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**Exploring the Jungian Shadow in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*: Uncovering the Repressed Facets of Nazneen's Personality**

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**Abstract**

This research paper examines the psychological growth of Nazneen, the protagonist of Monica Ali in her book, *Brick Lane* (2003) with the theory of analytical psychology by Carl Jung with a more specific reference on the relationship between the Persona and the Shadow. This research will contribute to understanding how the repressed desires, specification of individuality, and the impact of socio-cultural pressures on the choices, actions, and the changing sense of self bring Nazneen to her decisions. The qualitative research was chosen and thematic analysis according to the reflexive model by Braun and Clarke (2006) was conducted to provide systematic identification and interpretation of recurrent patterns of the Shadow in the personality of Nazneen. Through the analysis, it can be seen that her process of self-knownness encompasses living and accepting the repressed natures, latent desires and emotional theatrics which was bound by the family, culture and even the patriarchal demands. Individuation can help Nazneen to address internalized conflicts, assert her own independence and be able to create a unified and genuine self. The results emphasize that the Shadow does not serve as a pure source of bad and should not be seen as such but instead as a source of strength, agency, and psychological development. Through the Jungian theory of literary analysis, the present study highlights the importance of unconscious forces in the character development, the diasporic female self, and how societal rules affect and transform the character. The study adds to the larger conversation about literature and psychology by showing how fiction can help to understand intricate self-realization and individuation.

**Keywords:** Jungian psychology, Persona, Shadow, Individuation, Diasporic identity, Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*, Psychological growth

**Introduction & Background**

Human psyche is a complicated system of interacting conscious and unconscious processes, but not an isolated, single system (Jung, 1967). In analytical psychology, Persona and the Shadow are the key elements that affect social adaptation as well as conflict inside (Jung, 1951). Persona is a mask, or the elements that allow humans to fit into the social setting, fulfill social roles, and comply with societal expectations (Stevens, 1990), and the Shadow is made up of elements of the self that are not desired or accepted socially (Safe, 1992). Any form of imbalance between these two aspects tends to result in tension or inner struggle in

the psyche or inward projection on other people (Hillman, 1975).

Jung (1967) theorized that a genuine psychological development would necessitate the unification of the conscious with the unconscious that he called Individuation. It is a lifelong process where the opposing forces in the psyche are resolved to bring a coherent and true self (Stein, 1998). Literature can be seen as a reflection of these psyche dynamics and readers can witness the characters struggling with their Persona and Shadow as symbolic forms of conflict within (Foss, 2009). The archetypal Persona and Shadow have been seen in the literary work through the literary analysis (Rowland, 2010). Also, the Jungian models are used to explain psychological development and individuation among fictional characters (Stein, 1998).

These ideas were well explored by Monica Ali in *Brick Lane* (2003). The novel is based on the story of a young Bangladesh migrant woman, Nazneen, who immigrates to London following the arranged marriage and how she tries to cope with issues of displacement and cultural constraints, gender roles, and factored out personal desires (Ali, 2003). The contradiction between her Persona, which was socially enforced and reflected in a submissive wife and a responsible mother, and her Shadow of the unfulfilled needs and wishes to be independent is in the life of Nazneen (Alam, 2017). It is also exacerbated by the cultural and gendered norms of her diaspora that Nazneen is fighting against (Syal, 2010). Her friendships, in general, especially with Karim, inspire her to face off with her Shadow, which triggers a process of self-realization and participation (Kamal, 2024).

Analytical psychology developed by Carl Jung can be used to explain the analysis of transformation in Nazneen. The Persona is the social mask to walk around the cultural and societal pressures, and Shadow is repressed or denied qualities that confront the Persona (Edinger, 1992). Non-recognition of the Shadow can make one project, become in tension, or engage in an inner struggle (Jung, 1967). This is because combining the Shadow and Persona makes it easy to achieve psychological completeness and genuineness (Stein, 1998).

