

## A PSYCHOANALYTICAL EXPLORATION OF TRAUMA AND REPRESSION IN ATIQ RAHIMI'S *THE PATIENCE STONE*

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* (2008) from Freud's psychoanalytic perspective, focusing on the protagonist's portrayal of Freudian concepts of desire and the protagonist's repression. The analysis uses Freud's theoretical framework to connect the principles of desire and repression in the novel. The protagonist's experiences and behaviors are deeply rooted in Freudian concepts, reflecting a continuous struggle between her innate desires and societal pressures. The study also highlights the protagonist's use of verbal expression and catharsis to confront and release repressed emotions.*

**Keywords:** Psychoanalysis, Freud, Repression, Desires, Protagonist, The Patience Stone

### **Introduction**

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, a significant influence on psychology, literature, and sociology, outlines the three parts of the human mind: id, ego, and superego. The ego mediates the struggle between the moralistic superego and the id, driven by basic urges, while the id is motivated by basic urges (King & Noerr 2020).

Freud's psychoanalytic principles, used in literary criticism and gender studies, provide insight into individual conflicts and desires. They reveal underlying psychological processes and character motivation

Marx (2012) argues that social constructs and cultural norms shape individual psychology, while Pound (2011) highlights how Freud's theories of child development have shaped early childhood education. Freud's psychoanalytic theory views literature as a window to the unconscious mind, with characters embodying author's desires, fears, and internal conflicts. Character motivations and conflicts in literature can reflect the tension between the id and superego, and Freud's Oedipus complex can be applied to character relationships and conflicts. Unacceptable desires are driven into the unconscious, according to Freud's theory of repression, and this can be shown in literature through symbols, motifs, and dreams. Dreams are a crucial tool for interpreting unconscious language, which psychoanalytic analysis uses to uncover hidden meanings and unresolved tensions. Deeper truths in characters' thoughts and relationships are revealed by Freud's effect on narrative structure (Emmett & Veeder, 2013).

Freudian psychoanalysis has significantly influenced literature interpretation of characters, viewing them as representations of the human psyche, symbolizing internal conflicts. This approach explores character development, dynamics, and psychological depth, revealing darker aspects of the human psyche and the universal struggle with morality and desire (Freud, 1997).

Psychoanalytic theory in literary criticism enables a deeper understanding of a text's emotional and psychological dimensions. It views narratives as dreamwork, expressing hidden psychological meanings through the story's content. Freud's theory encourages readers to consider not just what is written but also implied psychological forces. Reading can activate the reader's unconscious desires and conflicts, leading to a cathartic experience. This perspective highlights the emotional impact of literature, the empathy for characters, and

engagement with the narrative. Literature often serves as a manifestation of the collective unconscious of society, revealing the underlying psychological forces shaping cultural norms (Heller, 1983).

Freud's theory of psychoanalysis reveals that literary works can be interpreted as representations of the unconscious mind, reflecting its nonlinear and illogical nature. This perspective extends beyond content to the way stories are told, suggesting that the form of literature can be an expression of unconscious processes. Freud's concept of transference, where emotions are projected from one person to another, can be applied to the reader-writer relationship, making reading a deeply personal and emotionally charged experience. Symbolism and metaphor play a crucial role in conveying unconscious meanings, acting as bridges between conscious and unconscious realms. Decoding these symbols and metaphors can reveal layers of meaning and reveal unconscious forces beneath the surface narrative (Zyl, 1990).

Freud's psychoanalytic theory offers a comprehensive approach to understanding human behavior, integrating it into literature, sociology, and education. It explores unconscious desires, gender roles, and early childhood education practices, demonstrating its adaptability and relevance in various fields. As Smelser (2015) aptly notes, psychoanalysis traverses the social edges, bridging the individual psyche with collective societal dynamics, ensuring its position as a cornerstone in the human sciences.

### **Problem Statement**

*The Patience Stone's* psyche, elusive due to its elusive nature, requires exploration through Freudian lens to understand desire, repression, and symbolism. A comprehensive psychoanalytic examination is lacking, making this study a valuable exploration.

