

The Search for Selfhood: Identity Crisis in Monica Ali's Novel , Brick Lane

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Abstract

Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* traces the tangles between identity and selfhood in the contexts of cultural assimilation and personal autonomy. The novel follows Nazneen, a Bangladeshi immigrant living in London, whose life is a work in progress as she navigates a conflict between what she believes about herself and the responsibilities she expects of her and the heritage all immigrants must carry. This article investigates the theme of identity crisis in *Brick Lane* that characterizes the protagonist's journey to self realization by forces both external forces and internal conflicts. The paper discusses the intersection of cultural displacement, gender role and the immigrant experience using postcolonial theory, arguing that the protagonist's quest for empowerment and belonging can be gauged. Through Ali's portrayal of Nazneen's transformation we as readers are able to witness the universal struggle of the oppressed to find their selves in a globalized universe of identity.

Keywords: Identity crisis, selfhood, diaspora, postcolonialism, cultural assimilation

1. Introduction

In *Brick Lane* Monica Ali captures the progressive journeys of the immigrant to the New World in the twilight of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, in multi-cultural Britain. The novel is based on the lives of people in London Eastern area; particularly on young Bengali woman, Nazneen who was forced to marry middle aged Chanu by her parents. Exploring experiences of First/Native and other People of Colour, as well as an exploration of varying sexualities and gender identities, it focuses on themes such as identity, assimilation, gender expectations, tradition and/or the contemporary world. These themes are not only essential in the plot that shapes the main character but they are also All these themes are important on the societal positions of an immigrant and a woman in the context of postcolonial state. The major theme in the center of a show *Brick Lane* is an internal conflict in woman called Nazneen who has to try to understand herself as an individual who belongs to two worlds: Bangladeshi and British. As a member of a diasporic community, she finds herself caught between two cultures: The first one representing traditional Bangladeshi culture of rural areas while the second one, on the contrary, offers an

opportunity to experience the freedom of life in London. Ali conveys all the conflicts of this kind of existence, detailing from the experience of the immigrant who tries to adjust to a new country's environment endeavoring to maintain his/her nationality at the same time. Nazneen's journey is a journey of change, discovery, and moments of disillusion and disillusioned in transition and transformation. The novel socially represents the immigrants as people who always try to find their place in the society they adopt, but the society rejects them. In the context of narrative of the protagonist Nazneen, the first few years of her stay in London depict exclusion and emasculation. Her marriage with Chanu is rapportive as she does not love Chanu and is unhappy with her life having limited ability to participate in the world. She has no friends, rarely speaks English and does not belong to the traditional Bengali community or British community. This is a familiar situation in so many immigrant women and some still struggle with these feelings and roles between home and the unexpected new world. This sense of alienation that a social character as such as Nazneen feels is made worse by the fact that the lady rarely communicates in a language that is understood by the nationals of the country they live

Prof. Sonba Salve

in. She rents a tiny, dark and claustrophobic apartment in a neighborhood in which despite the high density of Bangladeshis, she is a stranger in the Land. This gets to be a mode of severe aloneness, both physically and psychologically, which forms a major aspect of her inner struggle. It is contrasted with her desire of regaining contact with the world outside the maize fields she has spent the last years working on to keep her family fed and repay Chanu for taking care of them.

Another important social *mis en scene* of Brick Lane is the roles of gender especially in immigrant families. These roles are therefore defined by culture as well as by the socio- economic realities that the immigrants find themselves in the new country. The core duty which is expected from a woman like Nazneen is that of wife and mother while she is expected to blindly obey her husband just as any confined Bangladeshi woman should. Unlike Kishen, Chanu is gentle and caring yet he does not respect her individuality relegating her to the kitchen and the bed all in the name of love. True as a man he wants to safeguard her, yet he sees himself as the culture bearer. Nevertheless, his unwillingness to engage her in a meaningful conversation emotionally or intellectually is building up frustration in the protagonist, Nazneen, who is receiving no inclination of the role she has been handed out. In my opinion, the most profound aspect in the novel is being a struggle between Nazneen and her family tradition and she's drawn between this and emancipation. As a woman in a young Indian marriage, feel these pre-ordained roles forcefully, almost oppressively. She has to act as wife and a mother, continue her native customs, and be loyal to the family's traditions. This is at the cost of great responsibility because it negates her ability to chart her destiny or create an identity for herself. However, she only learns this in her interactions with rest of characters especially with Karim, an obviously dynamic young man, she slowly is awakened towards getting her personal freedom. This change takes time and is visible as change in the structure of the immigrant community as women start demanding their opinions on both the national and individual levels.