The major process entails individuation where the conscious and unconscious are brought into agreement (McLeod, 2025). In addressing the unacknowledged parts of herself, Nazneen comes to a balance progressively and gains insight of her past experiences and cultural heritage, integrating her former experiences and heritage to a logical, unified self (Lonngi, 2025). It is neither a complete denial of her own roots nor a process of assimilation to Western modernity rather a unification between the past and the present and the development of a truer form of self (Jung, 1967).

The psychological study of Nazneen in *Brick Lane* is an excellent point of perspective to interpret the relationship of social norms, expectations of the culture, and desires of this character in the conditions of the diaspora. Earlier studies have focused on the postcolonial interpretation of the novel (Alam, 2017). There are also feminist interpretations that have been brought out by others (Syal, 2010). Moreover, Jungian theory may be employed to shed light on the character development (Foss, 2009). Archetypal analysis is another technology which can be used to analyze literary works (Rowland, 2010). The Persona, Shadow as well as individuation, concepts of Jungian nature are vital in the explanation of psychological development in literature (Stein, 1998). The proposed study explores the manner in which Nazneen discusses her Persona and Shadow, and eventually individuates and becomes a person (Kamal, 2024). This knowledge can contribute to the body of literary studies by illuminating about the interaction of perspective on psychological development, cultural sustainability, and diasporic femininity (Haq, 2015).

#### Statement of the Problem

In *Brick Lane*, Nazneen's life is marked by unacknowledged desires, suppressed emotions, and socially disapproved impulses, which constitute the Jungian Shadow. While she outwardly conforms to cultural, familial, and marital expectations, these repressed aspects of her personality influence her thoughts, feelings, and behavior in subtle but significant ways. Existing literature has primarily focused on her social struggles, gendered oppression, and diasporic challenges, offering limited insight into the hidden layers of

her psyche and the psychological mechanisms by which her Shadow affects her development. The problem, therefore, is the lack of understanding of how Nazneen confronts, negotiates, and integrates these suppressed qualities, and how this engagement with her Shadow contributes to her psychological growth, self-awareness, and gradual individuation. This research seeks to fill this gap by applying a Jungian analytical framework to explore the interplay between unconscious impulses and her journey toward a more authentic self.

#### Research Objectives

1. To analyze the effects of Nazneen's Shadow and Persona on her decisions, behavior, and overall sense of self.
2. To explore how the process of Individuation facilitates Nazneen's reconciliation of conflicting aspects of her psyche and attainment of an integrated identity.

#### Research Questions

1. How does Nazneen's Shadow and Persona influence her psychological development and shape her identity throughout *Brick Lane*?
2. In what ways does the process of Individuation enable Nazneen to reconcile her repressed desires and social roles into an authentic self?

#### Literature Review

Monica Ali *Brick Lane* (2003) has been extensively discussed as a work of exploring the concept of identity, social pressures and the perspective of personal change, hence become a very rich source of discussing the Jungian concepts, especially the shadow archetype. Jung (1953) suggests that the shadow is an unconscious repressed part of the self-that is the aspects and qualities not permitted to be expressed, by the society, family or by the individual themselves because of the imposed expectations. The protagonist Nazneen is a perfect example of repression who is bound by patriarchal, cultural and socio-economic systems all through her life.

Al-Mamun (2014) examines the story of Nazneen as a metamorphosis, her transformation as a butterfly to a chrysalis. At first, Nazneen is described as a naive and passive woman, who has to live under the strong social and familial pressure. Her realization of fate and masculine rule is in line with her counterparts repression of her shadow roll in the sense that she has no knowledge of her suppressed desires, assertiveness, and uniqueness. By engaging in small rebellions, like rejecting Karim in her advances, resisting being pressured to go back to Bangladesh with Chanu, and opening her own business, Nazneen challenges and synthesizes the aspects of her shadow, which proceeds to make her a self-conscious and independent person (Al-Mamun, 2014).

The materialist reading places more emphasis on the socio-political and economical factors that influence the repression of Nazneen. According to Ahmed (2010), the novel depicts the status of patriarchal domination in the force of the Bangladeshi immigrant society, which brings forth the structural disparities in the silencing of women. It is possible to interpret the internalized obedience and compliance of Nazneen as the results of her shadow which was restrained by the fear, obligation, and socialization. This individuation which is the core of the Jungian analysis is therefore analogous to the process by which Nazneen manages to move through these pressures in the system which enables her to slowly incorporate those parts of her personality that are repressed.