### **Research Question**

In what ways does the protagonist's character in *The Patience Stone* represent Freudian ideas of desire and repression?

### **Literature Review**

Ahmed (2012) examined Freud's Oedipus complex in D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, focusing on the protagonist's emotional struggles and relationships with parents. The study emphasized the novel's application of Freudian principles, highlighting its relevance in understanding human behaviour and relationships, and its portrayal of the protagonist's psychological development and conflicts.

Buchanan (2002) examined Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, focusing on Freudian and Lawrencean psychoanalytic theory. The novel reflects early 20th-century anxieties and hopes, particularly regarding sexual freedom and psychological health. Buchanan argued that Huxley used psychoanalytic concepts to critique a dystopian society, highlighting the Oedipus complex, suppression of natural instincts, and the conflict between individual desires and societal norms.

The study by Potamites, Tan, and Yao (2014) examines Sylvia Plath's life, art, and psychological struggles, focusing on Freudian concepts of repetition and restoration. The authors analyze Plath's poetry and prose, tracing themes of death, rebirth, and trauma. They argue that Plath's artistic expression is deeply intertwined with her psychological state, with writing serving as both a repetition of her traumas and a restorative process.

Khan (2017) argued that western fiction often portrays Afghan women as passive victims of war and patriarchy. Rahimi's work in *The Patience Stone* offers a more authentic portrayal of Afghan women, avoiding stereotypes. Research by Hossain (2017) highlights Rahimi's role in representing Afghan women's plight and restoring their basic rights through fiction, highlighting the persistent issues of domestic violence and patriarchal norms in Afghanistan.

Putra and Mustofa (2012) explored Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone*, focusing on the protagonist's resistance against patriarchy. They analysed the protagonist's internal dialogue and actions, highlighting the metaphorical significance of *The Patience Stone*. The study concluded that *The Patience Stone* represents female strength and resistance against societal constraints.

The literature on Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* explores themes like trauma, women's resilience, and cultural dynamics. However, there is a lack of Freudian psychoanalytic perspective. A Freudian study could reveal unconscious desires, conflicts, and motivations, contributing to the text and understanding of trauma and survival. This could fill a research gap and enrich existing interpretations.

### **Research Design**

The research uses a qualitative method to analyse *The Patience Stone*, focusing on participants' perspectives and beliefs. This method involves interviews, observations, and document reviews to gather non-numerical data, allowing for flexible exploration and identifying patterns and themes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Close reading is a method used to analyse literary texts by focusing on language, structure, and meaning. It involves examining words, sentences, and passages to understand the author's message. This method uncovers layers of meaning within the text, gathers evidence for analysis, and allows the reader to interpret the author's intentions and the text's impact on the reader.

The Freudian weave of desire in Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* was analysed using Belsey Textual Analysis Techniques, referencing Sigmund Freud's theoretical precepts (Belsey, 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The research study uses Freud's psychoanalytic theory to analyse *The Patience Stone*, focusing on the principles of desire and repression. By integrating Freud's theories with Rahimi's literary expressions, the study contributes to understanding the human mind's intricacies. Desire is explored through the characters' unquenchable thirst for fulfillment and liberation from societal constraints, enhancing the narrative and providing a platform for further investigation.

Repression serves as a defence mechanism, suppressing distressing thoughts. The characters grapple with hidden fears and memories, utilizing symbolism as a conduit between conscious and unconscious realms. This exploration of human emotion, cognition, and behaviour provides a comprehensive understanding of Freudian concepts, paving the way for further psychoanalysis.

### **Analysis and Interpretation**

*The Patience Stone* explores the protagonist's internal desires, akin to Freud's concept of the id. She lives in a world where her needs are suppressed, reflecting the struggle between her inner desires and reality. The protagonist's life reflects the human need for connection and understanding. The story also highlights the protagonist's repression of her true self, a struggle fuelled by societal expectations and fear. The protagonist's dreams and fantasies serve as symbolic representations of her unconscious mind, highlighting the struggle between conscious actions and unconscious desires.

