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Quest for Plenitude in Taslima Nasrin's *French Lover*

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Abstract

This research studies the unconscious self of the protagonist character Nilanjana Mandal (Nila). She in search of true, independent and complete love, falls in the relationship with different people but her quest for plenitude in love is never realized in her life. The paper unfolds her contingent behavior pattern psychoanalytically and claims that this is an aftermath of her repressed desire for the love of her father. Her quest for her father gets displaced in the characters she falls in love with and they cannot substitute his place in her life as she unconsciously seeks for, she can not have a lasting relationship. This study claims that Nilanjana 's quest for plenitude in love is not fulfilled because of her repressed desire for her father figure. Her quest for his love remained unfulfilled therefore she falls for different who are in one or other way have similar characteristic features as her father. Furthermore, it claims that the upbringing of a child shapes their future nature. If they are not given proper love, attention, and praise they end up being sad, meek, irresolute and dependent. The research is done on the theoretical ground of some of the psychoanalytical writers like Sigmund Freud, Jessica Benjamin, Nancy Chodrow, John JB Morgan, Maximo, and Carranza, etc.

Key Words: Unconscious, Plenitude, Fixation, Oedipal Complex, Repression, Id, Ego, Super Ego, Displacement, sublimation, Anxiety, Libido

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I. Journey to Interiority in Nasrin's *French Lover*

This novel *French Lover*(2008) by Taslima Nasrin(25 August 1965) is the story of Nilanjana Mandal, a Bengali girl who reaches to the strange city of France in search of love and independence. In an endorsement on the back cover of the book, Penguin books writes, it is "a woman's search for true love and independence in the strange city far away from home". Her dream of life initially is simple, where she lives a romantic life with Sushanta, her lover. In her dream, there is a small house where she would wait for Sushanta as a good housewife. He would return from work in the evening and they would have a romantic dinner. In her ideal life would have struggled but they would enjoy it. In her words, "It would always be a struggle to make ends met; We'd love each other in the dim light of the lamp and laugh at the materialistic world outside" (Nasrin 13). This was a complete life: a life plenitude of love for her. Deceived by her lover, she gets out of the sensual her and attempts to be practical.

Born in a well-off family of Calcutta, she is a master's degree holder in Bengali literature. Brought up in an aristocratic family, she had the luxury of everything. She is the first among the two children. She has a brother, mother, and father in her family. Her mother is a pale looking, dark-skinned woman who had been neglected and rejected all her life. Even her own children hated and rebuked her for her pale color and submissive position at home. She ate the leftover of what her husband and children ate. She always served them. Until her last days, her family never knew of her bad health condition. It might be because nobody thought of her much. She realizes this only when she comes to see her ailing mother. Coming close to her mother she thinks, "once she used to eat the leftovers after feeding her husband and children" (Nasrin 142). Only after seeing her mother in death bed she realised

how neglected and ignored her mother had been in the house. She had never noticed her mother before as she was treated as nobody at home.

Her father is a well-known doctor in the town. He is busy with his work and personal affairs that he does not have time for his family and children. All she remembers about her father so far is his rebuke and controlling attitude. He has never been close to his family. He never loved his wife. He had used her to fulfill his needs. He married her because he needed financial assistance to complete his medical degree, begot children because he had to prove that he is not impotent. Nila's mother-Molina remained no more than a maid for him and the family. During the discussion between father and daughter, Nila says, "Maa was like a servant in this house, right? ... You've enjoyed lording it over her. And you had Swati Sen to give you other pleasure" (138). He has set a strict routine for her. She has to cook him food and serve him at any cost. She does not get any excuse even if she is ill. For his physical pleasure, he had a mistress named Swati Sen, unlike Molina she is white, pretty and fashionable. Nikhil her brother has adopted similar characterial trait like that of his father. He is a politician and a businessman. He does things for his social image. He does not want to go beyond the social practice because he fears criticism. When Nila Asks whether he really believes in the practices after death he says, "Does one ever believe in them?... there is an element of fun in it" (159). He wants his social image to be that of noble doing all the things that he does not believe which is intolerable to Nila. Nila always hated these dual characteristics of her family members especially that of her father that slowly and gradually she started a rebellion against them and their beliefs. There are servants at her home; therefore, Nila never has to bear the burden of doing household activities. She has done a master's degree in Bengali literature and has interest in music, poetry, and literature. Deceived in her so imagined

true, platonic and divine love, she chose to marry Kishan Lal because he is a non-resident Indian (NRI) and he could take her away from that place. She had hoped for a free and independent life in France but what happens is that she gets confined within the four walls of a sophisticated house. An independent and free thinker Nila cannot take it, therefore; she breaks away from the confinement and starts to live on her own. However, the single life she lives does not happen to be single because her room partner happens to be a lesbian. She learns and experiences homosexuality then. Her mother's illness and untimely death bring her to the deconstruction of her and her family's life. It is only after her illness that she thinks of her mother's and her life. She feels sorry for her mother and tries to bring her out of the pathetic situation. She pleads her father and brother to be there for her mother but does not get expected response from them. When she asks them to take a leave from their work and stay by her mother's side, her father responds, "Don't pay any heed to this impractical girl. Just because one person's life is at a standstill doesn't mean everyone has to stop theirs!" (141). Death of her mother leaves her no reason to stay in that country. With her mother's gifted money and a sad heart, she returns to France with no fixed goal and destination to reach. This is when Benoit Dupont happens in her life. Unlike others who dominated, criticized and humiliated her for her skin color, Benoit falls in love with it. When Nila talks of the beauty of the light he compares it to her beauty, "I had never seen such beautiful light before. Neither have I, where did you get such a light, Nila?" (68). This leads a broken girl to a different world. Inferiorised and subjugated because of the color of her skin, Nila had always seen those white skins as superior, egalitarian, independent and humanitarian being. Receiving affection for Nila at the time when she feels rejected from the whole world was inconceivable. Benoit tells her about his feelings for her despite his marital status. Nila always critical

of her father's extramarital relationship accepts him and weaves fine dreams of a happy, hearty and healthy relationship. Deceived by Sushanta, dominated by Kishan Lal, used by Daniel, Nila then aspires for a complete plenitude from her *French Lover*. Days of love and longing pass with knowing one another. Slowly and gradually Nila starts to realize the complete plenitude in love and relationship is a thing of tales.

Nila does what she thinks is the best for the relationship but east and west comes into repulsion. Slowly their ideas start clashing, behavior start to be incompatible. Benoir; the “Eros” could also not stand on Neela’s expectation and she breaks away from everything concluding that men whichever country, whatever society and whatever vision are all the same. Talking to the maid, after the catastrophic resolution with Benoir, she says, “I feel men, of whichever country, whatever society, are all the same” (293). Nila eventually liberates herself from every relationship and starts a new life a life of her own, a life where there is no fear of deception and abandonment. However, a critical look at the novel takes us to a chaotic situation. Throughout the novel, we find no consistency in her thought and behavior. She is always in opposition to her father. There is no any area where Nila talks well of her father however, she has keenly observed and understood him more than her mother. She knows his behavior, his likes, and dislikes. How he spends his day and what kind of relationship he has with people inside and outside of the house. At times she seems a resolute, dauntless, and revolutionary woman and at other, she is a stupid, pompous, and senseless woman.

Liberation of women especially sexual liberation and right to her own body have always been in fore in Taslima Nasrin’s writings. She is a passionate advocate of women’s freedom and has used her pen as her device of rebellion. Her characters are

her literary persona. Through them, she narrates what she experiences, sees, feels, and encounters in living in a gendered, patriarchal, orthodox religion guided and hierarchical society. She opposes all types of discrimination based on race, gender, religion, class or nationality. However, her main focus is on the oppression of women and religious fundamentalism. This resolute nature of her led her to forced exile and multiple fatawa called on her name by different Islamic fundamentalists. She defines herself to be a freedom fighter against the fundamentalist system governed by the ghetto belief of religion. In an interview, she defines her motif as a fight against the wrongdoings in the world through her pen. She says, "Everybody can fight to reach the same goal but in different ways. I am fighting not on a political level, but what I have seen in this society. I think that your destination is the same, to give freedom to women, or to give equal rights" (Persecuted for Power of the Pen, 33). Born in Islamic family where women have a subordinate position, Nasrin's psyche is controlled by the Islamic code of conduct. Seen from a female's perspective the book is extreme when it comes to the treatment of women. It has set different norms and codes for one to live. Quoting the lines from Quran's section 24:31, "Women are to lower their gaze around men, so they do not look them in the eye. (To be fair, men are told to do the same thing in the prior verse)". Similarly, another quote from Muhammad's Farewell Sermon Says, "Treat women well, for they are [like] domestic animals with you and do not possess anything for themselves". Similarly, defining the status of women, Sahih Bukhari in sermon 2:28 & 54:464 says, "Women comprise the majority of Hell's occupants. This is important because the only women in heaven mentioned explicitly by Muhammad are the virgins who serve the sexual desires of men" There are hundreds and thousands of such subordinating remarks on women that make women as a worthless creature in the Islamic religion. These things would

obviously be inconvincible for a revolutionary lady like Nasrin. She rejects the ghetto belief of the religion and comes out of the moral boundaries set by the Quran and other religions too.