From this point of view, postcolonial theory is an effective approach to consider the issue of the identity conflict in the character of Nazneen in the Brick Lane. This paper appreciates the novel as a text of transformation where the main character struggles to find her identity in a world that seems to be anathema to her ethnicity. A struggle of civilization and modernity, of the Bangladeshi culture and flee Being British is the main theme of the story. Here, what's happening to Nazneen is not only an individual process, but also a political one;

Nazneen therefore encapsulates some of the main post-colonial predicaments concerning cultural displacement, acculturation, and a decolonised subject's quest for identity in the context of colonial aftermaths. Aldeternotedly, in relation to postcolonial agency, the experiences of migrants such as Nazneen is characterised by their inability to fit in the society with its barriers unfolded in different levels. The concept of creolization is discernible in the interface of colonial/post colonial realities that is, the tension and synthesis that makes up the subject, Nazneen: She is Bengali born and brought up in Bangladesh who is now trying to survive in London. Her identity is split within her she does not accept the traditions of the family and at the same time she has her personal wish to be free and sexual. The process of her emancipation when the woman, step by step, moves away from her husband's domination and starts to gain her own autonomy echoed the theme of agency which many women in the Postcolonial societies.

There is a distinctive focus in postcolonial theory on what is termed the colonial office – the colonial legacy is an historical reality, and it is also their psychological reality. In the case of Nazneen it is this legacy of female subordination married to the immigrant psyche where the power seems to rest entirely with the dominant group. She suffers from a disconnectedness of British and Bengali people and cannot become a part of either group. This kind of division is unique to postcolonial societies, and those who find themselves in between traditions are considered in-betweeners.

The fluctuation of a character with the name, Nazneen, is an important part of the plot of the novel. From the obedient and powerless woman to stronger and more self-concerned woman, the action embodies gender, cultural transition, and postcolonial subjectivity. Nazneen at the start of the story is depicted as a woman who has resigned herself to being subordinate in the husband's household. She almost has no goal in her life apart from being a wife to the man and a mother to their children. But her changing intimacy with Karim, a politically aware Bangladeshi immigrant, brings the change. Engendering Globalization reveals how through Karim, Nazneen learns about new concepts in gender relations, love and self- freedom.

Her assignment with Karim is not just a socially stray against her husband, but also a protest against her husband who tries to regulate her life and against the patriarchal society which does the same. From this affair she gets the chance and the courage to look for a different position within the family and the society. As the Novel progresses, Nazneen finds her independence slowly coming into fruition and she

