

The Warrior with Cracked Armour: An Exploration of Nadira's Strengths and Weaknesses in Daizal R Samad's *The Mirror Tells Its Tale*

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Abstract

This paper explores the strengths and weaknesses of Nadira, a central character in Daizal R. Samad's *The Mirror Tells Its Tale*, through the metaphor of a warrior with cracked armour. The study examines how Nadira's courage, resilience, emotional vulnerability, and personal struggles shape her identity and influence her responses to challenging circumstances. While her strength enables her to confront difficulties and maintain a sense of self, her weaknesses reveal the emotional conflicts and insecurities that complicate her journey. The metaphor of cracked armour highlights the contrast between outward strength and inner fragility, suggesting that vulnerability is an essential part of human experience rather than a sign of defeat. Through a character-centred literary analysis, this paper seeks to understand Nadira as a complex individual whose strengths and limitations contribute to her psychological depth and personal development. The study also considers how her character reflects broader themes of resilience, identity, emotional conflict, and the struggle to reconcile personal vulnerability with the expectations of strength. Ultimately, Nadira emerges as a multifaceted character whose imperfections make her struggles meaningful and her strength profoundly human.

Keywords: Nadira, Daizal R. Samad, *The Mirror Tells Its Tale*, Character Analysis, Resilience, Vulnerability, Strength and Weakness.

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Introduction

Literature is a creative tool used by writers to represent complex events, crises, emotions and

experiences. Daizal R. Samad takes advantage of the powerful medium to expose the oppressive nature of patriarchy. Women are subjected to the superiority of men in a patriarchal society. Their

inferiority complex is cultivated in deliberate ways. From birth, daughters are bound by the fathers' authority and are conditioned by observation and/or training from their mothers to respect the patriarchal tyranny. A girl is raised as a caretaker for a home and family, but seldom as an individual with equal rights and opportunities to boys. Although patriarchy may not be mandated by the legal system of a country, it is shaped and reinforced by societal norms, values, daily interactions and traditional beliefs. Guyana is not exempt from the traditional norm of patriarchy. The intergenerational transmission of patriarchy from colonialism and other cultural imperatives has deeply embedded itself into the culture of Guyana over many generations.

Patriarchism is a continuing system of male dominance in Guyana in the present setting, although it is less entrenched and influential than in previous generations. The women who fought their way out of the cultural legacy endure a perpetual battle of self-awareness, liberation, social discrimination, and criticism.

Samad, through *The Mirror Tells Its Tale*, exposes the struggles of women who aim to define themselves beyond the rigid parameters of patriarchy. The novel explores Nadira's physical and emotional conflicts as she asserts her rights and power as an individual in the culturally oppressive Guyanese society. Her journey of individuality begins in her father's home. She observes and resists the lifestyle of her mother, a woman whose daily life is governed by the patriarchy system. She resists marginalization in the workplace by asserting control over her decisions. In her marriage, she becomes the sole provider for her family. Nadira is portrayed as a strong individual, representing women who align themselves with feminist values in Guyana and the global community.

Another challenge Guyana faces is social class division. Rooted in colonialism, this global challenge shapes the lives and values of Guyanese. Although it is not a dominant issue today and less attention is given to a person's socio-economic status, the existence of class division is due to people's attitudes and

behaviours towards the differences in income, education, and occupation. Samad reinforces social class distinction in the novel by using Nadira, the narrator, as an agent who is caught up in the tides of prejudice but who tries mightily to swim against it.

The novel demonstrates the pervasive nature of racial and political prejudice, thrusting Nadira into the microcosm of Guyanese society. Through the eyes of the narrator/protagonist, Samad reveals the trials and tribulations of living in a society where the colour of your skin and texture of your hair determine your social identity and how others perceive you. The novel offers a critical examination of how political affiliation governs the lives of Guyanese. Nadira bears the brunt of many challenges interwoven in the social norms of Guyana, yet she strives to assert her freedom from social, cultural and political pressures. This paper analyses Nadira's strengths and weaknesses as a woman who is determined to reconstruct her sense of self and restore her dignity.

Nadira's Strengths

A woman is nothing if not strong. *The Mirror Tells Its Tale* by Daizal Samad is an unblinkingly truthful and heartbreaking novel in which Nadira tells her story. Despite the countless challenges Nadira faces growing up in a patriarchal home, navigating the turbulent waters of work in which misogyny, racism, and politics abound. She is also made to cope with an unfaithful husband. And yet, with almost herculean will, she continues to persevere.