S. M. Shamsul Alam (Alam) views Nasrin's writing as possible gender Subaltern Narrative within the context of the debate between Islamic fundamentalism and Modernity. Nasrin's writings represent "gendered self-representation in an era when it has been Islamic fundamentalists and the modernizing nation-states" (Alam, 430). Between 1989 and 1994, Nasrin published about nineteen books, including poems, short stories, novels, and newspaper columns that were eventually published as books. Nasrin mostly advocates for the issue of identity and existential crisis in her writing. She likes to deconstruct women's oppression and subjugation, religion, and ghetto eastern women dominant culture through her writing. she has portrayed the life and struggle of a Hindu family of Sudomaya Dutta in the so-called Land of Muslim: Bangladesh in Lajja. The story is set in the event of Hindu Muslim riot/communal riot of December 1992, The best part of the novel is the presentation of the idea of dislocation created by the nation-State and the working of an illiterate wife of an educated eunuch man's wife.

Similar is the story of Far (return) Similar to Lajja the novel deals with the idea of dislocation created by nation states. Sexual liberation is one of the main themes of Nasrin's writing. She does not distinguish between self, body, and identity. They are one and the same for her. Her next novel Sodh (revenge) portrays this self of her. Sodh is a story of an active, enthusiastic, educated and attractive girl Jhumur. She has to let go of all her creativity and aspiration after marrying her lover. She avenges herself by having an illicit relationship. Thus, sexuality becomes a tool of liberation and revenge and hence the title of the book.

Likewise, the themes of sexuality and the politics of personal liberation returns in Nasrin's *Dukhaboti Maye* (Sad girl) (1994), is a collection of sketches but at the same time "not quite short stories"(Alam, 22). In *Dinjai* (Days go by), Nasrin describes the relationship between Mamta and her abusive husband. When her husband leaves her, Mamta becomes independent and liberated mentally and socially. In *Matritro* (Motherhood), Nasrin deals with religion and motherhood in a patriarchal social context.

In this novel, *French Lover*, Nasrin has played with the psychology of her protagonist and claimed that experience is the stronger guide than education. She has portrayed Nila as an educated, rebellious and self-dependent girl belonging to an aristocratic family of Calcutta. Initially, Nilanjana is a subaltern woman guided by her internalized sense of inferiority complex of her skin color, her woman self, and her third world self. She has observed her woman self and the way women are treated in the Indian context. It is therefore that she chooses to flee France to escape the guilt and shame of being deceived by a boy, she loved. Doing so, she wants to escape the social criticism that a girl with broken affair would face in Indian society. On self-searching about the reason for her marriage with Kishan, she thinks:

Or did she do it because one has to get married. Otherwise, people would frown upon her. Perhaps she did it to defend herself against nasty conjuncture about why she didn't marry until so late and also to prove everyone that she wasn't deaf or lame and could still get a good match. (15)

She has a duality of character she longs for her identity and her native land on the one hand and on another she discern the idea of living in her birthplace Calcutta. Not even for the wish of her mother. Similarly, she believes in self-dependence, yet she wants

her lover to be indebted to her generosity. She despises discrimination; however, she is not able to come off her aristocratic living style. While on a date called by Benoir, she insists paying the bill so as to prove herself better and generous. The incidence goes:

The waiter placed the bill in front of Benoir. Nila snatched it away. He protested violently. 'What are you doing? I'll pay. I have invited you. ...She kept eight hundred and fifty Francs on the table and said, 'just because I am from a poor country doesn't make me a pauper. (182)

She talks of self-dependence but tries to live on her mother's wealth. She longs for a personal life but fears loneliness. She criticizes extramarital relationship of her father but falls for one herself. She covets his father's mistress for taking away her father from them but happens to do the same on Benoir's daughter and wife.

Ramnath Kesarwani defines Nila's pursuit of happiness as her struggle to attain her identity, right and her "self". He focuses on the concept of the struggle of Nila and her multiple marginalizations as a daughter, black, and third world woman. Kesarwani calls her the "epitome of a post-colonial third world woman denying the procedure of taming her by her husband" (227). As per him, her struggle for attaining herself succeeds when she realizes that the so-called white, civilized, educated and egalitarian races are as ridged and barbaric as an ordinary Indian man. Kesarwani's attainment of self is the Nila's realization that complete plenitude of love is never possible because no one loves others more than and out of themselves. However, a deep study of Nila' mind and behavior says that it is more than that. it is not just Nila's surroundings, her socio-economic location, and gender that are bothering her. It is also the influence that they had on her. Their working on her and her struggle between what she is taught to be and what she wants to be. For understanding these

things one needs to study the subjects' mind, behavior and thoughts psychoanalytically.

The term 'psychoanalysis' has two accepted meanings. Firstly, it means a method of treating mentally disordered people. Secondly, it also goes to mean the theories on the human mind and its various complexities. This psychoanalytical school is also known as depth psychology on the ground that it goes into the deep region of the unconscious mind. The psychoanalytical theory was propounded by Sigmund Freud. Freud was originally a medical man who was engaged in the study and treatment of nervous patients in his own clinic. According to Freud, to study human psychology one needs to study his unconscious. He described the unconscious as the reservoir of desires, thoughts, and memories that are below the surface of conscious awareness. It frequently involves looking at early childhood experiences in order to discover how the events in the child might have shaped the individual and how they contribute to current actions and behavior. The fear, anger, desire, envy etc repressed in the unconscious of a person come into play in one's behavior in his/ her adult life, thus studying the repressed emotions we can analyze ones behavior and attitude.

Keeping Nasrin's *French Lover* in the frame of psychoanalysis, Nila's contingent behavior and thoughts can be better understood. This nature of Nila can best be explained by the theory of female Oedipus complex by Freud. To understand complexes one needs to understand the different stages of psychosocial development of a child. Freud claims a person passes through five different stages from their birth to death. That includes the oral Stage, the anal stage, the phallic stage, the latent stage and the genital stage. If the child develops fixation in any of these five stages they are supposed to be manifested in the child's behavior later. If a child is fixated on the

parent of opposite sex in the phallic stage they will be seeking a partner with resembling characteristics of the parents. It is at this stage that the social practices and gender-typing forms a superego in a child. Nila a first born daughter with a blackish complexion as like her mother could not get any attention from her father. Her arrogant and self centred father was busy in his own life and work. Nilaas like her mother always remained ignored by her father that she developed fixation on him that she sought for the fulfillment of love and affection that she could not get from her father in every relationship she fell upon unconsciously.

In contrast the relationship between Nila and her mother is frequently changing. With the changing age and circumstances, Nila's feeling towards her mother has been shifting. Initially, she is quite reluctant towards her in the early stages of life. She herself admits that she never ever noticed what her mother eats. She was always ashamed of her because of her skin color and her subordinated position at home. She even received the news of Molina's sickness with mockery and suspicion. She took it as a plot for making her return either to her marital life with Kishan or to her home in Calcutta. Her reaction on knowing of her mother's illness was:

Nila Laughed. She laughed because she simply couldn't believe that Molina was ill. If she was it could not be anything more serious than a common cold. Sunil was advising her to go back home because of Nila's Nerve, for having the nerve to leave Kishan, for putting Sunil in an awkward spot, ... because Sunil felt that Nila should go back to her father's house if she didn't feel like staying with her husband. (111)

She starts thinking and remembering her mother only after her death. In her memories, she feels sorry for the kind of life her mother had, the things and behaviors she went through. She pities for the experiences she had longed for but could not

have. She remembers, "Molina had always wanted to go to Darjeeling. But Anirban never had the time" (147). Throughout the novel, she has not mentioned any good memories she had with Molina. The ones that she mentions are also after the deception of Sushanta. It is perhaps when she realized her feminine self and is aware of her gender type, and her subordinate position as a woman in the society. Looking at her mother she studies what the position of a woman is like in her culture and society. According to Albert Bandura, adults not only provide models for children to imitate, but they are also actively involved in influencing a child's gender role identification. His social learning theory of individual personality proposes that gender identities and gender role performances are acquired through two concepts: direct tuition and observational learning. Neela got to understand her subordinate position in the society as woman when her love affair with a Brahmin boy failed because of her belonging to the lower cast community. She explains the condition, "Sushanta was a high-caste Brahmin: he could make love to Nilanjana Mandal of the scheduled caste, but marriage never!" (Nasrin 15). This discriminatory attitude of the society forces her to compare herself to her mother whom she had observed to be submissive, docile, meek and non-responsive. According to Bandura:

Matching behavior is acquired on the basis of contiguity of modeling stimulus sequences and symbolic verbal coding of observational inputs. These representational symbolic events, in conjunction with appropriate environmental cues, later guide overt enactment of appropriate matching response. (Bandura 43)

When Neela gets deceived by her lover she realizes her constraints as a secluded woman. She finds herself as helpless, and subjugated as her mother. Neela's this realization of her feminine self and internalization of the biases she would be facing

because of her gender leads her to marry Kishan Lal. Kishan Lal is an NRI and a wealthy person who would take her to France; a land of whites. For Nila white is the beautiful, rich, independent and egalitarian color. She believes as the color white is pure and spotless similar would be the land of whites where she would live an independent, free and quality life there. Nila's expectation shatters when she has to live a life of a jailbird in her so-called rich husband's house. Initially, she does her best to please her husband. She tries to stand to the standards of an ideal Indian housewife as her mother did. As she worked Nila wonders if she was doing all this because of all the social standards of a good wife. She thinks:

All day long Nila cleaned the house diligently, watered the plants and cooked. She was she loved Kishan or to please him so that he would be able to love her. There had to be a reason to love someone. His reasons were perhaps her cooking and cleaning. She couldn't expect him to love her out of blue, just because she was his wife. (Nasrin 57)

She does her best to fit in the standard of a good woman; however, she finds no attempt from the other side to cooperate with her. Nila a young, enthusiastic, passionate self-dependent girl cannot take it. It is when Nila realizes the wraths of her mother. It is then that she starts to observe her mother's life and realizes that if she keeps doing things for Kishan only and gives up her life as like Molina did then she would also be as helpless and as subjugated as Molina. In a letter to Molina Nila writes:

Ma, you have wasted your entire life trying to please other people, now you should think of yourself, enjoy your own life. After grandfather died, the inheritance was split up and you got a fair amount of money by selling your share. Who are you shaving it for? Spend it - on

yourself. Life is not forever. The people here have enough to eat and good clothes to wear. So they enjoy life to the hilt. They laugh heartily and we are afraid to laugh because we are in fear, why? Because some stupid man somewhere has said that if you laugh too much you will be paying for it with tears. (54)

This is when she realizes that her attempt to live a life like that of her mother would lead her to live a lifeless life of a servant, a life, where she has no say at all. Then, she leaves Kishan Lal's house and starts living with Daniel. It is only after Molina's death that Nila deconstructs herself, her relationship with her mother, her family member's and her father's treatment of her mother. It is then that Nila realizes that a lot could have been done for mother when she was fine and had hope from life. It is then that she realizes her duty towards her mother. She tries to make everyone realize this thing but before she could, her mother leaves her with utter sadness and desolation. She was there for her mother but at her time of death, she could not be there because she was sharing bed with Daniel. This gives Neela a great despair and pain. Looking at her mother's life where she always worked for other's happiness and comfort, always fulfilled other's wishes and desires, obeyed everyone, where she had enough riches to fulfill her dreams and live a luxurious life but sacrificed all for the happiness of her families. However at the end there was no one even to accompany her, soothe her and take care of her when she was dying. She then realises how futile her mother's life had been trying to make others happy giving up her dreams and wishes and determines that she won't let herself be one like that.

During her visit to Calcutta, she seeks for the one she could express her sorrow, grievance, and plight to but no one sits beside her, listen and soothes her. Her father despites rebuke her for not staying with Kishan and not being an ideal wife.

During the discussion her father says, “if you behave yourself, keep your husband happy like most women do, do as he says, he is prepared to take you back. ...Nila, you have gone and upset this straightforward man” (137). Nila is hurt by such a reluctant judgemental attitude of her father. She scorns him for being a defiant father and husband. It is then that the repressed neglected daughter inside her comes fore and revolt in front of this reluctant father who had never had a soft corner for his family and his wife. She then asks him, “There is a word- regret. Have you ever heard it? Have you ever felt it? No, you haven't. There was never any need” (Nasrin 138). With this she wants him to self realize that he himself had failed in his role as a husband and father. It is the disinclination of the father that saw the seed of hatred and anger in Nila towards him. His reluctance towards the family and his responsibilities formed a rebellious concept on her that she should reciprocate his reluctance with the similar attitude that she hates and criticizes every activity of her father.

In Freudian words, this attitude of Nila would be defined as her envy towards Aniraban, manifested in the form of anger and hatred. Prudent, educated and dauntless Nila finds her father to be self-obsessed, self-centered chauvinistic person who cared for nothing other than his own image and will. When Nila wanted to settle in India after her mother's death, he responds, “It is all to me. I will not be able to show my face to anyone” (Nasrin 155). This to her educated, self-dependent superego was intolerable therefore, she chooses deviance as a means of revolt. However, she is unaware of her morality being guided by the repressed pleasure principle in her later life. According to Hande Saglu:

Unconscious has the function of being a store for the past memories and traumatic childhood events that have an impact on our unconscious thought and behavior. Repressed feelings, memories, unacceptable

desires are generally connected to childhood abuse and sexual harassment. Such problems are kept in the level of the unconscious and later might have serious impacts on a person's mental and psychological conditions. (Saoglu, 1640)

Though she believes that she hates her father she has him in both her best and worst memories. This shows that in her unconscious mind she connects with him. In every incidence that happens to her life, a memory related to her father comes to her mind. When people wore a short dress, she has an amusing experience or she thought of doing something, she either remembers any incidence that would include her father or imagines how his reaction will be. When she is enjoying the freedom and beauty of France her attitude is, “she lost herself in the endless world of the Louvere. She no longer remembered that she was Nilanjana Mandal, daughter of Aniraban Mandal in Calcutta” (Nasrin 67). She is so skeptical of him yet she knows him better. She knows what he does and how he thinks. She knows of his affair with Swati Sen and where he goes with her and what he does for her.

All in all, the novel *French Lover* is deeply confusing and disappointing. Nila comes across not as a rebel with a cause, but a confused, deviant, unreflective, impulsive, and ultimately destructive character. In order to understand this novel and the protagonist, one needs to change the normal lenses, we need to explore the life of the writer and the protagonist psychoanalytically. Then only it could be understood as Taslima Nasrin's alter ego. Through Nila, Nasrin is trying to sublimate her revolt against the suppressing, the patriarchal Islamic code of conduct set for Muslim women. The Protagonist Nila has no specific character and persona. It keeps fluctuating throughout the novel. It is because of the clash between her Id which wishes to break away from the dominating and subjugating socioeconomic status and

the superego which fears the social stigmatization and criticism. She has a dual character, in surface level she says something but in the deeper level, she herself seems going in opposition to it. Relating it to her childhood and upbringing we can say that her contingent character is the repercussion of the uneven childhood she had have and the clash between her concentrated Id and diluted superego built on that ground.

II. The Quest for Plenitude in Taslima Nasrin's *French Lover*

Neelanjana Mandal's life is a hunt for the self-respect of a neglected, subjugated, and suppressed female self. She has been struggling to acquire plenitude in love throughout her life but has not been able to attain it. From her childhood, she has been deprived of the kind of life and freedom she longed for and till her adult life, she has been a failure. She loses in every walk of life. Penguin books, the publisher of the novel explain this novel as, "a fascinating glimpse into the working of woman's mind as she struggles to come to terms with her identity in a hostile world". Similarly, Paul Parrot claims the story of Nila is the story of failure, it defines protagonist character Nila as "rebellious, confused, non-practical and pessimist" (1). It also argues that the author has permitted the protagonist to fail miserably. Likewise, Sheetal Maurya (Maurya) reviews Nasrin's *French Lover* as a story of a confused girl.

According to Maurya:

Although this is a story all about a girl and her freedom somehow I've found the protagonist 'Nila' little confusing in herself. She was not happy with her husband because he is not handsome. He has put a restriction on her but on the other side, she happily accepts anything which her *French Lover* uses to say her because she is in love with his looks and sweet talk. (Maurya 1)

Similarly, Sigma G. R in her paper, Feminist theme in Taslima Nasrin's *French Lover*, argues that the Novel is an analysis of the failure of different marriages. She even claims it as writer's "escapades as the result of the lack of real love or affection in her husband's attitude towards her and his former French wife" (3). With all these findings of confusion and failure, this paper attempts to study the working of Nila's mind in terms of her behavior and experiences.

A superficial glance of Nila's messy life and contingent behavior is very confusing to understand. One does not find any consistency in her life. She breaks from her culturally weeded husband and the life of a housewife claiming that she felt controlled, and imprisoned by Kishan Lal. Kishan Lal wants her to stay at home, follow his orders, serve him and fulfill the wifely duty as a traditional Indian woman. This obviously is intolerable to enthusiastic, educated and self-dependent Nila. She then shifts to Daniel's place which is congested, messy but free. She enjoys the freedom and gets a chance to understand life in Paris better but it also comes to her with a price, she has to live with a homosexual and fulfill her sexual needs and undergo her racist behavior as a third world citizen.

The next time, she starts a new life with Benoit Dupont, a married French man with a seven-year-old daughter who claims that he falls in love with her at first sight. She easily agrees to Benoit's proposal and starts living with him though she criticizes her father for having an extramarital affair but Nila who cannot stay idle in Kishan Lal's house and wants to work and earn her living on her own does not feel of the need for finding work for her or engage in anything other than being a generous housewife who does not only serve her husband but also affords his financial needs. The same thing which is confinement becomes a happy life for her when she is with Benoit. We do not find her stick to any specific personality. She seems to be an educated, enthusiastic and a self-dependent woman sometimes and a stupid, prudent and senseless at other. She prides her education of Bengali literature she adores her Bengali self and does not wish to learn Punjabi, Kishan's language. Yet she is infatuated with the white skin, white culture and their way of living. This array of her personality can be understood from a psychoanalytic perspective. As Maximo and Carranza argue, "young people having a good sense of belonging, and self-efficacy to

confront adversity. These qualities would be brought out in the context of committed and encouraging relationships with others—parents, relatives, teachers, other adults, and peers” (1). This paper researches on her childhood, family background, her connection with her parents and other people and how they contributed on shaping her behavior and thinking pattern, the formation of Id, ego, and superego in her, her unconscious mind and defenses that she adopted to remain happy.