Prof. Sonba Salve

makes her decision herself. The last realm of the novel indicates that she has been able to deal with the both Asian woman and immigrant in Britain in an even if they are not free from difficulties. The last part of the novel needs to be discussed in terms of postcolonial feminism, which focuses on how colonial legacies and the culture of masculinity Global affect women. In Nazneen's case, her experience as an immigrant woman in Britain highlights the multiple layers of oppression she faces: from being a woman, a wife and an immigrant. However, which could prove to be quite empowering, slowly creeps into the novel towards the middle part of the novel, putting to disregard the impact of acculturation and social pressure. The climax of the novel demonstrates that degree of transformation: Nazneen, at least in the context of her marriage and her vision of her position in phenomenon, is far more forceful at the end of the novel than she was at the beginning of the novel. Her trip can be seen as a coda familiar and close to immigrant women who, migrating from one country to another, strive and experiment in both patriarchal societies seeking to define them as inferior, subservient beings. Thus, through the story of Nazneen, itself in the background of the novel *Brick Lane*, the issue of immigrant adaptation, creation of new identity, gender subordination is a peculiar focus on the British multicultural society. The protagonist in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* is an immigrant from Bangladesh, and the book provides transition and immigrant experience, especially that of women, in a postcolonial, multicultural world. While exploring the experiences of South Asian women who live in Britain, Ali analyses the issues of mythmaking and culture, conflicting identity and the problems of gender and personal freedom through the protagonist's character of Nazneen. In showcasing these themes postcolonial theory is used where issues of colonialism, gender and social marginalization are taken into consideration when dealing with immigrants. Finally, the transformation of a submissive, preoccupied wife into a stronger and more individual person can be discussed in perspective of the essential postcolonial values that include agency, identity and resistance. It also narrates the story of several search for identity, cross cultures and transformational constructs of adverse conditions prevailing at *Brick Lane*.

2. Theoretical Framework: Postcolonial Theory and Identity Crisis

2.1 Overexpression of PHA Synthesis Genes

Knowing the consequences of postcolonialism postcolonial theory is basic, which explores how the societies colonized and transformed analyze the issues of cultural hedonism, displacement and crossbreeding. Postcolonial thought follows the process in the construction of the identity of the

people after colonization and the relationship between the colonizers and those that were colonized. It problematizes the manner in which histories, power relations, and cultural encounter have contributed to, and persist in, the construction of identity in the conqueror and the conquered. At the heart of postcolonial theory is the concept of the 'Other' which paints the colonized as being in some ways substandard or Vakant. This binary merely assigns negative attributes to the colonized more so advancing the prejudice against them.

For immigrants, particularly post-colonial Immigrants, this concept of 'Otherness' also constitutes two aspects – spatial and cultural. Because immigrants have to constantly switch between their old culture in a different country and the new culture in a host country, they are confined to a life between two cultures. This process can cause depersonalization, where by one can be in a full or part sense, a member of two or more societies, part of, but not fully belonging to either society. In this respect, the question of displacement is not a merely spatial one, but a psychic one operating with the processes of establishing oppositions between times old and new, native and alien.

The use of postcolonial theory offers the most suitable paradigm to understand this mechanism of identification in the migration process. For instance, the transposition of the first person protagonist, Nazneen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* 'from Bangladesh to London, raises the social tension of cultural dislocation and the burden of maintaining conflicting personae. The following depiction of narratives will describe a confusion of personal alienation that Nazneen experienced in mid-twenties in the disorientated between her Bengali roots and heterogenic multicultural London.

When viewed postcolonial theory, it can be seen that series portrays an extension of the construction and deconstruction of cultural identity during migration process. Crises of identity involve such tensions as past/present, tradition/freedom, belonging/conflict while belonging can be divided into two categories: the Assigned, which refers to a Jew's position in the larger socio-political and cultural structures at large in society,, and the Aspirational; refers to a Jew's desire to be accepted into the dominant culture in Britain. In this way, it becomes clear that the conflict in the postcolonial subject's quest for identity is a reworking of cultural, personal and social relations formed in the context of colonialism. Also, the key feature of the postcolonial theory, which draws on the concept of hybridity that state that the fusion of two opposite poles or cultural identities produces something new – a hybrid, is at the center of concern regarding to the transformation

Prof. Sonba Salve

of Nazneen. Her migration is not just displacement but integration together with elements of cultural crossover where she recasts herself in a context of a constantly changing cultural temperature. As the novel portrays Nazneen, most of the immigrants have to do so by weighing and addressing the spheres that she continually experiences and to which she belongs but can only create a hybrid identity that pays homage to both her Bengali origin and her new life in London. These ideas of hybridity are important for postcolonial theory because it provides a way of analyzing the experience of coloniality in the present and in the ways that colonialism's effects on identity are not fixed, straightforward, but are, in fact, multiple, nuanced, and layered. It is possible to acknowledge that with reference to postcolonial theory it is indeed possible to define the process of migration and formation of identity. In this regard, post colony theory exposes the cultural syntactics of cultural creolization resulting from colonialism, and the marginalization and alienation of immigrants in the postmodern world.

