

## Making Sense of Existence: A Study of Monika Ali's *Brick Lane*

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### ABSTRACT

The characters of novel Brick Lane are seen constantly striving to unearth their true happiness under the sky beyond what is destined to them. Each of them struggles to change and move on in life. Each of them fights against Fate, Ties and cultures. Ali attempts to blend conventionally with modernity and with responsibility with self determination in a quite remarkable manner through novel. The protagonist of 'Brick Lane' Nazneen, her husband Chanu and her sister Hasina, reflecting dominance of Fate as a steering force of their life.

**Keywords:** blend conventionally with modernity and with responsibility

### I. INTRODUCTION

We talk about the ties, its complicated web of relationship- Nazneen as a daughter with her parents, as a sister with his sister Hasina, as wife with her husband Chanu; as a mother with daughter and as a passionate lover with her lover Karim and relationship with her. Then, it is the relocation of characters from the countries of their origin either by choice or by chance. Nazneen from Bangladesh to London, Chanu from Bangladesh to London and back to Bangladesh, Karim in London, Hasina in Bangladesh. Culture is deep rooted with all characters and adversely affected in the process of its adsorption.

Nazneen- The Protagonist is depicted as fighting against fate;

*'How You Were Left To Your Fate'*

Is the tag line of Nazneen's ill-fated entry into world. Not once did she question the logic of the story, though narrated several times to anecdote to amuse them. She was taught by her mother, to treat life with same indifferences with which it would treat her. And so she grew

up to be a solemn child who had no grievance or regrets against anyone, for, she confided in God alone.

Nazneen who survived at the mercy of Fate, gets married to the ugly looking man much older than her, and submits her entire life as playing the debt for each of her inhalation, remaining dumb if she was being without a soul, mind, emotions. She was just organism of bone and flesh. Fate decided her husband, Fate took away his son, Fate blessed with two daughters.

*'What could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne'. (p.16)*

This principle ruled her life. For about three decades and helped her to fly away from continents, to an entire new world. Monika Ali had began her novel with the story of an 'unspoiled girl from a village' the most interesting journey is how this introvert, shy girl become slowly begins to realize her existence as Nazeen and Nazneen alone. Gradually she takes control of her life, fighting fates and ties, cultures and countries. It seems Nazneen declares finally

*I will live my life my way,*

*No fate can over take my life,*

*No ties can make me weak,*

*No culture can hold me back,*

*No country can force me to change my ways,*

*I wish to eat a cream-cheese sandwich I will eat it with a spread of mango pickle, if I wish to ice-skate I will do it in saree.....after all it's my life.'*

It took Nazneen years to actually realize its own strength. She was for a while lost in the dark and convoluted lanes of infatuation. Fate made her the bread winner of the family. But she doubts whether it was fate that made her fall as a man much younger to her? Whether fate did not let Chanu come to know about her identity?. The irresistible attraction towards Karim lands her into an ocean of guilt and she was sinking down deep. It was a momentary pleasure, Those short lived moment spend with Karim.

*'An eternity in hell she told herself'. (365)*

Fate and Chanu seems to be shores apart. He regards himself lucky just once, on marrying Nazneen and he confesses this to his daughters.

*'You know, when I married your mother, it was a stroke of luck'. (297)*

As a father too he could not befriend his daughters, no matter how hard tired he is. His martinet approach always annoyed his elder daughter Shahana and she straight away refuses to return away from Bangladesh with him. His apprehensions of foreign culture spoling his daughters. Throughout the novel, Chanu does not come to know his wife's identity. But Nazneen's guilt imagines everyone know and the moment with Chanu would come to know it all and she waits for the wrath. He is portrayed as an innocent man but this inability to nosh his family and the communal chaos in the country result in his return back home. An expression of his helplessness in the novel.

*"Sometimes I look back and I am shocked. Everyday of my life I have prepared for success, worked for it, waited for it, and you days pass until nearly a lifetime is finished. Then it hits you- the thing you have been waiting for has already gone by. And it was going in other direction. It's like I've been waiting on wrong side of the road for a bus that was already full." (265)*

Hasina is portrayed as a wanderer. She is a beautiful girl, just opposite to Nazneen. She would care a damn to listen to anyone and eloped at the crucial age of sixteen with the man of her dreams, her lover, spurning her arranged marriage. Rebellious Hasina goes against cultural traditions. She believes more in making her own destiny rather than living in the mercy of fate. This only resulted in heartbreak and tragedy, Hasina rushes headlong at her life, first making a 'love marriage', then fleeing her violent husband.

Karim the lost youth is represented as a handsome, attractive man much younger than Nazneen. He is also a fanatic Muslim who is also trying to be a leader of an Islamic Group that would fight for the right of Muslim in Britain. Karim too falls for Nazneen as he finds her to be the 'real thing one wishes to marry' who is neither too sophisticated nor too native. He has all plans to marry her which is clear when he rejects a girl's proposal for her sake. He is good orator but he is an irrational youth heading toward the unknown path. His fate is – He is Muslim by birth, Indian Bengali by descent but born and brought up in England.

Nazneen and her round the clock thoughts would take a tour to her village down to Bangladesh, to her Amma, BaBa, Hasina, Aunt Mumtaz, the barber, the fields and all that made up Gauripur her most obsessed place. Dangling between Countries and cultures the immigrants constantly she strive hard to survive in all circumstances. To the roamtastic eye Brick Lane offers some of the liveliness color and taste of an Asian city, while to the harder eye the poverty.

Monica Ali through Chanu conveys the immigrant feel when they leave their countries forever remaining hyphenated. Most of the first generation immigration experiences have been etched in Diaspora fiction as 'Grey and Gloomy'.

The women writers carve out the diverse issue of immigration rather more critically and sensitively. They equally struggle hard to find their ground on the foreign land in all spheres of life, be it social, cultural, political or emotional. Apparently, Monica Ali, through her protagonist in Brick Lane illustrate Nazneen expresses her wish to learn English. She gives another candid views on Chanu's stereotype speech on 'Immigration Tragedy' reflecting the flexibility of female version on assimilation.

The idea of self empowerment is taking roots in people's minds and hearts. The story of Brick Lane is where the protagonist is born, married, attains motherhood and grabs womanhood is exhilarating. She is the voice of the today's women living in the global village. Fully aware of her inner strength, Nazneen takes control of her life, without the slightest doubt or apprehension. Assimilation, adjustment, acculturation and adoption the four A's or rather mantra's fortify immigrants and help them to make sense of existence beyond fate, ties cultures or countries. This is served with a pinch of humor and pathos by a promising Diaspora writer Monica Ali as a treat to her readers to savor for years to come.

## II. WORKS CITED

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