*The Patience Stone* explores the pleasure principle, focusing on the protagonist's quest for happiness and escape from reality. The novel portrays the human desire for personal satisfaction and avoidance of suffering, reflecting the eternal conflict between societal norms and personal needs. The protagonist's story highlights the consequences of living in denial of one's true self.

*The Patience Stone* explores Freud's concept of the id, where basic instincts and desires reside. The protagonist's feelings of being controlled by an external force reflect the conflict between

her true desires and outward behaviour. The use of the term "demon" to describe her desires suggests her internal struggle to reconcile them with societal expectations. The passage also touches on the unconscious mind, where the protagonist's true feelings and desires are buried, highlighting her disconnection from her true self.

The protagonist's pursuit of pleasure in *The Patience Stone* reflects the tension between her id and ego, highlighting the id's desire for social acceptance and the ego's struggle to maintain a socially acceptable self-image. This reflects the Freudian dynamic of the human psyche, where desire, repression, and the unconscious interact. The protagonist's struggle with her inner demon reveals a deep-seated conflict between her desires and societal norms, symbolizing a disconnect between the conscious self and unconscious desires. The protagonist's experience of being possessed and the demon inside her also signifies a loss of control, a key aspect of Freudian psychology.

The protagonist's unfulfilled desires manifest through projection and displacement, allowing her to distance herself from repressive forces. This reflects Freud's theory of repressed desires, which can be represented through a metaphorical demon. The protagonist's story explores the tension between repressed desires and societal expectations, highlighting the relevance of psychoanalytic concepts in understanding human behaviour and emotions.

In *The Patience Stone*, the protagonist experiences a sense of possession and seeing the dead, which can be interpreted as a manifestation of repressed memories and desires. This reflects the unconscious's intrusion into her consciousness, indicating unresolved inner conflicts. The protagonist's experience of seeing the dead and feeling possessed could symbolize her struggle with past traumas and losses. The uncanny, a concept explored by Freud, blurs the line between the known and the unknown, creating a sense of eerie familiarity and alienation. The fragmented speech ends with "I am..."(p.33), suggesting her struggle with self-recognition and acceptance.

In *The Patience Stone*, the protagonist compares her patience stone to Al-Sabur, the ninety-ninth name of God. This connection symbolizes a form of transference, where the protagonist projects her need for patience onto the stone, viewing it as a divine entity. The protagonist's declaration of being the stone's messenger, prophet, voice, gaze, and hands signifies her identification with it, blurring the boundaries between her identity and the stone's perceived divinity. The stone symbolizes her desire for visibility and recognition, breaking her silence and invisibility. The phrase "You exist, and do not move, you hear, and do not speak, you see, and cannot be seen" reflects her perception of the stone as an omnipresent yet passive entity. Her exclamation "Behold the Revelation, Al-Sabur!" can be interpreted as a moment of self-realization and empowerment, allowing her to externalize her inner conflicts and desires.

The protagonist's comparison to her sang-e saboor symbolizes her ultimate endurance and silent witnessing of her suffering. This mirrors the Freudian concept of the transference relationship, where the patient projects feelings onto a neutral, non-responsive analyst. The protagonist's act of revealing the green curtain and proclaiming "Behold the Revelation, Al-Sabur!" signifies a moment of epiphany, cathartic release, and emotional relief. Her self-identification as Al-Sabur's voice, gaze, and hands demonstrates the Freudian notion of identification, helping her construct her identity and agency in a constrained environment. Her declaration as Al-Sabur's messenger and prophet also reflects Freud's discussion on religion and its psychological implications, as belief in a higher power can offer psychological comfort and support during times of crisis.

The protagonist's actions and proclamation in the story emphasize the theme of visibility and invisibility, reflecting Freud's ideas on the conscious and unconscious mind. Her suffering and desires are often invisible to others, reflecting her own reality. The protagonist's fear, which

gives wings to her desires, is intertwined with her desire, a theme explored in Freudian psychoanalysis. Fear can act as a catalyst, pushing her towards her desires, even at the risk of burnout. This dual nature of fear and desire highlights the dual nature of fear and desire, as it can both energize and motivate. The protagonist's awareness of the risks involved in pursuing her desires adds to the intensity and allure of her experiences. This acknowledgement of fear as a source of arousal and empowerment demonstrates a deep understanding of her emotional landscape.