2.2 Identity and Immigration

The episode dedicated to the life of the main heroine Nazneen in London creates the thought-provoking perspective on the experience of cultural integration for immigrants with reference to the clash of two identity models. It is clear that the conflict as to who Nazneen is a reflection of a postcolonial phenomenon such as creolisation and dualism. Referencing some of the theoretical postulations made by Homi K. Bhabha the paper maps shows how the individual from one cultural context is always in between two conflicting worlds. I chose Bhabha's synthesis concept where people from one culture become acculturated into another entirely different culture which is in most cases hostile to their own, to describe the journey of Nazneen throughout the novel. Though it is quite clear that she is a Bengali woman, the challenges of living in a new, urban and primarily postcolonial and Western world – especially as is the case with the city of London – compel her to constantly reimagine herself. The result is a contradiction: on one hand, while she wants to continue as a Bengali girl with all these restrictions; which are – restrictions with regards to dressing, mobility, interaction with different sexes, etc.; on the other, she has all the freedom that a Western world can offer. This conflict over homogeneity and difference is what defines the Postcolonial immigrant situation, and the struggle is

subsumed within a context that is defined solely by a constant battle between the old world and the new.

In addition, another notion which I find vividly reflected in the story of Nazneen is that of double consciousness by W.E.B. Du Bois. This theory means the state of inner conflict regarding one's programming that is from cultural and social perspectives. For Nazneen this does not only play out in regards to subjectivity, but also in terms of space. She finds herself trapped between two worlds: the nature of expectations and perception of own Bengali community as well as the British society in which she currently resides. This extent of spatial and cultural contradiction is what leads to confusion as to her female identity. It becomes a struggle for the protagonist, Nazneen, to be at the crossroads as to the type of woman she is or should be, being an immigrant she is faced with two entirely different concepts of womanhood.

2.3 Gender and Postcolonialism

Beyond cultural identity, Brick Lane looks also at the role of gender and the extent to which patriarchy constructs the self. Feminism specifically postcolonial feminism is a branch of gender studies exposing oppression of women under both colonial masters and in postcolonial societies. Gender roles play a major role in forming of the protagonist's personality, as well as in her main occupation – the fight for independence with extreme outside pressure based on Bangladeshi and British cultures.

Although in postcolonial societies women are expected to uphold tradition, they are domestics confined to inferior patriarchal roles. The changing relationships between the two main female characters are used to symbolise the societal roles which restrict personal development: for the protagonist, Nazneen, these roles are that of a wife and a mother. Nonetheless, when the young woman starts feeling the desire, especially with Karim, she turns sexually and emotionally not only awake but alive. This relationship is a twist of a event in her journey towards self liberation and emancipation.

When it comes to Brick Lane, Marjorie's postcolonial feminism seeks to argue that women are still oppressed by Patriarchal structures irrespective of the Diaspora. Read symbolically, it is the emerging struggle for cultural and gendered oppression, women immigrants in postcolonial spaces that can choose between the two cultures they face

The descriptions of cultural and familial roles are Nazneen who grows up in Bangladesh. These include daughter and wife which are imposed by traditional Bangladeshi society from the early age of the girl's growth and development. Her marriage to

3. The Protagonist's Journey: From Submission to Self-Realization

3.1 Early Identity and Cultural Conditioning

Prof. Sonba Salve

Chanu, as a daughter of the Gorgian immigrant, was an arranged marriage which was not result of her consent. In this respect, what constitutes Nazneen's subjectivity is externally imposed and assigns a subordinate, often victimized, role to women. In Chhnyu character, polluted with patriarchal values, reduces Nazneen only to a helper, not a companion. Despite the confusion about his belonging to London, for Chanu, the main issue is the male role in the family and a woman's subjugation of desire while following the role of a wife and a mother.

