

# Psychoanalytical Disclosure of Karan Bajaj's Keep off the Grass and Johnny Gone Down



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**Abstract:** *Psychoanalytic criticism, one of the branches of literary criticism, uses the methods and techniques of psychoanalysis proposed by an Austrian, Sigmund Freud to interpret literature, primarily the characters in a work of art. According to Sigmund Freud — whose contribution to the field of psychology is large in quantity, and huge in number — unconscious is a part of mind, which is beyond conscious mind, but has a great deal of impact upon human actions. Freud divided a person's personality into three levels: ego, super-ego, and id, respectively, the consciousness, the conscience, and the unconsciousness. The Id is humans' psychological energy which is derived from instinctual needs and drives. The Ego is the organized mediator between inner world of a person and reality of the world outside. The Super ego is conscious mind of humans that acts according to the social norms and moral principles. This article focuses on the conflict among id, ego, and super ego of Samrat, the protagonist of Keep of the Grass and Johnny of Johnny Gone Down.*

**Keywords:** *Consciousness, Id, Ego, Super Ego, Unconsciousness.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The protagonist of the novel *Keep Off the Grass*, Samrat, more often than not, allows his id to overpower his actions. Throughout the novel he bends to id drives; from leaving his job at Wall Street to getting addicted to drugs in India, Samrat's life involves around id. He is interested in his job, but is unable to cope with his hectic schedule for which he blames the circumstances. He is always discontent with what he has, and longs for something else without thinking about the consequences.

## II. METHODOLOGY

In a short span of time, Samrat becomes a drug addict in Bangalore. The easy availability of drugs and his friends circle which includes Sarkar and Vinod give him a temporary relief from his trouble.

## III. RESULTS

The super ego, a part of Samrat is moderately active. At times, it helps him to act in socially acceptable ways. He never cheats his friends. Though he is not certain about what he wants, when he finds his friends in difficult situations he guides them to move on in their life optimistically. Throughout the novel, he has the feeling of guilt, worries about his past life. He is unable to come out his past life, and sometimes feels that his past life would have been better than the present. Through these characteristics, it is evident that his super ego, at times, overpowers his id and ego. Finally his super ego plays a vital role in his decisive move. He realizes the futility of striving for perfect life "It was as if an unknown, powerful force was playing out the whole cycle of life in front of us ... I realized the futility of striving for anymore.

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Everything will be just fine" (*Keep Off the Grass* 232). Advices such as "accept who you are and don't try to be your next door neighbor. The only judgment that matters is yours; the only one who needs to respect you is you" (*Keep Off the Grass* 236) from the alumni of IIM act as turning point in his life as all alumni share that they do their job out of compulsion and do not enjoy.

With many confusions in his mind he finally he calls his father to inform that he coming back home. But he assures him will not do the investment banking job rather he will decide what fits him. Thus, it is his super ego has the upper hand over his id and ego at the end but by the time the damage made by his id in his life is too much and very difficult to recover.

In the second novel, *Johnny Gone Down*, the protagonist Johnny struggles in maintaining a balance among id, ego and super ego. Unlike Samrat whose problems are the outcome of his mistakes, Johnny's problems are inevitable as he undergoes various physical and mental hardships, it is about how his id, ego, and super ego respond to his problems.

More often than not, he allows his Id to prevail the other two parts of the mind. When he understands that he has been taken to countryside he becomes cheerful. Because he can prefer to die in an open area. The jeep continued its bumpy ride through the debris-strewn dirt tracks, and soon the city gave vast, empty countryside. I remembered Ismael talking about the people to the villages. Perhaps I was being taken there, I thought, and felt a little cheerful. I would prefer to die in the open area than in that airless cell, wallowing in my own shit. (*Johnny Gone Down* 76)

Sometimes the act of Id proves to be a turning point. Even in the beginning, he gave his passport to Sam without much consideration, which turned out to be biggest blunder. But now, Id's act proves to be fruitful, paving a way for Johnny to escape from Khmer Rough soldiers.

In Rio, at a cafe, when he is sitting without money, he is served a beer and deep fried snack. Despite his eight years stay at monastery in Thailand, where he is taught to abstain from alcohol, he suddenly drinks the beer,

I didn't have the will to send it back, I gulped down the beer and took gigantic bites of the snack filled with meat, probably beef. How fickle I was. In a single moment, I had forgotten eight years of learning: to avoid alcohol, fried food and meat. The beer seemed to soothe the weariness in my feet and I stared vacantly at the people strolling past. Women with shopping baskets, children in school uniforms, young women and men holding hands. I had missed the sense of normalcy, perhaps that's what I had come chasing after. (*Johnny Gone Down* 118).