The oppression of the shadow of Nazneen is even enhanced by racism. According to Alam (2017) and Yin (2010), such characters as Chanu and Nazneen face the issue of racial prejudice and institutionalized discrimination in Britain. The fact that Chanu is conscious of hierarchies of skin-color and Nazneen adapts to the multicultural world of London shows how external influences also define self-identity and repress suppressed character. The shadow, as it is construed here, includes both the desires one has yet the

unidentified frustrations, fears, and resistance against the racial and cultural marginalization (Alam, 2017; Yin, 2010).

Karagoz (2020) emphasizes another phenomenon known as a double oppression, implying that the Bengali Muslim immigrants are mocked in both cases as minorities and because of their socioeconomic status. In the case of Nazneen, this is expressed in limited freedom, gender expectations and religious demands, which hide certain aspects of her identity, making her identity invisible. The shadow is therefore a Third Department to both the self and the culture as well as to the society that one should face in pursuit of genuine self-realisation.

The Jungian approach to Nazneen is supplemented by a Marxist approach of allocating her shadow into the context of the class conflict and the exploitation of labor. According to Arafat (2024), Nazneen is depicted as a working-class immigrant worker who is alienated in the garment factory and whose alienation is reflected in repressing herself internally. The staleness and financial exploitation that she undergoes suppress her personality, which supports the shadow archetype. The resistance acts, proximity with fellow women, and entrepreneurship indicate the instances when she incorporates the suppressed attributes and commands agency (Arafat, 2024).

All of these studies enlighten one about the dual forces - social, racial, gendered, and economic - which suppress the shadow of Nazneen and also about the gradual assimilation of these concealed facets in her. Her experience is a classic case of individuation process according to Jung whereby the struggle and integration of the shadow resulting in psychological completeness. With the help of defying patriarchal norms, racial dominance, and socio-economic exploitation, Nazneen, at the end, finds some latent power, self-respect and independence, and the whole integration of her shadow is achieved.

### **Research Gap**

Though *Brick Lane* has been studied widely due to its cultural and gender background, as well as the social problems, little study has been made to reveal the inner world of the character of Nazneen and its suppressed and hidden layers of the personality. Little information can be found in the existing literature on how these repressed qualities serve to influence her thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Jungian analysis of the shadow provides a chance to explore these unconscious factors and reveal how Nazneen faces her shadow and incorporates it into her personality, which leads to her development and self-change. This gap shows the importance of examining her psychological intricacy not only in the light of her social and cultural experiences.

### **Research Methodology & Theoretical Framework**

This paper uses a qualitative research design to investigate the Jungian shadow in the *Brick Lane* novel by Monica Ali which concentrates on the suffocated aspects of the personality of Nazneen. Such an approach should be qualitative because it will enable analysis of subjective experiences, inner struggles, and unconscious aspects in literary works in a more detailed way (Creswell, 2014). The thematic analysis, as the main approach applied, is based on the reflexive approach by Braun and Clarke (2006), as it will enable identifying, analyzing, and interpreting the recurrent patterns and latent patterns in the novel. This method will help the researcher analyze the expression of the repressed desires, fears, and impulses of Nazneen through her behavior and her interaction and their impact on her personal growth and self-realization. This paper will be informed by the concept of the shadow developed by Carl Jung, which can be defined as the unconscious and repressed element of the personality that human beings tend to deny or reject (Jung, 1953/1981). Along Jungian theory, the study examines how the shadow traits possessed by Nazneen, her unfulfilled aspirations and feelings, and her socially inhibited impulses evolve through the process of her journey and support her metamorphosis. The theoretical framework also takes into consideration the interaction of personal unconscious and societal restraints and how Nazneen is able to balance her own

conflicts as she deals with the cultural, gendered, and social expectations and restrictions. In combining thematic analysis and Jungian ideas, the paper provides a psychoanalytical perspective on the psycho-soul of Nazneen to reveal the dynamic unconsciousness that can be missed in reading her using socio-cultural or feminist theories.