3.2 Cultural Displacement in London

Worse still for Nazneen, another aspect of her identity as a woman of colour is added meaninglessness upon the relocation to London. The transition from BD to a multicultural but lonely environment causes feelings of loneliness. In the case of selecting an identity for herself, it shows how the main character Gestures is in a conflict over what is required of her as a Bangladesh woman living in Britain and her coping with this conflict has resulted in her having a split personality. The language barrier also makes her stay quite lonely as she is unable to make a total integration of the Bengali society or the total society.

3.3 Internal Conflict and External Pressure

It is noticeable that the prospect of self-fulfilment in a personal way becomes gradually unveiled in the course of the novel to Nazneen as she gradually becomes aware of the opposition between the roles imposition and her own desires. At first she is a passive wife and a mother who does not have any desire to work, but then she gets bored and wants to change. The actual change in Lonely is driven though the segment of the plot involving her extramarital affair with Karim, another Bangladeshi immigrant in Britain. It is in the spirit of the finding new alternative to the imposed identity by the institution of marriage that Karim presents to Nazneen. It marks her sexual discovery but is also more than that, it's the rediscovery of her independence. Through Karim she learns what her emotions and physical anatomy are doing, and rebelf against the gender polarity that has put a cage to her.

As becomes evident, these internal conflicts are mirrored externally. Nazneen faces discrimination as an immigrant woman in London, and her sense of 'otherness' is further intensified. Social prerequisites, as well as people's judgment of the woman and her family, prevent her reflection of the self. These external forces set up a struggle between the transformation of desire in the young girl, a representing, naively soaked in fear; and the alteration of systematical pressures on her.

However, through her search for an empowered status, Nazneen can successfully negotiate through those spaces, and by the end of the novel, reshape new identity for herself.

4. Gendered Dimensions of Identity: Navigating Roles and Expectations

4.1 Traditional Gender Roles in Postcolonial Contexts

Monica Ali depicts traditional Bangladeshi gender norms in Brick Lane that impose heavy limitations on Nazneen's self identity, and other postcolonial social structures that limit their role as women to the domestic, just as many do. In Bangladesh culture, women are expected to be a wife, mother and caretaker basically women are not supposed to have their own voice and have a little bit of self expression and autonomy. The patriarchal values that shape these roles continue to privilege the needs of the family and community ahead of the desire of the individual, so that women in the role, like Nazneen, lack agency. Her premarriage years in Bangladesh traffic with these expectations: a young bride, her life is well operated by the men in her life, father, to husband, Chanu. She herself is centered in a notion of the 'good wife', and has an essential place in the world.

This set of gendered expectations carries on even in another cultural context: when Nazneen moves to London, this set of gendered expectations follows her around. But as an immigrant living in a foreign country, she is still living according to 'her rules' of growing up and her marriage to Chanu is a stark repudiation to her reining in of the expected cultural pressures to adapt. In the diaspora maintaining cultural continuity is especially important and the cultural pressure on women to be wife and mother number is particularly acute. Nazneen's immigrant status and the weight of these roles is compounded by the loss she is experiencing in trying to hold her Bengali heritage while negotiating the difficulties of living in a Western society. But these gendered expectations have a tendency to restrict Nazneen's sense of self by socializing her to live in a fashion that sacrifices her needs and wants for fans of others.

4.2 The Role of Female Agency and Empowerment

Independent of the near impossible constraints handed down by traditional gender roles, the character of Nazneen grows throughout the novel, slowly taking command of her own life. She starts to question the role forcing her hand, she goes from being a passive participant in her own life, to an active creator of her own future. Its relationship to Karim figures not only as catalyst for her sexual and emotional awakening but also as a symbol of her

Prof. Sonba Salve

rejection of the constraints of her marriage with Chanu. The bringing of Nazneen and her desires out of the oppressive gender expectations in which she'd lived are just beginning to unravel when she connects with Karim. This affair is a disengagement from the subjugated self into one that starts to take control of her own situation, asserting herself as her desires about sexuality, emotion, and future begin to occur.