Being based on the idea of psychoanalysis this paper will be studying how the experiences thought and behavior pattern of Nila and seek the cause of her continuous failure to attain complete happiness. It will explore the underlying factors that caused what and why she experienced in her life. This chapter will dig upon her childhood experiences and its manifestation in her youth.

According to Freud, a human starts developing his behavior from the very childhood. His psyche starts developing from the day he is born. As per him, the human psyche is structured into three parts, the id, ego and superego, all developing at different stages in our lives. In a mentally healthy person, these three systems form a unified and harmonious organization. Working cooperatively they enable the individual to carry on efficient and satisfying transactions with environment thus fulfilling basic needs and desires. When these three systems are at odds with one another, the personality that they comprised is to be maladjusted. They are the three balancing factor of human personality. Each of them is guided by certain principle. The Id is guided by the Pleasure principle. It seeks instant gratification of all the needs and desires. It is the primitive and instinctive component of personality. It consists of all the inherited (i.e. biological) components of personality present at birth, including the sex (life) instinct – Eros (which contains the libido), and the aggressive (death) instinct - Thanatos. If it is anticipated fully we find ourselves doing weird things in

inappropriate situations. That is why ego keeps us controlled. Ego is guided by reality principle and forces us to focus or consider the risk, requirement, and outcome of our decision. It halts the energy Id until the suitable time and place. It develops in order to mediate between the unrealistic id and the external real world. It is the decision-making component of personality. Ideally, the ego works by reason, whereas the id is chaotic and totally unreasonable. According to Freud, “The ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world” (Freud 25).

The third part of mind superego's function is to control the id's impulses, especially those which society forbids, such as sex and aggression. It is guided by Morality principle. It also has the function of persuading the ego to turn to moralistic goals rather than simply realistic ones and to strive for perfection. It consists of the values and morals that a child learns from his surroundings especially family, society, and culture. It is developed since the age of three to five the phallic stage of psychosexual development. The superego consists of two systems: the conscience and the ideal self. The conscience can punish the ego by causing feelings of guilt. For example, if the ego gives in to the id's demands, the superego may make the person feel bad through guilt. The ideal self (or ego-ideal) is an imaginary picture of how you ought to be and represents career aspirations, how to treat other people, and how to behave as a member of society. Behavior which falls short of the ideal self may be punished by the superego through guilt. The super-ego can also reward us through the ideal self when we behave ‘properly’ by making us feel proud. If a person’s ideal self is too high a standard, then whatever the person does will represent failure. The ideal self and conscience are largely determined in childhood from parental values and how you were brought up. A child with motivating, caring, supportive and well-behaved parents will develop similar kind of attitude and manners.

Nilá's instant anger to her father, his carefree nature, negligence towards his family, her envy of his relationship with his mistress and her deviant activities are the mediated form of her libido towards her father. Her longing for him is synthesized with the superego which tells that the only logical and rational way of having him in her life is being close to him in a socially expected manner like those. As a daughter, there are different social strings that would keep him at a distance with her. In a normal condition, he would not pay attention to her, therefore, she chooses enmity, anger, and deviance so as to remain close to him and get his attention. Her ego mediated between her longing for her father or her id and social recognition of her with him as father and daughter and seek deviance as a means of remaining connected to him. Similarly, her falling in love with men having similar characteristics like that of her father is also an appropriate example of her ego seeking her repressed id manifested in a moral and socially acceptable way.

Freud has also propounded the concept of psychosexual development in a child. The theory of psychosexual development is based on the idea that parents play a crucial role in managing their children's sexual and aggressive drives during the first few years of life to foster their proper development. If we lack proper nurturing and parenting during a stage, we may become stuck in, or fixated on, that stage. According to Freud, children's pleasure-seeking urges (governed by the id) are focused on a different area of the body, called an erogenous zone, at each of the five stages of development: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital.

The first stage oral stage starts with his birth to the eighteenth month. In this stage, a child's erogenous region lies in his mouth. Freud argues, this is why infants are born with a sucking reflex and desire their mother's breast. If a child's oral needs are not met during infancy, he or she may develop negative habits such as nail biting

or thumb sucking to meet this basic need. The second Anal Stage starts from 1- three years of age. The erogenous region at this age lies in their erogenous zone lies in their bladder and bowel. Improper resolution of this stage, such as parents toilet training their children too early, can result in a child who is uptight and overly obsessed with order. In the third Stage the Phallic Stage, a child's erogenous zone lies in their genital organs. According to Freud, in this stage, the child begins to struggle with sexual desires toward the opposite sex parent (boys to mothers and girls to fathers). For boys, this is called the Oedipus complex, involving a boy's desire for his mother and his urge to replace his father who is seen as a rival for the mother's attention. At the same time, the boy is afraid his father will punish him for his feelings, so he experiences castration anxiety. Similarly, in girls, Female Oedipus complex occurs. She considers her mother to be the cause that she does not have a penis. This creates envy in her against mother and longing to the affection of the father. Nila's having no childhood memories with her mother and her admitting that neither of the family members nor Nila matches to Freudian idea. Nila realizes, "she felt bad but it did not matter to us. Nothing about her mattered to us" (150).

Jessica Benjamin in her paper *Father and Daughter* argues, that the daughter later on psychosexually progresses to heterosexual femininity (which culminates in bearing a child) derived from earlier, infantile desires; her child replaces the absent penis. Moreover, after the phallic stage, the girl's psychosexual development includes transferring her primary erogenous zone from the infantile clitoris to the adult vagina. Regarding mother-daughter relationship, the girl slowly and gradually facilitates identifying with mother, who understands that, in being females, neither of them possesses a penis, and thus are not antagonists. Nila's sympathy towards her mother. Her trying to bring her out of her wrath and dream of showing her penis and other

places proves that her relationship with her mother was not as antagonistic as what Freud says. Freud himself is not as sure on arriving in this idea as he is in explaining Penis envy therefore, he has chosen to leave a space to argue considering a girl's Oedipal conflict to be more emotionally intense than that of a boy, resulting, potentially, in a woman of submissive, less confident personality. Furthermore, if the children are not given as much love and attention in this stage they get fixated. This fixation is stored in their unconscious and in the further life either gets into the form of Anxiety or the ego has to employ defense mechanism to deal with it. A child fixated in Phallic stage keeps seeking for the fulfillment of the love of the parent of opposite sex through out their life.

Furthermore, Phallic stage later is replaced by the stage of Latency. During this stage, sexual instincts subside, and children begin to further develop the superego or conscience. Children begin to behave in morally acceptable ways and adopt the values of their parents and other important adults. This stage lasts till twelve. The Final stage The Genital occurs then after and lasts till his/her death. During this stage, sexual impulses reemerge. If other stages have been successfully met, adolescents engage in appropriate sexual behavior, which may lead to marriage and childbirth.

Freud's explanation of these developmental stages provided early psychosocial explanations for an individual's deviance or abnormal behavior. It is during the childhood that the software's that guide a human being is developed and installed in his/her mind. It is the most sensitive period in human life. It is then that parents need to take special care of their children. Any fixation created at this time will last throughout one's life. Fixation, as Freud described, is attaching oneself in an unreasonable or exaggerated way to another individual or one particular stage of development. Freud claimed that such a fixation at one particular stage can cause bad

habits or problems in an individual's adult life. It is at this moment when children recognize their gender and gender roles. Seen from this perspective Nila lived a neglected childhood. According to the psychoanalysts, a child develops a Fixation to the parent of opposite sex at the third stage of his/her psychological development. The child expects more love and affection from the parents of the opposite sex at this stage. According to Freud, if the child's affection towards the parent of opposite sex is not reciprocated the child develops fixation towards the parent. This fixation stored in the unconscious guides one's perception, attitude, and behavior towards that person.

According to Tyson, the child tries to fill up the vacant love of their parent's through their spouse as they grow older, they happen to look for the partner with similar characteristics as their parents and expect them to substitute their parents which is never possible and therefore the person use to get disappointed from them and the relationship most probably will break. Likewise, Nila's need of affection from her father was not fulfilled. She had not had the kind of attachment to her father. For a healthy relationship, trust, respect, and concern there is need of attachment in a relationship. The more attached one is with other the stronger the relationship is.

Sally I. Maximo and Jennifer S. Carranza, quoted Bowlby's concept of attachment as:

The propensity of human beings to make strong affectional bonds to particular others and of explaining the many forms of emotional distress and personality disturbance, including anxiety, anger, depression, and emotional detachment, to which unwilling separation and loss give rise. (127)

They opine that the behavior of attaining and maintaining intimacy to an attachment figure is usually conceived as stronger or wiser, "characterize human beings from cradle to the grave" (Maximo & Carranza, 123). Such attachment as per them is

prevalent during early childhood; however, it becomes apparent in adulthood when a person is distressed, ill, or afraid. The attachment, the loving caring and supportive relationship of family strengthen resilience in a person.