In the simplest terms, the Cambridge Dictionary defines strength as a good characteristic. But what are Nadira's good characteristics, and how do they impact her character? Nadira is a knot of strengths, ranging from the most practical to the deeply emotional. Samad writes Nadira as a deeply introspective character; her first-person perspective is illustrated by her careful conceptualization and critique that indicates wisdom beyond her years. However, as Nadira evolves, insecurities reveal themselves. Samad depicts the toll marriage can take on a person and how stretching to make room for another creates tension with oneself. While Nadira is traumatized

by her husband's infidelity and lack of support, she perseveres for the sake of her child. Daizal Samad's Nadira is a strong woman in every sense of the word.

Self and Situational Awareness

The first display of Nadira's intelligence is her self-awareness. According to Kendra Cherry, a psychology educator, "self-awareness means gaining insight into your emotions, behaviours, and thoughts" (2026a). Self-awareness is a strength because being aware of one's own thoughts and values contributes to the construction of one's identity and character. It dictates how you behave in response to your surroundings. Through Samad's writing, we see how Nadira's acute self-awareness develops in her inner monologue. For instance, in chapter two of *The Mirror Tells Its Tale*, Nadira delivers insightful commentary on the circumstances of her upbringing. She discusses the conservative bathroom her father constructed and how his patriarchal rules governed her mother and their home. Nadira also utilizes her insights into her own feelings to realize that she wanted a life that differed from her mother's. Even as the novel progresses, Nadira continues to be self-aware; as she grows, her feelings change, and she adapts and overcomes. Her self-awareness is further emphasized through her use of language to articulate her personal feelings. For example, when Nadira meets the girl at the counter in chapter six, she voices her unease at their interaction by saying, "I wanted to spit into her face and swear nastily. I tore my eyes away from them. My will, my good sense, prevailed" (Samad, 2019). Her intelligence facilitates her self-awareness through her ability to recognize her feelings and curb her behaviour to suit her intended goal.

After navigating our own feelings, we must navigate the world around us. Situational awareness is the ability to perceive, interpret, and understand events in our surroundings. Nadira's intelligence affords her a heightened sense of situational awareness. She demonstrates the ability to read a room and respond effectively and efficiently. Early in the novel, in chapter two,

Nadira exhibits a keen understanding of unspoken racist and classist power systems that governs her workplace. At the tender age of sixteen, she knows of the power she has over her superior, Comrade Sukhai, because his superior, Comrade Trim, hired her. She also knew that Comrade Trim faced scrutiny for the colour of his skin and that they used 'comrade' instead of 'sir' because of Guyana's new-found "socialist" government. Nadira uses her understanding and analysis of the intricacies of a situation to manipulate it in her favour. She also demonstrates poise when standing up to a gaggle of drunken cane-cutters. Later, in chapter twelve, when Nadira is interviewed by the lascivious Comrade Williams at the Ministry of Education, she lies through her teeth to survive. When Comrade Williams speaks suggestively and claims her husband is no good, she reacts by saying, "When he brings these party people home to lunch or dinner, I just stay in the kitchen, playing the part of the good wife" (Samad, 2019). Her defence of Salim is successful because she knows what Comrade Williams values and fears—the Political Party in power—and uses that to her advantage. Nadira's character is defined by her ability to read a room; it is one of her greatest strengths.

Intellectual Curiosity

To be an intellectual is a gift, but to be intellectually curious is a strength. Nadira actively seeks out knowledge on multiple occasions; she asks questions, investigates, and engages deeply with topics that interest her. She is an avid reader. As a result, her intellectual curiosity fosters problem-solving and evaluation skills; she constantly works on herself and her future. Samad depicts her intellectual curiosity through her introspection. For instance, in chapter twenty-seven, when Salim takes Nadira to the university to return a library book, they ride pass the seawall, and she becomes lost in the history it holds. Nadira recalls how remarkable it is that "the Dutch could have built something more than a century ago upon which our lives depended today" (Samad, 2019). She is able to discuss the colonial history of Guyana as well as the actions of the post-independence political parties. Nadira

weaves a connection between two moments in time because she is intellectually curious and critical. Her natural curiosity drives her other strengths; it improves her adaptability, empathy, situational awareness, self-awareness, etc. Her thirst for knowledge makes her a better person.