The comparison of Nazneen's journey towards self realization with others female characters like her sister, Hasina. It's a story of flight and, eventually, rebellion: she leaves her arranged marriage in Bangladesh to pursue independence, and finds it, if not happily, in the precarious city of Dhaka. What makes Hasina's journey unique is neither the fact that there is no one to support and stabilize her like there is with Chanu nor that she is trying to escape the same traditional gender roles that have women bound to their domestic spheres, but both these things. Hasina fights to get away from cultural and familial expectations to which – as Homa Kohansal observes – both women are subject, but whereas Hasina's rebellion takes her into dangerous acts, Nazneen's descent towards empowerment slowly but inevitably occurs. Nazneen gradually takes small steps towards asserting her own voice, in spite of the gendered identity which constrains her.

The end of Nazneen's journey is how what she finally achieves is autonomy. By the end of the novel, she's finally able to see her worth as an individual in and of itself and able to, for the first time, act on her own desires, rather than those expected of her by other people. In the novel it is important to emphasize the role of women agency and empowerment, because the way women in the post colonial contexts reclaim their self and become aware of themselves needs to recompense women roles and recover women self determination.

4.3 Intersection of Gender, Identity, and Cultural Belonging

On the one hand, Nazneen's evolving sense of gender identity is linked to her rethinking of selfhood and cultural belonging in the hybrid cultural space of Bangladesh and London, but on the other hand, it also involves Nazneen's essential awareness that reviews of selfhood about gender and sexuality cannot be understood independently from the cultural vernacular of 'woman' and 'queer'; as such where selfhood is regional and global, so are these classifications. Her struggle for identity became muddled, however, with the intersection of her gendered experiences and her cultural background: She was always between the expectations of a host society she lives in, and the

expectations of her Bengali heritage. According to Bangladeshi tradition, Nazneen's own notions of what a woman should be are challenged in London by less conservative attitudes toward women, but those newly available options create tension with her internalized interpretation of what is appropriate for a woman.

Nazneen inhabits a complex region of hybrid space, neither fully at home in Bangladesh nor fully part of British society, in which to form identity. Her experiences as a woman are deeply influenced by both cultures: She is expected to be a modest, dutiful wife and mother, on the one hand, and yet starts to feel the attractions of greater independence, more opportunity and more self expression held out by London on the other. Central to her identity crisis is the tension between these conflicting values that define her culture. She starts questioning her cultural belonging in general while she swims the tide of shifting expectations she's accorded as a woman.

As Nazneen begins to evolve her understanding of gender identity she comes to realize how to blend her heritage and the idea of self expression. In this, there is no separation between gender and culture; instead they work hand in hand to formulate her path of self realization. Speech about the larger theme of cultural hybridity in the novel, is done through the interplay between Nazneen, her evolving sense of gender identity and her changing relationship to her cultural roots. Ultimately by the end of the story, Nazneen has created for herself a space that hard the Bangladeshi part of her blended with the idea that she is filling out her independence of London, making it a fuller view of Nazneen and a more complete sense of self.

5. The Role of Cultural Hybridity and the Immigrant Experience

5.1 Cultural Hybridity in Brick Lane

The question of the relationships between the Indian immigrants and British society is one of the main driving forces behind Brick Lane: the concept of cultural marginality or cultural 'in-between-ness' is revealed as a defining characteristic of the novel's post-colonial characters. The conflict between sadness and hope, between Bangladeshi culture and life in an urban international city, mirrors the concept of hybridity, discussed in postcolonialism as constructing and performing with two or more cultures. In the novel, Nazneen's daily life involves constant movement between two worlds: the dutiful daughter and wife from Bangladesh and the freedom, diversity and independence of London in the twenty first century.