In Neela's case, she has never mentioned of any affectionate behavior of her father. The first thing she thinks of her father after returning home was of his reluctant behavior towards her mother and his adulterous behavior. She sympathizes her mother. She remembers how reluctant he was towards her:

Nila knew about Molina's wishes from her childhood- none of them got fulfilled. Molina had wanted a little love from Aniraban; she didn't get it. Once Molina had seen a Kanjivaram sari ...Aniraban did not buy it for her. But he bought it for Swati Sen, who wore it and went to Simla with him. Molina had always wanted to go to Darjeeling. Nila had never seen Aniraban and Molina share a bed. Molina always made her husband's bed with great care. He came back from his hours of fun with Swati, critiqued every item put on the table, crashed on his neatly made bed and snored the night away.'(133)

Her perception regarding her father shows that she does not have any emotional attachment to her father. It might be because of his alienation from his family. Since he spent most of his time away from the family and had no emotional attachment to them, Nila developed a concept that they do not matter to her father. Even, the first time the father and daughter meet after so long there is no exchange of emotions and affection in between. Aniravan talks of nothing other than Nila's separation with her husband and the shame that would cause to him once people know of it. She expects him to listen to her problem and understand it, sympathize her, support her and guide her. However, Aniraban is always judgmental and irrespective of her sentiments. He

dominantly announces his judgment without listening to her and thinking what it would make her feel. He is so prudent that he believes that the guy he found for her is the perfect one and he would not have any fault. If there is any fault that is of Nila. In a letter to Nila, he writes,

I suppose you can guess what I am feeling when Kishan told me everything. I am sure you are doing whatever you fancy in that foreign land, but one day you will come to your senses and then it'll be too late. Many of your compatriots have shared your fate. So please change your ways when there is still time. if you do not want to resolve things with Kishan, come back immediately. There is still time to mend your ways. (252)

Without listening to her or trying to understand what is going on between Nila and Kishan Lal, he declares that what she is doing is wrong and she should return either to Kishan Lal or to India if she wants to have a good life. This moral coercion leads Nila to revolt against her father and questions his moral self. She starts questioning whether he has stood to the ethical standards that he wanted her to follow, whether he had been a dutiful husband to his wife and a responsible father to his children. She condemns him for being pompous and self-centered. She claims that he had the family with them because he had to stand to the social expectation. He married Nila's mother because he needed financial assistance. She finds no tenderness in his behavior to Molina as a husband has to his wife. Molina was never his fancy neither were the children, therefore, she condemns:

You married maa because you needed money. That was taken care of by her dowry. You used it to study medicine. Maa was like a servant in this house, right? No one said anything because that's how women

often are in their husband's house. You have enjoyed lording it over. And you had Swati Sen to give you other pleasures. ... You had to prove that you were not sterile and so there were two children. It was the matter of pride that your two children studied and did well; you won there too. (Nasrin 138)

Aniraban's no responsiveness to what Nila says is a proof that he too agrees with the fact that he had not been fair to his family. Nancy Chodorow puts forth the reference of Morjorie Leonard's psychological argument about the role of the father in the development of feminine heterosexual orientation of a girl child. As per her, father's presence is very crucial during the oedipal, pre-adolescence and adolescence period. The level of presence of father leads a girl to idealize her father and men or to endow them with immensely sadistic or punitive (too less) or too possessive, seductive (too much). In Nila's case, her father was never there as an affectionate father when she was growing. Therefore, she always conceived him as a self-centered, selfish and punitive person. According to Nancy Edwards, the basics of a person's behavior are already formed in their pre oedipal level which continues as a guiding factor till their last. As per her:

The essential character of the ego-ideal, a part of super-ego functioning, is unconscious and functions automatically. Precursors to superego development and ego-ideal formation begin at early pre-oedipal levels, which results in derivations in adult behavior containing these primitive aspects. Due to their origins, these aspects of human development become obscure and not readily available to introspection. (165-66)

From her childhood she has not have good time with her father. Every activity and

event she explains regarding her father are mean, tyrant and unjust. This has evoked rebellious, outspoken and disobedient superego in her. This to her pompous arrogant and dominant father was also intolerable therefore a situation of tough of war broke out between them. The cold war of envy between the daughter and the father turns so bad that they start taking chances to hurt one another. Both of them try standing in opposition to another. Both of them even forget their relationship and the etiquette or the duty they have towards one another, the appropriate time and the aftermaths of their behavior would cause. The only thing that concerns Nila is that she should make her father guilty for being what he is and treating the way he did to her and her mother. Whereas for her father the most concerned thing is his prestige. Irrespective of Nila's mental state he just forces him to stand to his moral standards. He even compels her to returns back to Paris. He says:

Mithu's death left Nila Speechless. Aniraban shook Nila and brought her to her senses as he asked her when she was going back to Paris. 'I am not going back to Paris. I'll stay here.' ... 'After marriage your husband's house is your home there lie all your rights. Girls come to their father's house for a short while, not to stay.' ... Aniraban shouted, 'it is not to them. It is all to me. I will not be able to show my face to anyone. You want to disgrace the whole family? "If I don't get along with my husband, how is that a disgrace? 'It is.' Aniraban insisted, 'if you want to stay in this society you will have to do all that everyone approves of. Either you go back to Paris, or kill yourself like Mithu and let us off. This is my last word. (Nasrin 154-55)

The continual denial and negative behavior creates an anxiety in a person that they start showing deviant behavior. According to String Theory propounded by Robert K

Merton, when there is gap between one's goal and current status, there occurs strain. He defines four different ways of coping with the strain, conformity, innovation, ritualism and retreatism. Nela went with retreatism. She renounces the idea of an ideal daughter and ideal woman and gives up attempting to be one. She rather chose to go opposite. She rejected the goal of attaining her father's heart, love and sympathy and went completely opposite. She starts doing the things that her father would deride. She turns the idea of an ideal daughter character upside down. She denies his suggestion to reunite with Kishan Lal and to give them the money that Molina gave. When asked to give the money to them so that they could mend the house, Nila responds, "But this house isn't mine and I am not of this house. This is your house: so you take care of it. Don't envy my money" (Nasrin 157). She even lives a life of a mistress and rejects mother a child.

These all the activities at the unconscious level are revenge to Aniraban, who would not allow her to do so had it been in his will. She does all those activities that an ideal Indian daughter would never do. She takes a share of property from the natal home, leaves her traditionally married husband, makes an illicit relationship with a strange foreigner and lives with him before marriage. These activities are against the will of Aniraban who demand a full subordination and sincerity to the Hindu patriarchal norm and custom. All the time Aniraban talks about his and the family prestige. He keeps reminding Nila that any of her carefree activity towards the culture and tradition would stigmatize the good name of the family and it is what Nila hit with her reluctant behavior. In the preconscious level, Nila avenged her hurt ego, by going opposite to the morals of her father, by doing what would make him feel ashamed but she eventually hurts herself more. The more she tries to hate him and go away from him, the more she thinks of him. As for Freud, the tension in the human

psyche; among the id, ego, and superego causes conflict and repression. If someone experiences clashes in these three parts of the psyche, it is not possible to form a stable and healthy personality. Similar is Nila's plight. Though she believes she hates him her memories tells that whether good or bad her memories have her father. Despite all the heartbreaking and hatred, there is him in the foremost part of her mind. Whether it is best or the worst memory it is linked to him. While comparing the most important memories of her life to Benoir she told, "Sad memories of childhood? Nila was thrashed badly by Aniraban when she did poorly in her exam. Benoir it was Madam Dupont said to him too much chocolate was bad for the teeth. Happy memories? When Nila did well in the exam and got a red frock". (206)

Having Aniraban in her worst memory is understandable but she keeps him in his good memory as well. It shows that he is there in her mind even if she is not conscious. Freud developed a topographical state of mind which consists of three different levels, Conscious, Preconscious and unconscious. Conscience refers to the fully aware state of mind. All the ongoing process of mind comes under the conscious state. Preconscious is the unrecognized part which can easily be recalled with some stimulus. He argues, "the preconscious is like a mental waiting room, in which thoughts remain until they 'succeed in attracting the eye of the conscious' (306). Nila wants her father to get hurt and feel sorry, therefore, she chooses to go against his moral belief. She wants him to feel the way she felt by his behavior therefore, she willingly crosses the moral boundary set by him. Her preconscious superego has sought to avenge her rejected self by rejecting the moral boundary made by her father. However, in the deeper level, she is unaware of the fact that, in all this hurting and avenging process the unconscious longing for the father figure that had been repressed in her unconscious got displaced. Displacement, as defined by Watson, is, "the

psychological phenomenon whereby impulses aroused by a forbidden object are directed toward an acceptable object substitute” (2). It is one of the different defense mechanisms that one uses unconsciously so as to protect themselves from anxiety arising from unacceptable thoughts. Watson defines the Freudian idea of the defense mechanism as means of keeping one from falling into anxiety or guilt feeling that would result in a phobia, obsession or hysteria. As per him,

The instinctual object choice produces neurotic anxiety because it clashes with the superego, which arises from the internalization of the parents' moral values. For Freud, defenses protect the individual from experiencing anxiety either by detaching the forbidden wish from conscious awareness or by distorting or falsifying its true meaning. The defense may also provide some form of indirect satisfaction for the impulse in question. (Watson 17)

Since she could not get the kind of love and affection from her father, Nila’s repressed fixation got displaced in people with similar quality like that of her father so as to substitute him. Freud defines repression as the state of mind created when our drive impulse cannot run up against resistances seeking to put it out of action. Freud defines repression as, “the preliminary stage of the disapproval or judicious rejection, something between flight and disapproval” (Freud 127). Repression and unconscious are closely related to one another that we must defer any in-depth study into the nature of repression until we know more about the structure of the series of agencies in the psyche and the distinction between unconscious and conscious. To be precise, when a drive is denied the access, repression occurs. Repression creates fixation on the matter that is denied and since then the particular drive representative remains attached to it, in one’s unconscious state of mind and in long run it creates anxiety.

