
SELF-EXPLORATION AND CONCEPT OF ONENESS IN MONICA ALI'S *UNTOLD STORY*

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of identity and the concept of oneness in a person's life. Monica Ali was the most prominent writer who was nominated for the Man Booker Prize in 2003. *Brick Lane* was her first novel made her a popular person. The novel *Untold Story* was her recent novel published in 2011. The story revolves around the character Lydia, who tries to escape from the site of Paparazzi. The main aim of this paper is to study the British Bangladeshi writer Monica Ali's novel *Untold Story* with the idea of self-exploration and the concept of being singleness. Monica Ali recreates the life of Diana through the character Lydia. The story moves around the Lydia who faked her own death and moved to America with a new identity. She explores herself as a normal person and Monica Ali brings out the emotional experience of the person with loneliness. A quest for identity and remain here as the main theme. Monica Ali as a contemporary writer explains the importance of being once own self.

Keywords: *identity, oneness, loneliness, and self-exploration.*

Monica Ali was born in 1967 at Dhaka, Bangladesh. She moved to Britain in 1971. She studied politics, economics, and philosophy at Wadham College. Monica Ali started her writing by presenting short stories online and also received critiques. Later she found a space for herself and made a literary splash with her writing. Currently, she lives in London with her family. *Untold Story* is her depute novel and published in 2011, which gave a shade of Princess Diana's life in the form of a fairy tale. As a British Bangladeshi writer, she raises her voice towards the post-colonial, discrimination and identity crises. Monica Ali was known for her novel *Brick Lane*, which was well received by critics in the United States and shortlisted for Man Booker Prize in 2003. Later it was adopted as a film in 2007. She also worked in publishing, design and branding agent in the United States.

Monica Ali appeared as a Best Young British Novelist in 2003 along with Zadie Smith. Monica Ali presented four novels such as *Brick Lane* (2003), *Alentejo Blue* (2006), *In The*

Kitchen (2009) and *Untold Story* (2011). The novel *Untold Story* revolves around the character Lydia, who is considered as a reflection of Princess Diana. As a person, she created fake death of her own and moved to Kensington with the help of her personal secretary Lawrence in 1997. The entire crux of the novel revolved around the past and present life of the character Lydia, who comes out of the royal life. Monica Ali focuses on the theme of identity, loneliness, and life. In this novel, she traces out the shades of the Princess of Wales. Monica Ali has put forward a number of true instances and emotional experiences by the Princess. As a British writer, she comes out with the recreation of the Princess of Wales life in the form of a fairy tale. She confidently put forth the idea of self-exploration and quest for identity in a simple way.

Monica Ali, when she was at the age of 13 watched Diana gets married to Charles. It seemed to be a fairy tale to her. After her death, she wondered with the question “what if she had not died?”. This made Monica Ali’s to create this novel. The story traced out the effect of living a life under the spotlight in a third person narrative.

Literature is life. The perception of life is understood by literature and characters express thoughts and feelings. Self-exploration exhibits the truth about the individual and transform taken by them. It pushes them to live a life. Acceptance and transformation help people to explore themselves.

Self-discovering is the main theme deals by Monica Ali in all her writing. As a writer, she tries to give more importance to the person's identity which is linked with the concept of oneness. The stories mostly revolve around the self-exploration of the characters at different circumstances. The novel deals with the moral development of the woman in society and explores the life of being alone.

Oneness means being alone. The concept of oneness is the illustration of self as one or as many. It is fully deepening on the mentality of the person. Literarily it means that cognitive self on self-concept in psychology that deals with the emotion of the person.

In *Untold Story*, Lydia lives with a new identity which is away from the royal life of the princesses. Lydia tries to live a normal life without any stress. She comforts herself with a simple life which is filled with space to be on her own. At Kensington, she started to work. She feels better when she earns money. “I am really be standing on my own feet by now” (179). She always has consent not to reveal herself to anyone.

The novel contains flashback elements, Dairy and collection of letters in it. Lydia's flashback reveals her past life where she was not a person on her own. Dairy has a record of the information given by Lawrence who was a personal secretary of Lydia when she was a Princess. Princess escapes from her life by creating an accident. She faked her own death. In the country, she watched her own funeral which gives a lot of pain. But the passion for life made her move away from her family. Lawrence helps her to be away from the site of the people. Lydia changes her appearance with plastic surgery. She also changes her dressing sense and started to hide her

own identity from others. Lydia loves two things one is swimming and another one is a dog, Rufus. While swimming, Lydia forgot all things around her. She feels relaxed and stresses free person while she was in the pool. She gives more care to the dog.

She passed ten years of life in Kensington. Grabowski, a photographer comes to the place and find the similarities of Lydia with the princess. He tries to find the truth. He started to collect evidence against her. Lydia's friend Mrs. Jackson introduced Grabowski to her. After that meeting, she realized Grabowski as a paparazzi and the tension begins here. Monica Ali added thrilling elements for the first time. Grabowski found the truth and he tries to flash this as breaking news to all. But at the end break down everything and started to move on. Her life acts as a rollercoaster. There are lots of twists and turns but she overcame everything. She wants to be on her own and she remains as she wants. It is difficult to live alone as women but the confidence in her made to live as she wants. "I don't know what to do with my life now that it is entirely mine, to do with whatever I like"(181).

Monica Ali traces out the life of a woman who is above 40 in Kensington. Many women forgot their own identity when they are filled with responsibility. Lydia volunteer came out of her life where she didn't have a space to be herself. In Kensington, she lives a normal life filled with loneliness. But she has a peaceful life with her new friends. She moves her life as a worker at a company with a minimum salary. Lydia tries to live a normal life without any stress. She comforts herself with a simple life which is filled with space to be on her own. At Kensington, she started to work. She feels better when she earns money. "I am really be standing on my own feet by now". From this novel, we able to understand that self-exploration helps Lydia to know about life and she understands the value of oneness.

The term mid-life quest for identity explains that people who are above the age of forty try to be on their own. The person may alienate from the family and work in a job to have a self-identity. "Lydia understood that she loved her work at Kensington, and preserved her solitude". These people try to live a life for own. They enjoy being alone. Elliott Jaques as a critic she expressed that women attain freedom at the age of forties from the family bond. All they need is self- recognition as a person. Buchi Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood*, the character Nnu Ego try to have recognition among the people in the British colony and on her won she sell goods. "You can't escape from yourself, but you can learn how to live with yourself". Self-exploration helps Lydia to know her own self. Being alone is not an easy thing but the passion for life leads them to be single and alone. Same way Lydia explore the life of being alone and she enjoy the freedom of life. "I was free. For the first time in my entire life, I was free". She was comfortable with this lifestyle because no-one is here to judge her action and she can do anything as she wants.

The heart is a lonely hunter, a story written by Carson McCullers. The story explains the lonely individuals who think that he is the only person can understand their own problem and no

one else can. Someway Lydia also feels the same thing and she never wants others to know her problem. Other characters also experience loneliness in a different way. Carson who act as a lover to Lydia. One day he shares his past life to her. When he was 22, while he travels to Asia he had a chance to meet a girl who is Australian. They started to love each other and got married when she was pregnant. A girl child was born and Ava is the name of the child. Few months was only passed and they started to fight. Suddenly she left Carson alone and she also takes Ava with her. When he ends the story he looks the glass which symbolizes the emptiness in his life. "He was looking at the empty glass in his hand". Here The empty glass means a lot. Loneliness was surrounded him and the absence of his daughter made his life as empty.

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