His id makes even to change his mind all of a sudden, despite being in control for eight years. So, id drives are minimized when Johnny is under certain controlled and healthy environment. Johnny is a very good person, and he always helps everybody even at the cost his life. When he sees four black men shoot Macro, one of the gangsters in Rio, he saves him. There starts a gun fight, Johnny is in the middle, and he shouts "not again, please, not again. I will go back to monastery, I will serve the Buddha's cause, I will" (*Johnny Gone Down* 119). He feels that if he escapes again,

he will go back to the monastery and will not come out of it again. Here, it is his super ego comes into play and makes him to behave in socially accepted ways.

Once they reach Cambodia, they are introduced to the civil war, which is a serious issue at that point of time. People of Cambodia are massacred in huge number. According to Freud, ego also plays defensive role and Johnny immediately takes a defensive decision to get back to U.S. in the next flight. But they are unable to get back as the flights are cancelled.

For Freud, tolerance is one of the outcomes of Ego. Here, the protagonist Johnny is tolerant and often has the control over his emotions. When Sam asks sorry for persuading Johnny to come with him and to be trapped into these troublesome situations, Johnny supports his friend by saying that it is not his fault.

### IV. DISCUSSION

Johnny is good at planning and better at execution. He gets numerous ideas to get rid themselves off the trouble, but nothing works out in Cambodia. Once their status becomes worse, Johnny decides not to contemplate about his job. He does not allow his emotions to break out like Sam. He just chooses to live in the present condition and it's overt when he tells Sam, "There may be bigger problems to worry about than not joining the work on time, just relax a bit, will you?" (*Johnny Gone Down* 41). Johnny is practical and casual in approaching everything. Thus, most of the times his super ego is prominent throughout the novel makes Johnny a noble person whom the readers pity upon.

It can be stated that his initial actions such as going on a trip with his friend and giving his passport to his friend are the result of his id's drives. Other than that, throughout the novel he could control his id's improper actions. Ego plays an important role in his life. Therefore, he is able carry on his life, in spite of going through the most difficult situations. His actions are based on reasons and the outcome of his intelligence. He hardly thinks about either his past life or his future life. He lives in his present, therefore makes his decisions most of the times correctly. But his fate chases him. Wherever he goes, he finds himself lost, though he never gives up. He fights hard to come up in his life. He is basically a talented and hardworking person. But when things are not in his control he accepts the fate.

Johnny's super ego is supremely effective. From the beginning of the novel, his super ego is constant in making decisions. His morality is highly commendable. At times, he even goes to the extent of losing his life in order to help his friends. He also takes care, that because of him nobody should suffer. He values his friends' help and never leaves them in troublesome situations.

Johnny is a humble person, who loves to go with society, and he always thinks that there should not be any trouble for the people around him. It is evident, when Sam and Johnny discuss the trip while the key note speaker of the convocation day gives presentation.

A Chinese woman, who was disturbed by their discussion turns furious and stares at them. Johnny notices that and suddenly asks sorry, while Sam continuously speaks about the tickets. But Johnny stops Sam and starts to listen to the speaker. This shows Johnny is not the person, who breaks the codes of society. Further Johnny tells that he wants a simple life, which will give him happiness forever.

When Johnny understands that Macro is dealing with drugs, first he feels ashamed for working with him. Because dealing with drugs is the lowest of sins in Buddhist teaching. But when Macro tells not to judge them before he fully understands them, Johnny believes them. “Who was I to judge the impact of growing up in surroundings like these when I had spent eight years in meditation to get over two years of being locked up in a cell? (Johnny, Gone Down 135).

## V. CONCLUSION

Thus, Samrat and Johnny are the typical examples of the entire human community. Freud’s concepts of id, ego and super ego, are explicitly present in their life. They both fail to maintain a balance among id, ego, and super ego. Samrat allows his id to overpower the other two as a result; he suffers in leading his life whereas Johnny’s ego and super ego help him overcome his problems. In both of their life, the conflict among id, ego and super ego is obvious.

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