The protagonist's acceptance of fear as part of her pursuit of desires is a form of psychological growth, as it encourages her to confront and integrate her fears into her journey towards self-realization and fulfillment. This embrace of fear and desire is a transformative aspect of her journey, leading to a deeper understanding of the human psyche. The protagonist's declaration of revealing everything to her Sang-e-Saboor, a stone that absorbs her stories and emotions, echoes Freud's concept of the talking cure. This process demonstrates the therapeutic power of self-expression and narrative in the journey towards psychological liberation. The term "Sang-e-Saboor" represents the psychoanalytic process, where the protagonist projects her innermost fears, desires, and pain onto the stone, hoping to find relief and understanding through this act of projection and confession.

The protagonist's story in *The Patience Stone* reflects Freud's emphasis on uncovering hidden memories and desires to heal psychological wounds. Through storytelling, she reconstructs her identity and explores her experiences, choices, and emotions, seeking to make sense of her suffering and find a path to healing. This narrative also highlights the concept of catharsis in Freudian psychoanalysis, where bringing repressed feelings to the surface can lead to emotional release and healing. The protagonist's journey of confession and self-revelation in *The Patience Stone* exemplifies the therapeutic process of psychoanalytic therapy, where speech becomes a vehicle for uncovering and addressing the roots of psychological pain. The act of confession and the desire to be free from pain echo the therapeutic concept of working through, which involves repeatedly confronting and processing distressing memories and emotions until their power diminishes.

The passage depicts a fly's journey across a man's body, symbolizing the protagonist's exploration of her suppressed desires. The fly's hesitant movements mirror the protagonist's own search for meaning and fulfillment in a life lacking sensory or emotional fulfillment. The fly's exploration of the man's inert body suggests a lack of resistance to probing these deep-seated desires, allowing for a more honest examination of the self. The fly's journey into the mouth and eventual engulfment echoes Freud's concepts of consumption and incorporation, symbolizing the protagonist's struggle to internalize and reconcile her repressed desires into her conscious identity. The scene serves as a metaphor for the psychoanalytic process, where the protagonist examines the patient to uncover hidden truths and desires.

The passage explores the theme of observation and the unconscious mind in *The Patience Stone*, with the fly's silent exploration of a man's inert state and the protagonist's internal struggle. The fly's interaction with the man's body, touching his eyes, mouth, and skin without response, symbolizes the disconnect between the protagonist's inner desires and her external reality. The fly's persistent search for taste, similar to Freud's theory on human desire, reflects the protagonist's quest for meaning and fulfillment. The fly's final journey, "engulfed," symbolizes the ultimate consummation of desire and the finality of death or transformation. This metaphor represents the protagonist's existential journey, seeking liberation from her pain and constraints, possibly pointing towards radical change or the end of her suffering.

*The Patience Stone* by Atiq Rahimi explores the concept of repression, as described by Freud. The protagonist, a woman, hides her true self due to societal and personal fears, using silence

as a shield. Her unspoken desires are revealed to her unconscious husband, who acts as a 'patience stone', allowing her to release repressed feelings. Dream narratives serve as a bridge between conscious awareness and unconscious needs, allowing the protagonist to confront and understand her repressed emotions. The oppressive environment in *The Patience Stone* further influences her experience with repression.

The protagonist's story from *The Patience Stone* reflects repression, a concept explored by Freud (1915). The protagonist's forced marriage and her husband's absence symbolize her repression of her desires and feelings, as she accepts societal norms and societal expectations. The war's chaos externalizes her internal conflict and repressed emotions, illustrating the Freudian concept of repression. The protagonist's gradual awareness of her repression is reflected in her passive acceptance of her situation, which is a common response to Freud's theory. The use of symbols like a photo and a sword in the marriage ceremony symbolizes the gap between her reality and her desires, symbolizing the repression of her need for a real marital relationship. The story demonstrates the impact of repression and the struggle between societal norms and personal desires.

