiji, the fact is, your presence here, your existence itself, is a danger to us” (Padmanabhan,81)

As Simone de Beauvoir explains the collective myths in defining women as cultural historical and psychological process of men defining women as other, which is only described for the perks of men, She explains collective myths represented women as other since ancient times by the writers, which were predominantly men, which can be reflected in the quote

“Eventually the opinion of ancient Greeks like Pythagoras, who wrote, There is a good principle, that created order, light, man and a bad principle that created Chaos, darkness, and woman”(Beauvoir,4).

Women being defined as Other is so much so reiterated in the narratives, literatures, cultural and creative expressions that she came to state where she can be viewed as the archetype of other, the other that is chaotic, different, weak, and inferior. This what is leading to collective shadows in the societies that are patriarchal and favourable towards men’s conditions while succumbing women to inferior positions, subjecting them toward physical violence and also mental abuse that restricts their intellectual freedom and exploration of self.

The sociology of archetypes, tries to redefine the archetypes. Archetypes are expressed through primary elaboration and also in secondary elaboration. Secondary elaboration is basically through artist imaginations penned down, found in Vedas, Gath, myths, thus these elaborations of archetypes are basically elaborated by human being itself, as the human always evolve in contact with the environments, cultures and social institutions, as a result might hurled up in the toxic socialization process and might elaborate these archetypes for the benefit of one group by othering the rest, like the elitists, capitalism, European. Thus there is need to rebuilt those elaborations of archetypes with modern mindset and try to identify those elaborations of archetypes that have been manipulated in order build new ones.

The archetype of women being other, is represented in different cultural myths and historical events and also in literatures, however archetypes are result of human beings imagination and their experiences since ages, thus this allows us to reflect on toxic socialisation and historical processes as they evolve, which shows archetypes that are created are the result of various historical aspects, cultural practices and myths, thus these archetypes need to be recollected like Jung says in the collective shadow archetype, and should build new ones.

Manjula Padmanabhan represents a world with extinction of women due to the new established order led by General and his men where their motives were erasing women as they are not needed anymore, as women are considered chaos, reason for mortality, in more sense as a both physical and intellectual

threat to men and thus they were replaced with technology, and this extreme conditions and new order that see as women as other and wishes for their erasure, as the character in the general says is a result of past, the historical processes which can be seen through the quote in chapter 7

“The past sculpts the future as surely as a scalpel carves a block of flesh. We are the result of a particular historical process. There is nothing to either condemn or celebrate in what we have achieved. We are what we had to be” (55, Padmanabhan).

This new established order which is described in the novel is result of historical process, the order that sees women as other being and threat to human mortality and as unnecessary in the need for reproduction or creation. Amanda Vajskop “Finding Patterns in the Chaos: Woman as Chaos Agent in Creation Myths”(2005), explains how the generalized violence against women, rationalization and ignorance to the violence and devaluation of women is result of historical traditions and practices, also certain types of cultural myths that contributes to the violence enforced on women.

The idea of single-sex world that Manjula Padmanabhan presents in the novel is result of historical processes and Meiji’s inability to gain the consciousness of her identity as woman, as Padmanabhan points that has occurred due to her lack of access to the myths, fairy tales and novels. This kind of portrayal contributes to the idea that world we perceive and the identities that we adapt to is perceived by the myths and narratives that has been constructed in the society and has been passed down to us. Myths in various religions and cultures like Christianity, Hinduism, Seneca folktales, Australian myths contributes to the belief that creation happens without female participation or that creation happens only when women is out of control of creative process and is violated. In Christianity, Eve was held responsible for transgression of mankind and was punished as the male subservient counterpart for Adam and Eve’s sinful act. Australian myths and Seneca folktales has belief of male is created without help of women by male gods, thus insisting on the message that creation without the involvement or aid of women. Also in Hinduism, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, one of the oldest Vedas, teaches how creation happens only when women are violated.

The idea of single- sex world has been seen in many of the science fiction literature like *Female Man* by written by Joanna Russ, Poul Anderson’s *Virgin Planet* where only female world is established, these female gendered worlds were generalized as the only way of freedom from male dominant patriarchy. While there are works like Margaret Atwood’s *Handmaid’s Tale*, that depicts a world that greatly dominant by Male gender while women is only needed for reproduction and are constantly under repressive patriarchal surveillance in a society where eliminating women was generalized. While Manjula Padmanabhan’s imaginary world is centers around the idea of no female world and not required for reproduction and is replaced through cloning technologies and exterminated women to achieve only male world. The idea of single-sex gendered worlds has been common themes of science fiction literature for they try to show imbalance sex ratios, and increasing inequalities between genders in patriarchal societies.