Empathy

Empathy is our first glimpse of Nadira's emotional intelligence. "Empathy is the ability to understand and share others' emotions, allowing us to see things from their perspective and connect with their feelings" (Cherry, 2026b). A strong aspect of Nadira's character is her empathy. The way she not only understands others' needs but also supports them fosters trust and strengthens her relationships. Nadira's empathy is best depicted by an encounter with her friend, Deva, in chapter 20. When Deva is assaulted by a teacher—the Principal, Mr. Pillai's son, Winston—Nadira goes to Deva's home to offer her support. She visits Deva unprompted, a testament to their friendship, and listens as Deva retells the story of her assault. In that moment, instead of offering futile notions of hope or an empty promise, she recalls that "somehow I kept my mouth shut, for such talk would seem trivial to what she was saying and feeling" (Samad, 2019). Nadira steps into Deva's shoes and realizes that, given the power imbalance, Deva would not get justice. So, she offers the only thing she could: her company. Later, in chapter twenty-three, when Nadira is placed in a position of power over Mr. Pillai, she wears Deva's skin and exacts her revenge. She steadies herself and runs circles around the feared Mr. Pillai until she was satisfied. This was her form of justice for Deva and the way her life crumbled after Winston. Essentially, Nadira's compassion—her empathy—fuels an inherently human sense of justice that not only improves her insight but also makes her more resilient as a person.

Devotion and Fidelity

All marriages require devotion and fidelity if they are to endure; one needs to be loyal to one's partner, have a deep love and affection for them, and be dedicated to them. *The Mirror Tells Its*

Tale demonstrates that devotion is one of Nadira's core values; she has a steadfast devotion to Salim and their future together. Her devotion drives her; the love she has for Salim is why she perseveres and fights for their future. Readers fully understand the level of devotion she possesses when Salim undermines the efforts Nadira make to allow him to attend the University of Guyana. In chapter thirty, she declares, "Do you realize that I have bought myself nothing since I started working at the ministry? The money goes for food, rent, your tuition, your books, gas for your bike, and pocket money for you" (Samad, 2019). This statement is a testament to the sacrifices Nadira makes for their future, handling everything else so Salim can focus on his education. She even helps with his assignments. Even in earlier chapters, their relationship grows deeper and develops into marriage because she remains loyal and supportive of his dreams and ambitions. Nadira's devotion is strong and unshakable; her faithfulness is enviable and absolute.

This faithfulness stems from her fidelity. In Samad's *The Mirror Tells Its Tale*, Nadira places great importance on fidelity, so much so that it is a source of tension in their relationship. In chapter thirty-two, when she meets the girl, Hafida, with whom Salim has an affair, she breaks down. Samad robs Nadira of reciprocal fidelity to underscore how important it is to her. When she returns home, she cries, lamenting that "I wept for all women who opened their eyes and saw their fidelity repaid by betrayal" (Samad, 2019). The imagery of Nadira crouching down by the door, shaking as tears fell, drives home how important fidelity was to her. Her character is bound by loyalty, faithfulness, and duty; she does her best to follow the rules that society has attributed to marriage. She cooked, cleaned, worked, and gave wholeheartedly only to be met by betrayal. Similarly, her fidelity does not end at marriage. For instance, as a daughter, Nadira does her best to fulfill her parents' wishes for her-to be the perfect wife and mother. She is equally faithful to her abused friend, Deva, as she is to her job. Salim's acts do not diminish her efforts, because in the final chapter, when she returns to her parents, it is described as her return to

faithfulness. Samad illustrates how a person's strengths can shift or evolve regarding those around them and their relationships. Through it all, Nadira remains steadfast. Such resilience takes strength, and Samad's work captures that strength with unerring precision.

Resilience

Given all the trials she's faced, there is no doubt that Nadira is resilient. Resilience is the ability to fortify yourself, to adapt, and to persevere in the face of adversity or trauma. In *The Mirror Tells Its Tale*, Nadira shows resilience from the moment she leaves her father's house. Throughout their entire marriage, she encounters difficulties with Salim's suspected infidelity and lack of support, but withstanding this makes her more resilient, highlighting her resourcefulness as well as her growth. A striking example of this strength is her desire to go to the university library. When she first broaches the topic, it develops into an argument because Salim's reaction clearly reveals that he thinks of her inferior. However, given her ability to adapt and overcome, Nadira declares to herself, "But the inequality was in here already, and it was my plan to scrub it clean" (Samad, 2019). In chapter thirty, Nadira utilizes Salim's desire to have a car to emphasize the sacrifices she makes to maintain their household. She uses the car as an incentive and, as a result, achieves her goal of going to the library. It is easy to encounter a problem and choose defeat, but at every turn, Nadira finds a way to survive. As she continues to grow throughout the novel, her resilience builds, and in the end, it saves her.