### **Data Analysis**

This section includes a thematic analysis of *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali, with special attention to the realization of Jungian shadow in the personality of Nazneen. The shadow, as Jung defines it, constitutes the repressed, the hidden, or otherwise socially unacceptable parts of the psyche that cannot be recognized by the conscious being. This, in the life of Nazneen, involves her inhibited desires, dormant agency, emotional depth and unresolved issues by cultural, familial, and marital pressures. Through these suppressed aspects, the analysis reveals the role of the shadow in her inner struggles, responses to difficulties and a gradual process through which the unconscious impacts on the formation of identity and psychological maturity that has a faint impact on the identity.

### **Repressed Desires and Longing for Freedom**

The most notable feature of the shadow that Nazneen has is the fact that she wanted to be independent and express herself, which was not recognized. She internalizes the demands of the society and her family since early life which dictate to her a restricted, household identity. The exterior obedience, however, harbors a desire to explore, have personal agency and find emotional satisfaction in her psyche. The shadow represents an accessory storehouse of these repressed desires, which are implicitly directing her thoughts and emotional reactions, her choices even when she is not aware of them. This repression puts a strain on her consciousness as the conscious part of the self is still attaching to the norms, and the shadow is secretly desiring to stay independent and realize the self.

This repressed need is expressed in different forms especially the minor rebellions or an internal exclamation of her inward discontent. Even though Nazneen first comes across as a dutiful and docile woman, her hidden feelings encourage curiosity and the impunity where she, to some extent, takes a risk, which points to the presence of the shadow. In this way, her shadow not only causes frustration but also is the reservoir of personal potential, which later leads her to the psychological growth.

### **Alienation and Cultural Displacement**

Nazneen has another shadow that is shown through alienation and cultural displacement. Moving to London introduces her to society that is extremely different to her background, the new experiences present the opposition of her socially constructed self as compared to the suppressed parts of her personality. The novel environment becomes the trigger of the appearance of shadow features, including her sense of insecurity, self-doubt, and repressed individuality. This paradox of cultural dissonance only makes her situation worse as she pushes back and forth between adhering to a suit and not acknowledging those desires within her shadow.

The emotional reactions toward being pushed to the periphery, having no understanding, or not fitting the mainstream cultural story are part of her shadow. Her personal life is a result of these repressed experiences of alienation, making her a self-reflective, self-centered personality. Although Nazneen tries to act outwardly cool, submissive, the shadow manifests itself in moments of inner reflection and psychological complications and revelations, secret fears, desires, ambitions, non-socially approved. The interaction between displacement and repression explains how the environmental forces could lead to unconscious then lead to the close connection of shadow, albeit momentarily, to the conscience.

### **Confrontation with Suffering and Loss**

The other vital theme to the shadow of Nazneen is suffering and loss. Childhood experiences of familial repression, arranged marriage and later household duties develop a trend of endurance and repression in her. The shadow is the storage place of her pain, grief, and frustration which she can not easily release, even anger about the societal values and restrictions imposed on her. These repressed feelings are found in the subconscious and they form part of her character albeit faintly but continually.

Nazneen takes on responsibility and vigilance through the shadow to secure her ability to control her world even though she rejects body agency and emotional release. This suppressed trauma and constant feeling of inferiority makes her have duality in her psychology, the one is suited to meet the needs of the society, and the other one has unexpressed feelings of resentment, wish to become independent and untapped desires. It is in this context that the shadow serves as a storage of unresolved emotional conflicts as well as the source of development of resilience and indicates the extent of unconscious impact on conscious action.

### **Emerging Agency and Shadow Integration**

The more the story unfolds the more Nazneen starts appealing to the shadow, which is a step towards agency and the development of self-awakening. The Jungian theory stresses the need to embrace the shadow, as by doing so, one can incorporate hitherto suppressed aspects to the conscious lives and grow and individuate. Decision-making, assertiveness, and self-expression abilities, which Nazneen had been repressed, begin to manifest in her case. These instances are gradual but internally mediated showing how the shadow has changed as a conflictual source to empowerment tool.