India being highly patriarchal society that has been repressive especially for women, this patriarchy and increasing inequalities against women can be seen through the cultural practice like dowry system. The idea of dowry system is practiced since 3<sup>rd</sup> century bc across the world, it is also known as bride price in the west. The idea of dowry initially was to benefit the bride, but over the time, its significance and implications have changed. This practice isn’t relevant in the western societies in contemporary age but in the east, it’s still a prevalent and is one of the extensively practiced cultural practices, and as result has been contributing to the inequalities and violence against women. Dowry has changed into the symbol of

prestige and families tries to demand dowry even after marriage, this reason is contributing not just to the dowry killings of women but also leading to the cause of non preference of girl child. The technologies that are supposed to ease the pain of child rearing are now used against women in killing the girl child through sex selective abortions. These female infanticides, dowry killings are depriving the little intellectual gains and reproductive freedom gained by women in the past years. This repressive state of women, where the women population is gradually decreasing every day is contributed collectively by everyone in the society where women has been decreasing to the status of other, would have caused Manjula Padmanabhan to imagine an idea of last Indian women left alive for the newspaper article which later has elevated into this particular novel *Escape*.

In the novel while these myths are not directly expressed but central idea of the novel which is creating a single-sex world without necessary of women and her replacement through technology, reflects the ideologies that have been shaped through history, myths, cultural practices and literatures. Manjula Padmanabhan cultural background reveals she was exposed to different cultures, gods and myths. She was exposed to European gods, tales and Christianity during her convent schooling, while later she was also exposed to Hinduism and mythology when she first came to Delhi, while Manjula Padmanabhan also explained in her interview Dialogues with South Asian SF writers-11:Manjula Padmanabhan, that she is more deeply connected to Greek, Roman and Scandinavian gods and mythology. Manjula Padmanabhan also makes very clear that her stories doesn't just lie around her ethnic roots and are culturally flexible due to exposure of different cultures outside her ethnic roots during her childhood. Manjula Padmanabhan sees Science fiction as extension of myths, mythological gods and binary morality of Christian world.

The science fiction work Maryshelly's *Frankstein* reveals a monster embodying the collective shadow of Victorian society of England reflecting Victorian era's ideologies and anxieties, Likewise Manjula Padmanabhan's *Escape* portrays men and technology as collective evil to reflect the collective shadow on Indian society and women in contemporary age due to the increasing violence of modern technology against women and corruptive and patriarchal ideologies of ages that's prevalent till today, and ignorance towards these age old cultural practices like dowry system, is pushing women to the status of other and non existent

Thus it can be seen Manjula Padmanabhan's works interwoven realities of science, religion and myths, has traces of her emotional connection to mythologies of different cultures in depicting reality of Indian society where even after so much evolution women is still subjected to different forms of violence under the shackles of patriarchal norms and her freedom surrounding intellectual, reproductive and sexual freedom is still in question even today.

## Conclusion

The collective shadow described by Carl Jung helps identify the unequal sex biases that contributes to the collective ethics and ideologies that marginalise status of women, further depriving their right to individuality and existence itself. Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious identifies the shadow of the human psyche that leads to the projection on society and ultimately becomes the collective shadow and harms society in many ways. Carl Jung's collective shadow archetype helps identify the ideologies that are being instrumental in contributing to violence and inferiority of particular sections of society. The novel *Escape* portrays the woman as other, unequal and unfit to reproduce the human race.



Padmanabhan portrays the dystopian, oppressive conditions of women where they have been replaced with technology and also have been exterminated as unborn girl children using advanced technologies, indicating the current scenario of women and girl births in India, who have been killed using sex-selective abortion technologies. Manjula Padmanabhan portrays this situation of women has resulted from particular historical processes. The ideology behind these acts of violence can be traced back to the inferiority with which women have been treated since our ancestral times. The collective shadow archetype identify these archetypal ideologies against women since ancestral times in the myths, folktales and historical and cultural aspects that are prevalent universally. The core idea of the evil forces in the novel is to create a single-sex world by completely wiping out the existence of women from the nation. To achieve this vision, the antagonist uses biological imperatives in creating sex biases and justifying the otherness with which women are treated in the novel.

The idea of a single-sex world where women are not required in the process of creation can be traced back to the myths and folk tales where woman were not essentially needed in creating humans. The myths across the globe such as Christianity, Hinduism, Seneca folktales, Australian myths, describe narratives where creation happens without female participation or creation happens only when women are out of control of the creative process and are violated. Manjula Padmanabhan, being exposed to Roman, Greek and also Indian cultures, draws her ideas from different mythologies. The idea of a single-sex world embedded in the collective unconscious of the society is contributing to rationalisation and violence against women. Carl Jung suggests the evolving nature of the archetypes through time, and it is important to identify the toxic socialisation process in building archetypes through recollection and eliminate them.

The cultural practice of dowry system which started around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC and was meant for benefit of women is now evolved to be the social taboo that perpetuates violence in society resulting in domestic violence and sex-selective abortions, with status of women being further marginalised. Therefore, the collective shadow archetype helps navigating the intersection of science, religion, myths and cultural practices that's contributing to the archetype of 'woman being other,' further contributing to their marginalisation and extinction.

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