Courage

Nadira has the resilience to endure and the courage to leave. Nadira's courage quietly builds as *The Mirror Tells Its Tale* progresses. For instance, when she lived in her father's home as a girl and young woman, she abides by his dictates—tiptoeing around him—but in her own home, we see Nadira find the motivation to stand up for herself. This is mostly evident in her arguments with Salim. When they fought, she initially attempts to appease him; however, as the arguments grew intense, she finds the courage to

challenge his point of view and undermine his threats. The best illustration of her courage is in chapter forty, when he pushes her to the brink. Nadira notices the signs of an affair and decides to broach the topic with Salim. The argument grows violent on both sides. In a fit of rage, he hits and sodomizes in front of the cradle where their child slept. The imagery of Nadira in pain, crying on the floor as she comforts her sleeping child and thinks, "...I knew what had to be done, and I knew why I had to do it," (Samad, 2019). She is resolved, determined. Nadira is courageous enough to choose a path for herself and her child by returning home.

Nadira's Insecurities: Identity and Self-Perception in *The Mirror Tells Its Tale*

In Daizal R. Samad's, *The Mirror Tells Its Tale*, Nadira, the narrator, is a woman whose insecurities are born from personal experience, familial background, and the values of the society into which she is embedded. Rather than seeing insecurity as a basic absence of confidence, *The Mirror Tells Its Tale* depicts it as a growing process which is formed through years of judgment, comparative living, a deficiency in emotionally stable connections and societal expectation. Nadira cannot accept herself because she is forever comparing her physical features and values to that which cannot exist, leaving her with a cycle of doubt that impacts her relationships, her peace of mind, and the idea of who she truly is. Throughout *The Mirror Tells Its Tale*, the mirror acts as a visual, an externalization of Nadira's internal battle of doubt, rather than of security and self-acceptance. The viewing of the mirror represents the perceived flaws which Nadira harbors. She is constantly scrutinizing herself, which only emphasizes the beliefs of self-loathing and insecurity she has accepted from the people around her and her need for validation, specifically from her husband who plays an extremely crucial role in the perspective of herself. As stated in the novel, "Her (Nadira) insecurity is evident in: distorted self-image, dependence on outside affirmation, emotional instability and external societal pressures that affect her identity". It is supported through

research that both personal belief and societal and cultural influences impact the development of self-esteem and identity. Research has shown that the more someone is being criticized or feels pressured to live up to unrealistic standards, the more likely negative perceptions will impact their ability to feel confident, thus affecting one's relationships (Orth & Robins, 2023). Nadira's situation is an example of how both emotional influences and expectations from society can drive the manifestation of insecurities and fragmentation.

The first and most significant form of exploring insecurities through Nadira is her altered sense of self-perception. Rather than acknowledging and accepting herself, Nadira finds herself obsessed with what she perceives to be her flaws. She has a habit of appraising and critiquing her looks, and has allowed the harsh, judgmental comments that arise in her thoughts to form her idea of who she is. This creates a deep dissatisfaction within her, affecting her confidence and overall emotional state, without recognizing the self-loathing that she possesses.

One of the strongest statements within the novel revealing this self-loathing is where Nadira mentions she is "Guilty of seeming old at twenty-five" (Samad, 2019). Although she is young, passionate, and attractive, Nadira perceives herself as looking old, and unworthy. It is evident that this judgement is nothing but a representation of how insecure Nadira feels about her looks rather than who she is in reality. There is a clear disconnect between the appearance of Nadira and her opinion of her own self-image as her strong judgement displays the negative ideals that have been created and internalized about beauty and worth within herself. One of the most significant symbolic tools in the novel for revealing Nadira's battle with herself is the mirror. It no longer serves as a mirror to physical reality, but as the tool for her ongoing self-criticism. With each glance into the mirror, Nadira is compelled to search for flaws, rather than to admire any potential beauty within her. As displayed in the lines, "This cruel game with the mirror..." (Samad, 2019), her interaction with her reflection becomes

