

**A Study of the Hero's Journey in Arman Aryan's Trilogy  
*Ashvazdangaheh* Based on Joseph Campbell's Monomyth of the  
Hero's Journey**

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### **Introduction**

Archetypes are common concepts that are embedded in the collective unconscious of human beings. Joseph Campbell had an undeniable effect on mythological criticism with his theory of "monomyth" and his analysis of the sequence of heroic actions. According to Campbell, the passage from each period of life is accompanied by the performance of certain rituals, one of the most important of which is the maturity and entry of the child into adulthood. The period of adolescence plays an important role in the formation of one's identity and the imitation of the hero becomes more intense. If the adolescent learns valuable concepts in the pattern of the hero's journey, he/she will become a better human being.

Arman Aryan has made an effort to write heroic stories for adolescents. His trilogy called *Ashvazdangaheh* attracted the attention

of both critics and reading public and won several awards. His attention to mythology and valuable concepts in the stories is remarkable. The journey of the first character of the story, who is transformed from an immature adolescent to a mature adult, and his liberation from ambition, has the capacity to be studied from a mythological point of view and the hero's journey pattern can be used to provide a structural framework for the transformation process of heroes into sublime human beings. Hence, the researchers employed this fundamental mythological theory as a basis to study *Ashvazdangaheh* trilogy.

### **Methodology, Review of Literature and Purpose**

The present study uses a library method for collecting data and a descriptive method (qualitative analysis) for analyzing Arman Aryan's *Ashvazdangaheh* trilogy (with titles *Contemporary Myth*, *Invincible Devils*, *Emancipatory Epic*) based on Campbell's heroic journey theory. The research presuppositions are as follows: the hero of *Ashvazdangaheh* becomes immortal; he wins in the inner battle and the battle against the devil's wizards and becomes the master of the two worlds; and the steps of the belly of the whale, the supernatural aid, the meeting with the goddess and the road of trials from Campbell's hero's journey pattern are repeated in the novel.

Numerous researches have been conducted on the archetype of the hero's journey, such as Reyhanifard (2011), Aghajani (2012), Ma'qouli et.al. (2012), Taheri & Aghajani (2013), and Abdullahzadeh & Reyhani (2020). Also, Yadollahi (2013), Amirkhani (2013), Emami et.al. (2015), Irvani et.al. (2015), Zabihi & Peykani (2016), Varzdar (2016) and Fooladi & Rahmani (2018) have studied Campbell's pattern

of hero's journey; and Pirsufi & Maleki (2016), Mansourizadeh (2016) and Hosseinpour (2012) have analyzed Aryan's stories. Studies have revealed the need for more researches on this model for the purposeful writing of adolescent stories. By selecting this topic, the researchers tried to cover a part of this research gap in children and adolescent literature.

### **Discussion**

Campbell recognized three general phases of departure, initiation, and return, and seventeen steps in the hero's journey. The present article tries to analyze the novel *Ashvazdangaheh* based on Campbell's pattern. The main character of the story is invited to the adventure by drinking the potion of immortality. He is unable to separate from his mistress and refuses the call. A supportive creature in the role of a green-clad old-man guides him. He becomes resolute to continue the quest after meeting the prophets, reading the scriptures, and using the spiritual weapon of the name of God. He has to beat wizards, soldiers and the "moghan" to cross the threshold. According to Campbell, the hero is swallowed up by the unknowns; *Ashvazdangaheh* loses his eyes in the lions' pit and is trapped in the crypt of the dead. He also walks in the darkness of the cave until he sees the truth. At the end of the story, *Ashvazdangaheh* goes blind, but he can see the light of truth again.

On his "road of trials", he accepts the danger of entering the palace and receives a book and fights with the Mongols to save the captives; however, his most difficult challenge is to enter the devil's place. Lady Laleh in the role of the goddess is a blessing for *Ashvazdangaheh*, since she is his source of solace in the battle with the

devils. Ashvazdangaheh becomes free from the temptation of ambition and leaves the queen. The devil also appears in the role of “the woman as the temptress”.

According to Campbell, one can reconcile with the father by leaving behind the dual monster who thinks he is God. Meeting with Keykhosrow helps Ashvazdangaheh in achieving perfection. After that, Ashvazdangaheh becomes a mystic figure who wants to save the lives of all human beings and guide them toward God. After this apotheosis, he attains the “ultimate boon” of self-awareness and knowing God. According to Campbell, the heroes refuse to return and Ashvazdangaheh likes to live with the lady; however, he escapes by the help of the giant of the magic lamp. Having gone blind, he needs to be rescued and is healed by a savior while sleeping.

Campbell also believes that the divine world and the human world are one. Discovering the forgotten dimension of the realm of the gods is the meaning of the hero’s action. According to Campbell, after this journey, the person is freed from all the personal limitations and is no longer afraid of his/her own doom. In this story, Ashvazdangaheh abandons his ambitions and becomes the master of the two worlds. Eventually, he is immersed in the atmosphere of monotheism and brings peace, anticipation for the coming of the savior and the destruction of the devil from his journey.

### **Conclusion**

In this study, the steps of Campbell's hero's journey pattern were analyzed in *Ashvazdangaheh* and the first hypothesis of the research was confirmed; i.e., the hero of *Ashvazdangaheh* defeated the devil and

became the master of the two worlds. However, the second hypothesis of the research was not fully confirmed since no repetition was observed in the step of meeting with the goddess. None of the steps have been omitted from the story, but the steps of the belly of the whale, the supernatural aid, the woman as the temptress and the road of trials are repeated 3, 3, 2 and 4 times in the story, respectively. Also, the steps of crossing the first threshold, the belly of the whale, the woman as the temptress, meeting with the goddess and the magical flight have shifted in place. As a result, the steps of the pattern are increased from 17 to 25 steps.

Although Campbell' hero's journey pattern is written by examining both eastern and western heroic texts and stories, it cannot account for all the events of the story. The story, due to the narration of historical events, the everlasting struggle between good and evil, and the presence of features of the character's immortality, does not completely follow Campbell's model and some steps are repeated or shifted. In spite of this fact, the research shows that this story is identical in detail with other heroic stories and follows the general pattern of Campbell's heroic journey.

**Keywords:** Arman Aryan, Ashvazdangaheh, Hero's journey, Campbell, Archetype

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