Prof. Sonba Salve

Taking a closer look, one sees that the struggle between retaining her Bengali self and conforming to the diversity of the city of London provides the center to the struggle of her identity. She has to constantly exist in this state as she gradually set up her own life in light of empowering herself while also striving to cast aside limitations imposed by her culture. The concept of cultural liminality, which is shown in 'Brick Lane' as a complex immigration paradigm represents the chronic instability of the immigrant status, which is permanently constructed and reconstructed on the borderline between assimilation and opposition.

5.2 The Immigrant Experience: Displacement and Belonging

The main message in the book *Brick Lane* is related first and foremost to the subject of immigration, as it brings out the deep and the bitter aspects of immigrants' lives. In the novel, those problems are depicted, including the longing to preserve one's culture, the experience of feeling like a stranger in a new country and the problem of being lonely, and problems with identification, as well as their desire to find it. These are the issues that the people who migrate from their own countries in search for other opportunities encounter but they are torn between staying and leaving.

For most part of the novel London represents a closed world for Nazneen; a world full of prejudices of the color of her skin, language she cannot speak, and the restrictions of the culture she comes from. She is as emotionally alienated from the greater population of Britain as she is from her ethnic group. This disconnection is especially felt when trying to relate not only the rest of the city but also her Bengali roots. After arriving to London she has added decision of establishing herself in a community in which it may seem as if she is unwanted or even a burden.

This is further compounded by other stresses that comes with being a immigrant woman. She finds herself caught between two worlds: one in which she cannot be accepted by own Bengali who always finds her strange or 'changed' and other where English society, divided by class and race, just puts her in the outsider category. This is a true feeling of alienation and emasculation of immigrant women who live between two worlds, and none really belong to them.

On a psychological level, thus, the sense of location/dis-location experiences in the novel is enmeshed with the processes of the split subjectivity of the female protagonist, Nazneen. It must be noted that novel represents her transition as an emotional and psychological struggle. She is an immigrant and

thus, becomes constructed through a series of cultural displacements in more fragmented ways. Her life is full of contradictions between her wish to assimilate in the new, adopted country and the urgent necessity to come back to one's origins. It is not just the battle of Indian traditional norms with the British norms as a social culture but the clash inside that has been identified and dealt with by Chawcksey.

I argue that Nazneen's search for a place where she is wanted is not about assimilation into British culture or the reintegration into Bengali culture. It is about navigating the tensions of the inner conflicts of the subject 'the Bangladeshi woman' operating in a postmodern globalised world. So, the cultural code of her native country become interesting to her against the evidence of the personal and social transformation in her condition of the woman in the contemporary Great Britain and in the context of the new world terms. In this respect, her story captures the experiences of many immigrants today—especially women—who carry the burden and pressure of having to be 'modern' and 'American,' and 'real' and 'Pakistan,' and demand recognition of and appreciation for both.

5.3 Nazneen's Evolving Relationship with London

The primary focus of *Brick Lane* is the immigrant diaspora, the most significant aspect of immigrant life. In fact, the fear of losing the tradition, the feeling of being an alien in a foreign land, loneliness and fragmented self concept are problems that are experienced by many expatriate women. For most of the novel, London seems to represent to Nazneen a city of barriers; cultural, emotional and linguistic. She is really isolated from the rest of the society in the city and her own ethnic group to join the rest or the city after immigrating. This feeling of marginalization is further compounded by the fact that the character falls under the pressure of immigrant woman where she is never fully accepted by her own Bengali culture and the British class and race casts her away as an outsider.

At a psychological level, this displacement could hardly be deeper as a range of signs construct the displaced, and increasingly, fragmented subjectivity of a comparable figure: the figure of Nazneen. The conflict between the willingness to stay with her adopted country and the need to find her identity connected with the country of origin forms an emotional conflict. Although, Nazneen's need to belong is not confined to adapting to British culture but is about negotiating these internal conflicted values, as a Bangladeshi women living a life of a global citizen.