emotionally charged, and a constant struggle rather than the comfort of seeing her reflection accurately. Research has already been produced indicating a link between the assessment of self-esteem and one's body image and those who regularly engage in comparison of themselves to unachievable beauty standards risk becoming victims to poor self-esteem and negative perception of oneself and anxiety (Griffiths, Farrow & Brough, 2023). This aligns with Nadira's journey as she is unable to reach a level of self-acceptance, due to her own criticism of herself as the constant comparison. Negative thoughts leave her unable to develop an acceptable sense of identity. Her self-worth is defined through the perception of her perceived shortcomings, allowing her insecurity to become an obstacle in the developing her self-worth and self-belief. Through Nadira's use of the mirror, it is also revealed how that the concept of insecurities is broader than mere appearances as Nadira's distorted sense of self reflects not only a dissatisfaction with physical appearance but a psychological conflict fuelled by negative internalized thoughts and a vulnerability shaped by societal expectations.

Added to Nadira's insecurities is her reliance on her husband's validation, or lack thereof. Her self-esteem is dependent on how she believes she is viewed by him. Instead of growing her self-worth internally, Nadira grows hers in relation to how much attention and love her husband gives her. This dependence, in return, makes her emotionally vulnerable. One example of this emotional dependence is her confession that all she does is "Not for me at all, but for him" (Samad, 2019). This illustrates Nadira's self-confidence; in it, Nadira acknowledges that her interest in appearance comes not from herself, but from how she hopes her husband feels about her. It is only for her husband that Nadira puts in an effort, thus creating a sense of herself through a relationship rather than through her individuality. This leads to her lost ability to know the value she has within herself, independent of his validation. She cuts her hair, and is happy only when he is pleased by the change.

This experience relates to the idea of the male gaze, that people perceive women as individuals only when they can see their image as it would be seen from the male perspective. A woman is only desirable if a male finds her to be so. Nadira is unable to see herself as worthy, except through the lens of her husband. This is a source of instability to her confidence. If she feels emotional distant, or if her husband appears in any way dismissive or unaccepting of her image, Nadira's insecurity becomes more pronounced. Her constant search for reassurance leads to anxiety and self-doubt. Rather than processing these concerns or discussing them openly, Nadira is often overcome by her own insecurity, allowing them to influence her actions. It becomes evident that this dependency on her husband prevents her from developing a resilient and firm self-identity and confidence.

Research suggests that those who rely primarily on external validation have greater insecurity. They are at risk of low self-esteem, and develop emotional insecurity and low confidence when this approval is denied (Orth & Robins, 2023). Self-esteem based heavily on the opinions and acceptance of others, results in high levels of self-doubt and insecurity, which directly corresponds to Nadira's dependence on her husband's attention for her sense of self. Samad further emphasizes how the source of someone's insecurity can come through dependence on a relationship where someone's sense of self is based wholly on external approval and validation. In spite of her notable strengths, she depends entirely on Salim for her sense of self-worth.

Although Nadira's insecurities are intensely personal they are also shaped by the society within which she exists. Samad explains that the negative views she holds about herself stem not solely from her internal thoughts but also from societal expectations in relation to beauty, ethnicity, skin color, language, class, and gender. Perhaps the most influential factor on Nadira's insecurities is the focus that society places upon appearance. She is consistently aware of the pressures placed upon women to retain youthfulness and beauty, and she compares herself to unattainable ideals rather than

appreciating herself as an individual. Such constant comparison ultimately leads her to believe her worth is determined by her appearance. Samad highlights the effect race, class and language also have on Nadira's insecurities. Beliefs and societal attitudes to skin colour and social status divide Guyanese society and result in individuals judging both themselves and each other based on this prejudice. Such attitudes serve to promote questions within Nadira's mind of her own value and reinforce the belief that if she can fit into "upper-class" society's mould she can gain acceptance and succeed. These insecurities become rooted in her as the result of consistent external reinforcement. Additionally, cultural expectations regarding women's role cause a further burden upon Nadira. She feels that she must remain a happy and supportive wife and believes that her success in meeting her husband's needs and expectations is what makes her worthy. This pressure forces Nadira to ignore her own feelings and to prioritize the feelings of others. She fails to gain confidence in herself from internal conviction as she continues to seek the approval of others around her.

Nadira grows up in a home that speaks Guyana Creole. The village and most of the larger community use the same medium of communication. But there is a certain "class" stigma that is attached to Creole. Well-bred people like Salim speak more or less formal English. While Nadira is quite proficient in English, she returns to her natural language when she is upset or angry. For her, her use of Guyanese Creole is something that betrays her inferiority; it reminds her of her working-class origins.

