

**Research Article****Themes of Reinvention and Survival from Untold Story by Monica Ali and Love Song by Andrea Levy****K. Kavitha<sup>1</sup> and Dr. G. Chennareddy<sup>2</sup>**

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**Abstract :** In this research paper, the author is going to explore themes of reinvention and survival in the outlook of Monica Ali's Untold Story and Andrea's The Love Song. It depicts the status of women in the family and society after marriage in the context of British women in the present-day scenario. Prominent British feminist writers Monica Ali and Andrea Levy present the woman in various dimensions, which is also discussed in this paper. It is also highlighted how women are discriminated against and exploited due to various influences in the works of these writers. This research paper also focuses on the most important aspect of women and their dilemmas in the struggles in their marital relationships, which affected their professional lives. To analyze women's exploitation and discrimination, the role of women in families, and their societal relationships with men, the researcher has taken the works of Monica Ali and Andrea Levy.

**Keywords:** displacement, identity, emotional, fantasy, survival.

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**1. Introduction**

According to Monica Ali's portrayal, Lydia is a woman seeking freedom, anonymity, and authenticity, having been crushed by the weight of celebrity, public scrutiny, and an emotionally vacant marriage. Lydia wants to create identity and reinvention. Monica Ali presents Lydia as a woman in search of self. By faking her death, she rejects the roles society and monarchy imposed on her—princess, wife, mother under surveillance—and chooses to become ordinary. This act of self-erasure is not just escape—it's a radical assertion of agency in a life where Lydia once had none. Lydia faced emotional damage and survival. Lydia experienced deep emotional scars from her past. Ali gives insight into this pain. "I was a shadow with pearls, waving. Nothing behind the smile." Monica Ali explores how this constant performative existence, under public gaze, led Lydia to internal disintegration and a loss of voice, self, and trust. In order to survive, she had to disappear. While Lydia has a sense of freedom, it is accompanied by loneliness, a fear of being discovered, and the necessity to suppress a whole person in her life. The relationships she builds in America develop hesitantly and with guardedness. When a friend begins to uncover her reality, Lydia reflects, "You never really leave the past behind." It crouches, always ready to pounce." This reflects Ali's deeper commentary: freedom for women like Lydia is always partial, because the world doesn't easily forget—or forgive—those who step outside the roles assigned to them. In interviews, Monica Ali described Lydia as a symbol of freedom and the

fragility of reinvention. Lydia, in Ali's hands, is not just a runaway princess—she is a woman in pursuit of wholeness, shaped by trauma, yearning, and the profound costs of reclaiming her life.

July, in Andrea Levy's short story "The Love Song" (from *Six Stories and an Essay*), is portrayed as a quiet but emotionally rich character who represents the invisible lives of the women. According to Andrea Levy, July is filled with the dignity, caring, and emotional maturity of Black women who served as domestic workers, often erased by history and unnoticed in daily life. Though she speaks little in the external world, her internal reflections are profound. Levy does not romanticize her but presents her as a woman deeply aware of her surroundings, her displacement, and her longing. July is always present but never acknowledged—a symbol of the many Caribbean women who lived in the margins of British society. Levy writes her as someone whose invisibility is not a weakness but a form of survival. July doesn't fight or protest overtly; she endures. July's quietude speaks through understanding and watchfulness. "He plays for her. Not for me." This small sentence reflects an entire life of being second to someone else's story. Emotional Complexity and Longing. Levy centers July's desire—not just for the husband she left in Jamaica, but desire for love, care, and recognition—as a fundamental part of her identity. She has an emotional inner life that is filled, even if the outer reality is ordinary and muted. "I miss my husband, but some days, I miss someone I never had." Levy relies on this line to reflect the dual longing that July's desire represents desire for what is real and what is imagined, what is known and what is impossible. It is a commentary on how displacement impacts not only your body but your heart and mind as well. Representation of a Generation. In interviews and essays, Levy has reiterated her goal of documenting the experience of Caribbean immigrants, particularly the women whose contributions were overlooked in British history. July is not a 'great' heroine, but she represents thousands of women who contributed to post-war Britain and who remained invisible through their capacity as maids, caregivers, and workers, whose labor added to the cultural diversity of British society.

Levy once said, "I wanted to write about the people I knew, the people who built lives and raised families in a country that often didn't want them." July is exactly this—a woman building a life, loving quietly, and existing with dignity despite erasure.

Andrea Levy fabricates the character July in "The Love Song" as an innocent Jamaican domestic worker. July is a quietly formidable character who represents the important narrative strands of absence, yearning, invisibility, and emotional resilience. July is a Jamaican domestic worker in 1960s Britain, and as a reader, we gain a close-up view of the life of a Black immigrant woman confronted with loneliness, fragmented identity, and living in a racially hierarchical society.