As per Freud, the mechanism of repression is accessible to us only by inference from its effects. If we restrict our observations to its effect on the ideational element of the representative, we find, as a rule, that repression creates a substitute formation. Repression causes one to leave symptoms through his behavior. Substitute formation and symptom do not identically represent the repression however they can be a good medium to observe the return of the repressed.

John J B Morgan in his paper “Effects of Parental Behavior on Child’s social development, argues that parents should be able to moderate their availability to the children. Too much of availability makes them too dependent and habituate to the parent. Similarly, too much unavailability also affects their psyche. As per him, if a parent is not able to fill up the need of parental affection in the children this need remains unfulfilled in the unconscious and as they grow they try to substitute somebody else in that place so that the unfulfilled longing get fulfilled. Morgan states:

A parent who gives the child no devotion and who is cold, stern and forbidding may develop a hunger in the child which leaves him Fearful, Resentful, and Morose. In infancy, such neglect often leads to autoerotic habits or thumb sucking. In later life, such a person may devote untold energy in a vain hunt for someone to love him enough to make up for his infantile starvation. (Morgan 372)

Neela’s hypocritical father who thought of nobody other than himself, his comfort and his social status could never stand to the expectation and longing of him in his daughter. His cold and stern attitude towards her leads her to a total despair. The disappointment in indemnification love of her father leads her longing of her father to be buried in her unconscious which eventually results in her to fantasize for men with similar characteristics. Neela’s attraction towards Sanal Edamaruku despite knowing

of his lecherous, adulterous reputation from Chaitali and Kishan and her calling him despite Kishan Lal's forbidding, is an example of her displaced longing for Aniraban. Sanal has the similar characteristic feature as Aniraban. He had affair with other's wife, is deceitful, dominant and reluctant. Her self-searching for approaching him, when he did not reciprocate to her call is an example that she too wanted to have his attention. When she calls:

Nila hung up. She was angry with herself. She didn't know why she made that call, to hear how busy Sanal was, so busy that even though Nila called him, not only was he unable to talk, he didn't even say when he'd be able to talk. He was so busy that even after Nila hinted that she wasn't happy, Sanal had no interest in knowing why or what was happening in her life. Why did she want to talk to Sanal? Was it just to talk with someone? If it was it, she could have talked to Molina or any of her friends in Calcutta. ... She didn't because she wanted to talk to Sanal and no one else, the Sanal who was infamous for fooling around with other people's wives, pouncing on them and eloping with them- Nila wanted him to take her away from that house, somehow. She asked herself if it was indeed the reason. She didn't come up with the answer. (Nasrin 63-64)

According to Freud, the unconscious mind is the primary source of human behavior. He emphasized the importance of the unconscious mind, and a primary assumption of the Freudian theory is that the unconscious mind governs behavior to a greater degree than people suspect. According to Freud:

We can go further in support of unconscious mental state and allege that only a small content is embraced by consciousness at any given

moment so that the greater part what we call conscious knowledge must, in any case, must exist for very considerable period of time in condition of latency, that is to say of unconsciousness. Of not being apprehended by the mind. When all our latent memories are taken into consideration it becomes totally incomprehensible how the existence of unconscious can be gainsaid. We then encounter the objection that these latent recollections can no longer be described as a mental process but they correspond to residues of a somatic process from which mental can be once more proceed. (Freud 117)

The goal of psychoanalysis is to reveal the use of such defense in order to deal with conflict and problems in life. Freud stated that the ego employs a range of defense mechanism. Nila's hurt ego seeks to displace her longing to somebody with features similar to her father and who is less likely to denounce her as he did. Sanal who was condemned to have an adulterous relationship with other's wife comes to her mind when she feels dominated, dishonored and hurt. She wants him to listen to her and take her away from her husband as like her father did to Swati. Similar is her affair with Benoir, he is disloyal, dominating, selfish, self-centered and has a marital status like that of Aniraban. However, Nila seeks complete plenitude in love from him. Lovejoy defines plenitude as the state where "no genuine potentiality of being can remain unfulfilled" and is unattainable. As per him, plenitude is the state of complete fulfillment of every possible desire. It also infuses the optimistic view that the soul will, or at least could, rise through a perpetual progress of degrees of perfection."All in all, plenitude is the state of complete satisfaction, fullness, and abundance. Nila seeks the same kind of feeling from him. She not only wants him to love her fully but also fill in the unfulfilled love in her, to give what her father could not. She wants him

to break away from Pascal and his daughter and be there for her only.

Jessica Benjamin, argues, as a result of the oedipal complex a girl child longs to have masculine features. Since it is not possible and she slowly and gradually confronts the genital differences and realizes that she cannot be or have everything. Once she realizes this she switches from homoerotic to heteroerotic love. Now she may choose to love in man the masculinity that she once wished to have and the father is the first one she happens to seek the love in. She further argues, the confirmed recognition from the father helps the child consolidate the identification and enhances the sense of being a subject of desire but the lack of recognition and the denial of the identificatory bond damages the sense of being a sexual subject and lead the woman to look for her desire through a man and frequently to masochistic fantasies of surrendering to the ideal man's power. She further argues that the search for identificatory love is thematic in many relationships of submission.

Nila's blind surrenderance to Benoir, his reluctant behavior, and his conditioned love exemplifies the above-mentioned idea. She knows Benoir is married and has a child from the first day she meets him. She knows that more than herself he praises her skin color and body. She knows he looks down to her third world self, yet she chooses to be with him. She not only chooses to be with him but also showers her riches on him. Affording his expenses and offering him expensive gifts she expects him to surrender to her generosity. "She began to plan how she'd set up the house and how Benoir would be stunned when he entered the decorated apartment, how he'd kiss her and say, 'you amaze me every time I see you. You are wonderful'" (Nasrin 214). She does not buy anything for herself but tries to provide Benoir every facility that he would have at his place or even more than that. Throughout the novel, she does not expect anything of him other than his time and attention. She wants to be an

ultimate giver who is reciprocated by love in return. She, who had always been skeptical to Aniraban, criticizes him for his male chauvinistic behavior, his adulterous behavior, his complaining about everything her mother did ultimately fall for Benoir who is totally like him. As like Aniraban, Benoir too does not find logic in whatever she does, does not receive any gifts without commenting and does not help her out. In the preconscious level her affair for him is an attempt to go against his will and the culture and belief system which never understood her and her plight. This way she believes she gets plenitude in love but in the deeper level, her quest of plenitude is the quest of the father figure in her lovers.

Neela changes to a great extent, her living style, food habits, her cultural practices and her belief when she starts living with Benoir. She completely surrenders in front of him. She who used to get hurt on Kishan Lal's complaints does not mind Benoir's complaints about everything she did; her buying of the house, her selection of furniture for the house, her choice of gift for him. The dauntless Neela at Kishan Lal's place turns demure for Benoir. She turns herself to a housewife no longer longs to go to the outer space as she did in Kishan Lal's place. Even during her illness she longs to serve him. Nasrin writes "Neela's fever subsided on its own in seven days. Once she was better Neela turned her attention to her new home. She cooked all day long, showered, dressed and waited for Benoir. Her eyes and mind stuck on the clock" (254). This actually had been her life in Kishan Lal's place. Other than the affection she has for Benoir the scenario is totally the same, however, Neela is happy doing all these. Unlike Kishan Lal's place, Neela really expects Benoir to be happy with her service and shower her with love. The deviant Neela now turns demure for Benoir who is no different than Kishan Lal other than his French, whitish and handsome self.

A keen observation of her behavior after she gets into the relationship with Benoir resembles with that of Swati Sen. Swati Sen: her father's mistress who had been living the happiness of her mother's share, who got the love of her father, whom her father did everything to please. Her father spent quality time with Swati and did the duty towards her mother and the family seemingly. Her father loved Swati for her skin color and fashionable styles. While talking of Aniraban's attitude Neela Explains, "it is not that Anirban Mandal did not love anyone, he did but not Molina. He loved Swati Sen... Swati was Fairer than Molina. That was the one quality for which Aniraban loved her(133). Similar is the attitude of Benoir regarding Nila. He too fancies Neela for her blackish skin color. As like Swati, Nila knows that Benoir is a married man and has a child to look for. As like Swati, she too gets to spend quality time with Benoir who would not be able to completely let go of his family and get married to her. Similar had happened with Aniraban. She also becomes the one to take away a father from Jacquelin as like Swati did to her father. Despite all the love and showering of gifts and surprises, she can not enter Benoir's life so was the state of Swati. She was her father's fancy, however, he could not marry her. All her life she envies Swati Sen more then she loves her mother. She thinks that her father showered all the love and happiness of her share to Swati. She envies her and her skin color, however, ultimately she chooses to be one like Swati. She knew that Swati's skin color and her attitudes lured her father. Similar happens to Benoir, all he does throughout their relationship is praise her skin and her attitudes which he finds strange and attractive. Deep in the psychological level, she fancies to become Swati; whom her father loved more than anyone and experience the love he had for Swati. She therefore unconsciously dragged herself into similar similar situation falling for a person with resembling nature, attitude, status and lifestyle. She chooses similar status

as Swati and asks Benoir to go stay with his family. At time when Benoir talks of divorcing Pascal and live with her and had argument with her, she says:

If you want to go, sure. I won't stop you. I did not ask you to come here. You came on your own. When you were in that house, our relationship wasn't bad. Where's the difference....My mind is not narrow, it's quite broad and that's why I am telling you to go and live with Pascale.... I will suffer a little when you go but I am used to it.