Despite Nadira's enviable ability to think critically, to assess with clarity and honesty, she has to wage war with the values that she has learned to cherish, that history has compelled her to hold dear. Inversely, she has to guard against what she has been conditioned to despise, what society itself despises. Light-colored skin is superior to darker skin; formal language is superior to "broken English", as Guyana Creole was and still is disparagingly termed. Color, language, and social graces are seen as caveats of

“upper-class” status, and this is frequently yoked to economic status. These are values which have been cultivated from the time Columbus landed on our shores.

While there is no evidence that the love Nadira bears Salim is not genuine, we recognize that he does possess the qualities that have been deemed to be most desirable. He is fair-skinned, formal of speech, from a “good” family, is a “properly brought up with all the “correct” social graces. Indeed, many of the couple’s conversations and debates center around these contentious issues, and it is Salim who—ironically—takes up the cause of the working classes. Nadira, on the other hand, desires the life of the characters of Jane Austen, none of whom are black or brown. She seeks to make her home in the manner of what occurs in Austen’s novels, not recognizing that those novels are quite unrelatable to her culture. Our education itself seems to conspire against us, putting us at odds with our own skins, our own surroundings.

And yet, she is wonderfully informed about the history of Guyana and the West Indies. Her knowledge is way beyond what is to be learned in secondary school. Nadira reads, as is obvious to her numerous literary and historical references throughout the novel. She analyses the politics of Guyana with remarkable accuracy, and draws informed and logical conclusions about Guyana’s socio-economic and political directions from her analysis.

It is when her own psychological, emotional and physical well being is at stake that these qualities are overwhelmed by her insecurities. Her intellectual acumen, her intellectual curiosity, her attachment to the values of truth and fidelity—unshakeable as they are—seem to come up short. Her deeply entrenched sense that she is not worthy comes to the fore and her reactions become emotional. This is true especially when it relates to Salim. His very presence is a reminder of what she aspires to be, what she has been made to cherish.

In *The Mirror Tells Its Tale*, Nadira’s insecurities stem from a mix of her internal insecurities as well as societal influences. Her poor self-image,

constant need for validation, and her ubiquitous self-doubt ultimately corrode her confidence and determine how she views herself. Using the symbolic device of a mirror to illustrate her unending struggle for a stable identity, Samad illustrates how easily insecurity can take root. Samad also reveals that the struggle with insecurity is not only individual but is also influenced by our loved ones and the greater social community.

Nadira’s dependency on her husband, the anxiety she feels about rejection, along with the impact of cultural standards, beauty, race, language, and class leave her fractured. Instead of fostering self-acceptance, they create her compulsion for questioning and doubting herself. Given that contemporary individuals also experience the pressure to adhere to stringent beauty standards, receive constant external validation, and meet societal demands, Samad’s depiction of Nadira remains poignant and relevant to many of us. When an individual depends on external validation for their self-worth, these external forces can negatively impact one’s sense of body image, self-esteem, and emotional health. To summarize, *The Mirror Tells Its Tale* is not simply the story of one woman’s insecurities; it is an investigation into one’s sense of self, worth, and the profound effect of our society on how we view our identity. Samad helps us understand that these external pressures influence the way we define beauty and worth. Ultimately, the novel exposes the enormous pressures that females are made to endure.

Conclusion

Nadira is not a character who can be defined solely by her strengths or her weaknesses; she is shaped by the world around her. The expectations of her family, the impact of patriarchy, colonialism, and racism in society, and Salim’s unfaithfulness all contribute to the person she becomes. These circumstances force Nadira to navigate a world where her identity and choices are influenced by others. However, instead of remaining oppressed by her circumstances, she grows past them. Her weaknesses and strengths blend together to form her complex and fractured

sense of self. Her fractured nature is not a sign of weakness, but evidence of a woman who has been shaped, challenged, and transformed by life's experiences. Daizal Samad's portrayal of Nadira in *The Mirror Tells Its Tale* demonstrates that strength does not mean surviving untouched; rather, it means learning from what broke you, loving yourself, and finding the courage to choose a different path.

It is when Nadira finally decides to leave the marriage in order to return to where she started, it is only then that she demonstrates self-determination. She returns to the beginning, but is now armed with experiential depth, self-assurance, and a self that is both torn and new.

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