The protagonist in *The Patience Stone* hides her unhappiness and frustration, a behavior that aligns with Freud's theory of repression. This leads to sadness and unfulfilled desires. Later, she realizes her repression and the impact of her life choices. This journey demonstrates how repressed emotions can shape actions and choices, illustrating Freud's theories on repression and how hidden emotions can influence mental state over time.

*The Patience Stone* is a story about a woman who confesses her deep fears and longings for her partner, highlighting the role of repression in managing her emotions. She represses her doubts about her love and ability to maintain the relationship, a defence mechanism against abandonment and self-doubt. The protagonist's mental construction of her partner's image serves as a shield against her loneliness, but the reality of her partner's return and physical encounters dissipate these illusions, leading to a profound emotional dissonance.

The protagonist's initial physical encounter with her partner reveals her internal conflict and failure of her repressed fantasies to align with her lived experience. This moment highlights the role of repression in her life, as it exposes the gap between her inner desires and the external reality. The protagonist gradually adjusts to her partner's presence, describing it as "clumsy" and "empty," as a form of coping. This acceptance of her partner's inadequacies and resigned adaptation reflects a deeper level of repression, where she has come to live with and normalize her unfulfilled desires and emotional void. The protagonist's experience mirrors societal expectations, as she fears abandonment and conforms to societal norms, highlighting how societal expectations can shape personal experiences of love and belonging.

The protagonist's journey through repression and her relationship with her partner reveals the impact of repression on identity and relationships. She constructs an identity based on her waiting wife; a self-concept shaped by her repressed emotions. Recognizing and confronting repressed emotions can lead to personal growth and change. The protagonist's adaptation to her partner's "empty presence" reflects the enduring impact of repression on relationships, as they become accustomed to unfulfilling ones. This highlights the need for self-awareness and emotional honesty to break the cycle of repression and dissatisfaction. The story highlights the psychological and social ramifications of repression and the connection between individual psyche and societal norms.

The protagonist finds solace in speaking to her silent partner, revealing hidden emotions, a therapeutic release and a form of self-healing. This process, as described by Freud, lessens the unconscious power of repressed emotions, providing comfort and understanding. The protagonist's one-sided conversations allow her to confront her feelings and experiences

directly, allowing her to process them. This act also serves as a mirror for self-reflection, allowing her to examine her feelings from a new perspective. The power dynamics in the protagonist's relationship also play a role, as her partner's inability to respond or react gives her control over the conversation, allowing her to express herself more freely and authentically.

The protagonist's narrative explores the themes of voice and silence in relationships, highlighting the therapeutic value of giving voice to repressed feelings. She confronts her own repression and challenges societal norms that dictate silence and submission, particularly for women. The protagonist discusses sexual dynamics, focusing on the power exchange in prostitution, where the prostitute may hold more power than the man. This shift challenges traditional masculine dominance and reveals the protagonist's understanding of sexual power dynamics. The protagonist's commentary on men's fear of prostitutes exposes underlying psychological fears and conflicts. The protagonist contrasts perceived control in sexual encounters with the reality of the exchange, challenging societal norms and confronting repressed fears. Her calm delivery suggests she has come to terms with these realities, using repression as a way to manage the emotional weight of her insights.

The protagonist's perspective on power dynamics in sexual encounters reflects her own experiences of repression and powerlessness. She uses the interaction between a man and a prostitute to illustrate the broader dynamics of power and control in relationships. This reflection indirectly addresses her own feelings of lack of control and dominance in marriage and sexual experiences. The protagonist's analysis sheds light on societal constructs of masculinity and femininity, highlighting the challenges and contradictions inherent in these roles. Through her narrative, she confronts her personal experiences of repression and critiques societal norms that perpetuate power imbalances. The stone, symbolizing her use of repression to manage pain and secrets, serves as a metaphor for the therapeutic process of voicing hidden feelings, leading to emotional release and healing.