(256-57)

Benoir could not pour in the kind of love to satisfy her libido because he was not Aniraban. Similarly, she too could not be Swati who enjoyed her father's love but not his tensions and responsibilities as like as she has to do. This creates anxiety in her. Her Id comes into action in the form of rebellion using the tool of projection and sought liberation from the relationship which does not satisfy her unconscious longing of fulfilling the unfulfilled love. She condemned Benoir of not being fully sincere to her and still having feeling and concern for his ex-wife and daughter which Aniraban never did to them. From the very first day she Met Benoir she knew he has a daughter and a wife yet she chooses to be with him. Unlike Aniraban, Benoir choose to take the responsibility of his daughter and wife which was unusual to Nila. She started envying them.

She projects on Benoir to be the sole cause of the pain and suffering that all of them: Pascal, Jacqueline and herself were having. She asks Benoir to go and live with Pascal however deep inside she has a fear that he really will. During the discussion with Benoir she is in a contingent situation:

Nila placed a hand on his shoulder and said, 'I know you tell the truth. And I feel for Pascal if you were my husband and you left me for

another woman... Don't make her suffer anymore. Don't give yourself so much pain. I will suffer a little when you go but I am used to it my mother was also used to suffering. Benoir got up and switched on the bright lights. Nila's heart thumped loudly; any moment now he would start packing his suitcase. Any moment now her only succor would walk out leaving her alone. ... Nila knew what it was to be alone. If Benoir left she'd trip over her own shadow in that house. No one would hug her, hold her and say *je t' aime*. (257-58)

Nila constant flaunts in the state of what should be done and what will please her for a long time. Her Superego which knew that Benoir has not been able to leave his wife and daughter completely and be with her fully sought to make things easier for him and his family, however, the lonely id that sought his affection and pampering would not let him get away from her. It took her many internal and external conflicts to reach the decision of liberating herself and her lover from the relationship.

Nila obviously proves herself as a rebellious hero liberating herself from the uneven relationship. However, her unconscious to different incidences leads us to explore another level of unconscious driving her behavior. According to Maximo and Carranza, it is essential to maintain the positive, loving and respectful relationship with one's parent because it can even heal the effects of poor peer/ public relationship. According to them, sense of belonging and connectedness to family, and feeling loved and respected in the family can even protect one of the different risk behaviors, including suicidal behaviors, substance abuse, and violence. Nila did not have such privilege of supportive, loving and respectful behavior in her life. Her father was a self-centered charlatan, her mother was a dominated, subjugated and inferiorized woman to whom Nila's ideas and understanding about life contrasts, the society that

she is brought upon are also not supportive and positive to her and other dark, deviant and rebellious girls like her. This is why she could not defend herself against the vivid sexual and physical assaults that she went through. Her inability to stand in-front of Kishan Lal and ask him to return the property/jewelry that belongs to her even in the time of urgent need and taking the loan from Sunil. Her no rejection to the homosexual physical relationship with Danielle's despite her detest towards it, her silent burial of Sunil's physical abuse twice, her no responsiveness to Benoir's physical assault and animalistic behavior are the proof that she could not defend herself in front of them. She lacks the nerve to speak up, therefore, she rationalizes their behavior as a male chauvinistic behavior of patriarchal male which female like her are not able to defend. Rationalization, as defined by Saul Mcleod, is "the cognitive distortion of "the fact" to make an event or an impulse less threatening. We do it often enough on a fairly conscious level when we provide ourselves with excuses" (3). Nila did the same. In spite of rejection she moved with rationalizing them saying "men, of whichever countries, whatever society, are all the same" (Nasrin 291). She neither has guts to revolt nor does she resile. Maximo and Carranza, argue that resilience is an ability that is boosted by the a sense of belongingness and connectedness to one's parents and family. According to them:

the primary factor in resilience is having caring and supportive relationships within and outside the family. Relationships that create love and trust provide role models, and offer encouragement and reassurance that help bolster a person's resilience. Other researchers take warmth and responsiveness to be a good indicator of love and have investigated the long-term effects of warm and responsive parenting on children. (3)

Nila did not have a caring environment at home as a child. She found her father to be alien to her and the family since her childhood. Her mother on the other hand was not her fancy. Therefore, her tacit self remained weak and coward. She can neither cope to what she experience nor can she raise voice against them. Maximo and Carranza's claim "Parents must fill their children's emotional tanks with unconditional love for them to operate as they should and reach their potential" (3) best describes the coward nature of Nila. Had she collected guts, she would not have to live as a pauper as she did because the law would be in her favor. If she wanted her property back from her husband, she would not have to wander here and there taking refuge had she got enough guts and speak up. But she is not able to collect guts to face Kishan. When she thinks of calling kishan, "Nila wanted to make another call, but changed her mind. Nila didn't want to answer his(Kishan's) questions about where she was, with whom and why she even left his home. She was afraid to hear him call whore" (116). Even in case of Sunil's raping her, had she been able to raise voice the first time he would not dare to do the same deed twice. Similarly, a self-centered devilish person as Benoir, who had only used her throughout the relationship and turned a devil on knowing that she has chosen to part from him, could have felt guilty had she dared to take a legal help rather than running away from the place like a culprit. It would not only punish him but also be a lesson to those pseudo westerns who think that eastern women are meek, submissive and docile, therefore, they can be easily used. Even those who are going through the domestic violence as like her, could get empowered getting to know of her deed.

Sexuality and liberation have always been the main theme of Nasrin's paper. She emphasizes on women's right over her body and Nasrin's texts are defined as a discourse of gendered self-representation, as an attempt by a woman to define herself.

This representation, furthermore, involves subject constitution through subaltern narrative. Her texts are a critique of both nationalism/modernity and religious fundamentalism in countries like India, Bangladesh vis-a-vis gendered self-representation. She does not just advocate for liberation and freedom she exercises it as well. She rejects the traditional concept of single partner life and believes that if one is not satisfied in a relationship they should have the liberty to come out of it. She also advocates sex outside of marriage and open marriage and says “if men can have four wives, women should be allowed to have four husbands” (Nasrin 1).

Many people find the use of sexual insinuation in her writing shocking and unacceptable, but she says the shock value is necessary to get people to react. Some people also see her as wild because she has had three husbands: the first one died, the second she divorced, and the third a common-law husband, is now separated from her. It is her advocacy of sexual freedom that even the women's groups do not necessarily support her. Baby Maudud, leader of the Bangladesh Women's Council, was quoted in the Washington Post as saying, "the death threat is not that serious. If these fundamentalists kill her, then we will protest it" (2). However, Nasrin argues, "her writings are part of a broad political movement against Islamic fundamentalists in their war against women (Alam 29). Nasrin has put on the liberal conscience in the state of Nila too. She has presented Nila's consciousness of brutality of male race, the similarity in their nature irrespective of their race, geographical location and educational status however she has not forgotten to justify the psychological conflict of a dejected woman. Even when Benoir acts like an animal Nila rationalizes it as if it was something she could do nothing other than silently taking it.

Then Benoir grabbed her by her throat, “you miserable creature, I will kill you.’ Nila could hardly breathe; she used all her strength to

unclasp his fingers. Benoir pushed her down on the floor. She fell face down and he kicked her with his hard boots....

Benoir walked out. Nila's *French Lover* walked out. Her handsome man with his blue eyes, blond hair walked out. She lay on the floor for a long time. ... Two, she called Danielle and said she needed to get an abortion done and ...Four she called Morounis and asked her to send someone to get the house in order. ..." (Nasrin 291-92)

TS Ramesh argues that Nila's letting go of her so-called true lover and deciding to live on her own as seek of "True Abhimaan". As per him such rejection of conventional practice is coming out of the logic of heart and seeking of self-respect, pride, and happiness. He believes she is let down by men in every step she takes in whether they are her husband or lover. This makes her think with the logic of their understandings, "their purposefulness" and with the gift of sharp distinction becomes selfish.

Nila a woman with the logic of heart" (15) aims to get the "heart of matters" (15) but her effort becomes futile and she chooses to escape from all these things. This escape is what Ramesh define as the seeking of self-respect, pride, and worth. Ramesh's entitlement of Nila's act of getting out of the unstable and unmatched relationship as a true search of "true Abhimaan"(18) is worth it. However, he has not been able to realize that psychological turn that Nasrin has created by sowing the concern of Modibo in Nila's mind. This is the point that Dr. Sigma G.R's claim that Nila's culmination ultimately becomes the "liberation or emancipation of women from men" (3) needs revision.