### **1. Marriage and Emotional Displacement**

July and Lydia both exist within fractured or distant marriages. July is separated from her husband by geography and economics. She sustains the relationship through memory and obligation, stating, "He waits, he writes. I write back. That's marriage, isn't it?" (Levy). Her marriage survives on duty, not intimacy. Lydia, on the other hand, reflects on a marriage that emotionally failed long before she faked her death. Her union with the prince is marked by betrayal and performance: "I was never a person to him... I was an image to project" (Ali 112). Both women experience marriage as absence—whether literal or emotional. July's displacement is rooted in both her surroundings and her inner world. She has left her homeland and husband behind to work in Britain, living in the home of a white Englishman named Robert. While she seldom speaks in the narrative, her unspoken narration discloses an elaborate affective world marked by aloneness and unarticulated resistance. Her relocation has placed her in a foreign world where she is wanted yet invisible—a servant who will always appear but cannot be recognized. She thinks, "I miss my husband, but some days, I miss someone I never had," which

conveys a great deal about her emotional displacement, which is not only disconnected from her distant husband but also from those immediately around her.

## **2. Identity and Invisibility**

Both characters experience invisibility; however, it takes different forms for each of them. July remains unseen, marginalized by both her race and class. She is positioned as a domestic worker, ignored by her white employers, who regard her as nothing more than an object, and by her husband, who provides an emotional balance but has a limited presence. Lydia remains hidden by choice, seeking a life untouched by royal obligations. Yet, even in her marriage, she felt unseen, noting, "Not even he knew me. Not the real me" (Ali 135). Their stories expose how women's identities are often erased by the roles they are expected to perform, whether as servants or as princesses. July develops a subtle, unspoken affection for Robert, the man she works for. She watches him from a distance, interpreting his music and mannerisms with a romanticized tenderness. Yet this love is unreciprocated and unacknowledged—Robert barely sees her as a person. The heart of the story is in this longing for something that has not been fulfilled. "He plays for her. Not for me." Levy here emphasizes the race and class barriers that stop July from expressing or receiving love in a world that does not allow her the space to be openly realized.

## **3. Yearning and Emotional Fantasy**

Both July and Lydia undergo unfulfilled longing—for love, relationship, or acknowledgement. For example, July's serving Robert reflects her emotional barrenness: "I miss my husband, but some days, I miss someone I never had" (Levy). Lydia also grapples with longing for authenticity and care, and even in her cloistered existence, she struggles with whether intimacy of any form could be possible without unveiling her history. Both women are likewise suspended in emotional limbo, trapped between the experiences they have had and the experiences they desire. What is distinctive about July is her stoic survival. July does not protest noisily, nor does she seek pity—she survives, and yet she survives with great strength inside. July's silence is not weakness but a means of enduring in a world where her voice holds no significance. In contrast to the people she serves, who exhibit superficial ease, July's emotional life is rich with memory, love, and sorrow. Together with Lydia, she is one of the two main protagonists from Andrea Levy's novel.

## **4. Reinvention and Survival**

Lydia redefines herself by faking her own death, shedding her royal life, and starting again. This extreme act of survival dismantles marriage, media, and monarchy. July, on the other hand, cannot escape; her survival is reliant on endurance instead of rebirth. Her world is one of silence and survival as she is embedded in the systemic racial and gender hierarchy. Even though "The Love Song" and Monica Ali's *Untold Story* could not come from much more different racial, cultural, and social positions—a Jamaican domestic worker in 1960s Britain and a fictionalized version of Princess Diana living secretly in contemporary America—both stories articulate experiences of emotional isolation, gendered roles, and the state of transactional identities, particularly mediated by their experiences as wives and women.

## **Conclusion:**

Both Lydia and July are different in terms of social class, gender, race, and agency; however, they share commonalities of emotional and experiential isolation, the limiting roles of wives, and, potentially, a complex interiority. July's gentle stoicism contrasts with Lydia's dramatic escape from captivity and domesticity, but both women are potent representations of the ways in which marriage, patriarchy, and social roles can alienate a woman from her own identity. Their stories challenge us to think about how women might not only survive marriage and patriarchy but also

the ways in which they might remake their lives in advance of it. Andrea Levy explains that July is the emotional heartbeat of a lost history—a quietly intelligent, reflective, strong woman, she carries her emotional costs of dislocation deep inside of her. Through July, Levy speaks for those who are not heard and seeks to restore dignity to those who are invisible. While July's tale may seem simple, it is richly layered with pain, beauty, and a deep and lasting truth. According to Monica Ali, Lydia is a deeply sympathetic yet flawed character, a woman who chose disappearance over destruction. She captures the notions of female agency, identity, emotional survival, and the ambiguous meaning of fame and femininity. Through Lydia, Ali examines not only the monarchy or the press, but rather the ways in which women are made into symbols and told to choose freedom at all costs, including leaving everything they've known behind. Through July, Andrea Levy gives voice to the voiceless lives of Caribbean women who migrated to Britain with Windrush. July carries her story of emotional resilience shaped around migration, race, and class, yet through the intensely personal eyes of a woman that continues to feel, hope, and survive, even as she is rendered invisible.

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