When Nazneen starts to assert her life, make independence decisions and establish control over her life, which she previously was not allowed because of society and family-related laws, the incorporation of the shadow traits can be observed. The shadow, which was a holding ground of passivity and internalized constraint, has now offered the psychological resources needed to autonomous acting. It is through the identification and assimilation of these characteristics that Nazneen initiates the individuation process that she will slowly transition to a more unified, self-conscious self which relaxes into concord between the conscious self and the latent selves that reside in the unconscious.

### **Shadow and Emotional Complexity**

Nazneen also has a complicated emotional life that is also based on the shadow. Ambivalence, empathy, desire, and reflection are among the dominant elements of her unconscious that are usually repressed due to the not meeting the norms of conformity and passivity in society. It is through the shadow that she is able to work out and see those emotions inside and it is in the way she is able to react, form relationships and gain knowledge of herself and others.

Her compassion and ability to think are especially remarkable, since they are ensuing qualities of the shadow, found in its dormant sources of emotional intelligence. Although the conscious self can conceal or tone down these reactions in order to comply with societal rules, the shadow gives depth and strength. It can help Nazneen see the finer side of the human experience and developed emotional intelligence which shows that unconscious is not only a place of struggle but also a place of human growth and relationship building.

### **Shadow as a Source of Transformation and Resilience**

Finally, the shadow of Nazneen is a powerful force. The shadow was defined by repression, internal conflict and suppression of emotions in the beginning but overtime; it turns out to be a source of resilience, self-determination and mental development. Challenging repressed desires, accepting emotional depth, and claiming agency transforms the characteristics of the latent shadow to conscious advantages by Nazneen.

This transformational power of the shadow is manifested in how she manages to survive difficulties, embrace change and develop a sense of independence. The characteristics, previously concealed within herself such as self-reliance, bravery, depth of emotions, and decision-making start to shape her identity

consciously, and this shows how the unconscious material is transferred to her everyday life. The shadow is both a psychological reservoir of the repressions of the past and a springboard to new development which is a demonstration of the Jungian theory that the recognition and integration of the unconscious results in individuation and the flowering of a more coherent and genuine self.

According to the journey of Nazneen, the shadow becomes not only a place of darkness or opposition but also the place of unsuspected possibilities. Its incorporation permits the correction of the conscious self to the repressed aspects of personality, which makes life richer, stronger, and more conscious of the self. The story is an illustration of how repression, emergence and integration dynamically interact with each other with the significance of the shadow in transforming the individual.

The thematic analysis shows that the shadow within Nazneen refers to suppressed desire, emotional richness, hidden agency and determination. Being limited in the beginning by cultural, familial and marriage factors, these suppressed areas have a toll on her inner struggle and how she deals with challenges. The shadow comes out slowly as she is exposed to alienation, suffering, and chances of self-assertions, which bring her sense of self-awareness and individuation. Combining the previously suppressed qualities, Nazneen turns the act of repression into empowerment which demonstrates the Jungian idea that the shadow is necessary to develop as a person. Through her experience comes the importance of the reality of recognizing and integrating the unconscious in the process of developing a complete and true-to-self.

### Conclusion

As is shown in the analysis of the character of Nazneen in *Brick Lane*, the Jungian shadow plays a very vital role in the development of psychology. Imprisoned by the culture, the expectations of her patriarchal society and the socio-economic strain, the repressed desires and the unleashed capabilities of Nazneen, are repressed in her shadow. The experiences with being alienated, suffering and having a chance to assert oneself slowly make these concealed sides visible so that she can grow into an agency, emotional and tough. Making the shadow part of her conscious self allows individuation that permits Nazneen to balance between social roles and personal aspirations and make the divers successful and real identity. The current work points out the fact that the shadow is not only the place of conflict and negativity but also the place of power, personal development, and transformation potential. Using Jungian ideas to analyze literature, in the research, the unconscious work plays a crucial role in interpreting character growth, diasporic reality and female self-actualization.

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