If we observe the incidences that take place Nila's superego has to reject this canonization of patriarchal male chauvinistic society by liberating herself from Benoir

and his conditioned love. According to Nancy Edwards, “Under some conditions, people can have subliminally triggered emotional reactions that drive judgment and behavior, even in the absence of any conscious feelings accompanying these reactions” (84). Nila’s rejection of Benoir is the act of a radical feminist superego nevertheless her unconscious ego which sought pleasure drives her to Modibo a poor helpless guy escaped from Mali and living in France and was in need of support: just the way Aniraban was before marrying her mother. Looking for Mobidi whom she has met just once is one of the four things she does after such a life-threatening accident. Nashrin writes, “When she got up she did four things. One, she took in a deep breath in the pure air....Three she called Mojammel and asked him how Mobidi was doing, whether he had a phone number and where did he live?” (291-92). Her concern about Modibo in the worst condition of her life indicates a special place for him in Nila’s heart and this can be justified by his comparison to her father. Her mother was black and was in search of a groom because she had to be married at any cost as per her tradition and practice. On the other hand, Nila’s father was poor and was in desperate need of economic support to meet his dreams. Therefore, he got married to Nila’s mother so that both of their needs got fulfilled. Similar to her father Modibo is also poor, is intelligent and trying to establish himself and is desperately in need of economic support. Nila’s fixated unconscious for her father finally rests on Modibo as a supplement (substitute formation on Freud’s words) of her father. This is in Morgan’s words “devotion of untold energy” in hunt of somebody’s love. Nila’s fight, therefore, therefore, is for the liberation from an abusive, self-centered and self-obsessed lover not the presence of a male in her life.

To sum up, the protagonist character of Taslima Nasrin's *French Lover*, Nila is a being guided unconsciously by her unconscious fixation towards her father. Though

she is defined as a rebellious hero who fights against the patriarchal society lead by men and laws made by men, we cannot see any consistency in her behavior and thought pattern. However, if dug into her childhood and lived experienced we can interpret the contingency in her nature. The reason that there is no any uniformity in her behavior, thought and relationship lies in her unconscious mind. A detailed observation of Nila's life leads us to understand the play of the unconscious self of a neglected child whose fixation towards her father leads her into different situations and different relations. She gets involved in different relationships but cannot get complete happiness in any because she chooses all of them as a substitute for her father. Her selection of lover, her treatment towards them, and her behaviors in different incidences indicates that she is trying to displace her fixation of the father figure whom she longs for but is not reciprocated equally. In the surface level, she seems envious toward her father for not being an ideal dad. She is skeptical to every activity he does and tries to oppose him for treating her and her mother the way he does. The superego of a young, educated, empowered and self-dependent girl sees it as a negligence of a reluctant, irresponsible and patriarch father and chooses deviance as a means of countering him. However, her deviance is guided by the unconscious Id fixated on her father. Though she tries to dismantle the moral boundaries set by her father she cannot let go of the fixated girl (Id) seated in her unconscious and seeks pleasure in the substitution of the vacant love in on or the other way. Her different relationships and the people, whom she is attracted to are in one or the other way are guided by the libido which sought her father's affection for her. In Freudian words, she is trying to displace her longing of the affection of her father in her lovers. She expects them to substitute the unfulfilled love of a father in her life. However, since they were not her father and were an independent individual of their own they could not fit into her unconscious desire of a father figure. Therefore, all her relationship could not give her happiness and got projected in different ways in the form of domination and oppression.

III. Unconscious as a Guiding Factor on one's Behavior and Thought

After analyzing the novel in detail the researcher comes to the conclusion that Taslima Nasrin's novel *French Lover* is Nasrin's experiment with the unconscious self of a person. She has very artistically portrayed the play of unconscious in one's life and argued that one's upbringing shapes their future behavior attitude and thought. The researcher has found out that the lived experiences of one's life is not for the time being but has a long term effect in their life and behavior. Furthermore, the kind of environment one is born in, the kind of treatment they are given and the kind of inspiration they get gets deep rooted in their unconscious that their personality and behavior are totally influenced by them. Similarly, the influence of parents in the life of a child is very crucial. If they give their children support, praise, and admiration they happened to be self confident, determined and self sufficient. If they do not give them enough time, support and praise they happened to end up like the protagonist character Neelanjana Mandal. Who do not get satisfaction in anything she does. She is coy, introvert, courageous faint hearted. Her dad heart fixated on the love, care and attention of her father remains unquenched life long.

Nasrin known for her advocacy for women and their liberation from the patriarchal, orthodox and gender biased society has attempted to work with the psychology of a young girl born and brought into an aristocratic family of Calcutta. The novel is considered to be a story of the liberation of a girl who undergoes different kinds of subjugation and subordination. However, there is no consistency found in those ideas because the mind of the protagonist keeps altering time to time. The answer to this fluctuation of her mind can best be given from psychoanalytic perspective. In order to form a healthy personality, one should balance his id, ego, and superego. Repression happens as a result of this tension. When one of these three

parts of human psyche outweighs the other, one resorts to repress desires or past memories rather than articulating them. The similar thing happens to Nasrin's central character Nila. Reading between the life, behavior, and thinking pattern of the protagonist leads us into the study of a fixated mind of a sad girl, which unconsciously seeks to gratify the unfulfilled love of her father from different people in different ways.

According to the Freudian idea of psychosexual development, it is said that a human being passes through five stages of psychological development in their entire life. If anyone is deprived of the thing that they long for in these stages the longing is fixated to the thing all their life and try forming substitute of them unconsciously. Since it is repressed in their unconscious mind the person himself/ herself is unconscious of the acting of their unconscious. They naturally seem to be interested in the people having similar features. However, since nobody can fit into somebody else's shoes the fixation remains unfilled and the person remains unsatisfied throughout their life. The repressed fixation in their unconscious mind keeps guiding their behavior and thoughtpattern and seeks gratification of that unfulfilled libido seeking substitution from people with similar characteristics. This disposition of their unconscious ego can never satisfy their quest for the fixated figure.

Taslima Nasrin's protagonist character NilanjanaMandal is seen confused, deceived and deserted woman who could not find true love and happiness. However, a deep study of her behavior and attitude links the way things happen in her life to her childhood. Nila a neglected child seeks love in different people but cannot find true happiness and projects her failure as her misfortune and learning of a woman in a male dominant sexist world. Her willing to Marry Kisan Lal can be linked to her desire to make her father happy. Furthermore, he has similar quality to her father.

Though he resided in France he is sticking to Indian traditions and practices that he wants to marry an Indian girl only. He is well off and works focused yet has a rigid and male chauvinistic thought as like her father. Similarly Benoir a French guy to whom she falls in love too shares similar character trait to her father. He has an appealing outlook, is married, has a child, is attracted to her skin color as like her father who is better off than her mother, seeks pleasure outside of marital bond, is attracted to his mistress's skin color and keeps an extramarital relationship. Similar is Sanal and Modibo to whom Nila gets attracted. Sanal is known for his bad reputation as somebody who lures other's wife and infidel as like Aniraban who has affair with other's wife. Her final attraction Modibo too acquires similar features to her father. Modibo is poor, doesn't have money is desperately seeking economic support to establish himself in France similar to what Aniraban was when he met his mother. Nila's attraction towards all these men is a way of releasing her repressed longing for her father. Her fixation of her father is being displaced in them because they share the similarity in character with her father. She is not satisfied with any one of them because none of them are her father to whom she is fixated and whom she wants to replace.

Since it is specific to the unconscious that the subject is not aware of the unconscious guiding him/her Nila herself is unconscious of these things going on in her life. For Nila, she hates her father for his mean treatment to her and her mother, his ghetto patriarchal behavior, and his strict rigid beliefs. She believes that she hates him and revolts against him and tries to hurt him going against his principle. In the surface level she seems to be opposing him, his negligence of his family and his extramarital affair however in a deeper level her unconscious fixation of him leads her to dispose of her desire of him in those males that come in her life. Even in her

activities of extreme hatred, she happens to seek him in one or other way. Her relationship in conscious level is the guidance of her superego which has been time and again hurt by the reluctant behavior of her father. She is hurt because of the reluctant behavior of her father to her mother, his carefree attitude even after her death, the imposition of his wish in her and allowing her to stay in India, therefore, she seeks revenge. She tries to avenge herself hurting his ego by being deviant going against his principles of life. She makes an illicit relationship with a married man and lives in an open marriage (living together) which her father would not allow her. Her superego took this as a revolt against her pompous father for whom his goodwill and own satisfaction is the most important, however, the Id which is guided by her Fixation to the man whom she thinks she hates has some other moves. In extreme hatred and angry too she is guided by her repressed desire of her father. Though she believes that she broke away from the conventional boundaries that her father is adherent to, she happens to be attracted to the person similar to him and even become a mistress like Swati whom she always hated. Similarly, Neela as a girl child with blackish complexion and outspoken does not receive any praise and support in her life that she remained meek, submissive and irresolute all her life.

All in all, Nasrin's *French Lover* is a perfect example of a novel that works on the functioning of an unconscious mind. Nilanjana Mandal's character very artistically portrays how an unconscious mind guides one's behavior and belief. It is through a psychoanalytic study of her character that one can understand the contingency of her behavior and mind. She does not have any specific personality because she did not have a sound childhood. She has lived a life of negligence throughout her life as a black daughter, a neglected child, and an unvalued sex. It is through the study of her background that people can understand her inconsistent behavior and thoughts.

As Freud defines literature displaces unconscious desires, drives, and motives into imagery that permits it to achieve release or expression, though they may bear no resemblance to its origin. Psychoanalytic criticism is a valuable tool/lens because it allows the literary analyst to look beyond the surface of the text into layers of meaning that the author might not even have been consciously aware of. It may answer some of the most complex questions regarding the way people think and behave. It helps us understand the how people think and why they think that way. It may help us understand complex riddles logically and practically.

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