*The Patience Stone*, a novel by Franz Kafka, explores the concept of a stone bursting into pieces, symbolizing a breaking point in the mind's capacity to handle stress and trauma. The protagonist's words suggest that repression can overwhelm an individual's ability to cope, and the stone symbolizes the moment when repressed emotions can no longer be contained. The protagonist's act of cleansing and moistening the man's eyes symbolizes care and renewal, aligning with Freud's notion that acknowledging and releasing repressed emotions can lead to psychological liberation. The metaphor also reveals the protagonist's belief in the cathartic power of speaking to a silent listener, symbolizing the stone as a receptacle for words and secrets. The stone's explosion symbolizes the breaking of psychological barriers and the liberation from emotional confinement imposed by repression.

The protagonist's journey of directing repression and finding avenues for emotional release and healing aligns with Freudian theories on the importance of acknowledging and processing repressed emotions as a path towards psychological well-being and inner transformation. She criticizes the concept of relying solely on spiritual or internal guidance, highlighting the disconnect between abstract beliefs and concrete realities. The protagonist's emphasis on tangible actions like feeding the children highlights the disconnect between abstract beliefs and concrete realities, indicating a desire for grounded solutions rather than relying on abstract concepts alone. This critique also challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations, as it highlights the importance of taking tangible actions to address real-life challenges. The protagonist's critique can be interpreted as a challenge to traditional notions of women's roles as solely nurturing or spiritually focused, presenting the prospects of presenting societal expectations while asserting individual agency and practicality.

The protagonist criticizes abstract beliefs and advocates for practical actions, questioning the effectiveness of spiritual guidance. She explores the interplay between belief systems, defence mechanisms, and societal expectations.

### Conclusion

*The Patience Stone* explores the protagonist's struggle with repressed desires and unfulfilled needs, highlighting the societal pressures and societal expectations that shape her inner life. The novel highlights the impact of unacknowledged desires on behavior and the potential for self-discovery. The protagonist's relationship with fear and desire reveals the dual nature of emotions, with fear acting as both a barrier and catalyst for pursuing deep-seated needs. The novel offers insight into the transformative potential of desire and the complexities of human emotions, highlighting the profound impact of desire on personal identity and agency.

*The Patience Stone* explores the protagonist's experiences with repression, power dynamics, societal norms, emotional release, and practicality versus spirituality. The protagonist uses verbal expression and catharsis to confront and release repressed emotions, aligning with Freudian theories. She critiques abstract beliefs and focuses on tangible actions, challenging traditional gender roles and societal expectations. The protagonist's journey of confronting repression and challenging societal expectations contributes to a deeper understanding of repression's functions.

*The Patience Stone's* protagonist is a complex character who grapples with unfulfilled desires and repressed emotions. Her life is marked by a longing for identity, autonomy, and recognition, which she feels is hindered by societal roles. The protagonist's life is like a fly's journey, highlighting the constant presence of unfulfilled desires. Her confessions to the Sang-e-Saboor reveal the depth of her repressed desires and the pain they cause. Her desire serves as a force of rebellion, pushing boundaries and challenging the status quo.

The protagonist's journey in *The Patience Stone* explores the dual nature of fear and desire, highlighting the transformative potential of embracing one's desires despite fear and uncertainty. The novel highlights Freudian desire as a powerful force that drives individuals to seek fulfillment, challenge constraints, and explore the self. The protagonist's use of verbal expression and catharsis to confront and release repressed emotions aligns with Freudian theories, and her interactions with *The Patience Stone* as a symbolic listener emphasize the importance of externalizing internal conflicts for emotional renewal. The protagonist's critique of abstract beliefs and reliance on tangible actions challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations, reflecting Freud's exploration of defence mechanisms and societal influences on individual behaviour.

The protagonist's journey in *The Patience Stone* explores the complex relationship between individual psychology, societal expectations, coping mechanisms, and emotional release. It highlights the importance of addressing repressed emotions for personal growth and emotional liberation, highlighting the challenges of human psychology and societal dynamics.

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