Prof. Sonba Salve

6. Postcolonial Feminist Perspectives: The Quest for Empowerment and Belonging

6.1 Postcolonial Feminism and Nazneen's Journey

A postcolonial feminist analysis of *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali: the process of the protagonist's Nazneen's transformation and the idea of identity and agency. Postcolonial feminism provides analysis on manner in which colonial histories continue to inform and condition the lives of women in postcolonial societies through the intersectionality of gendered, raced, and classed subjects. These forces are the main backdrop for the construction and deconstruction of Nazneen's selfhood in *Brick Lane*, whilst being a woman deemed inferior to men and an immigrant regarded as inferior to the host country population.

The essence of postcolonialism atmosphere finds expression in the novel with regard to the main character, the Bangladesh immigrant woman named Nazneen, for whom gender oppression is complemented by ethnic and minority oppression. Her situation in London reflects the compound condition of postcolonial women who are dispossessed in the first world as well as in their own postcolonial countries by patriarchal and colonial racisms. In this respect, Ali condemns these intersections of gender, race and class with reference to the indicated social categories to show that the former oppresses the latter while subjecting the women to limited choices and agency.

This is where all social and psychological forces at work in *The Household* by Mona Eltahawy are countered: with Nazneen's journey of self-realization. From a passive, submissive, loyal wife, she becomes a meaningful woman – this is a change that is not only a woman's personal fight but a critique of cultural and social systems that try to encompass women like her. Transcending this archetypical portrayal, the novel returns to Nazneen's life employing postcolonial feminist theoretical framework, as means of capturing the complexity of identity construction in postcolonial, globalized world. It is worth noting that all these experiences this is a woman, who is both the subject of patriarchy and a member of an immigrant society living in a world that is defined by colonial and postcolonial relations.

6.2 Nazneen's Transformation: Empowerment through Self-Realization

The transformation experience of the protagonist in *Brick Lane* is well understood from the point of view of Nazneen's moving from submissive to transformative agency. At the beginning of the novel, Nazneen is a docile and compliant wife and a

Bangladeshi woman submissive to cultural ideology. One is a dutiful, self sacrificing woman who continually obeys her husband, Chanu, and her father's wishes. But her emotional and sexual awakening, her gradual finding herself or the start of the process, kicks off with her affair with Karim.

When an individual is capable of defining and establishing personal wants and when the tá's wife, Nazneen, learns what she feels sexually, she starts to make her own decisions. From her interaction with Karim he makes her feel that her wants and needs are important, this wakes her up from her expected role of a submissive wife. The 'empowerment' is not merely in an external 'reform' – for example, the fact that she knows English or has become more independent-but an inner change in Nazneen. She starts liberating herself from being an object being constructed by others (her husband, her culture, her community), and constructs herself as an agent with voice, desire and rights.

It is however crucial to note that this change is inherently political, as does the entire transformation that Nazneen undergoes, from a submissive wife/person of colour to a powerful and independently thinking individual who resists Patriarchal and colonialist expectations. Such rejection of being an obedient wife and a mother allows her to challenge the structure of the family and her culture. At the same time her choices raise the question about individual's freedom and social cultural roles as a woman. That change of submission to agency is a significant transform in postcolonial feminism in discourse since it demonstrates how women in postcolonial societies struggle to gain their identity and gain power amid colonial and cultural oppression. Toni Morrison's *Sula* is a travelogue to the marginalized area that is as much an assertion of the right to self-formation, a right to the freedom of personal choice, and the right to invent a life beyond customary gender roles assigned to her.

In this regard then, in the context of *Brick Lane*, we come across a relatively positive representation of women and their agency in the new world of postcolonial west. The novel also insists that we learn that there cannot be a uniform and happy process of 'empowerment' so eagerly discussed in contemporary multiculturalist rhetoric. This is a grim road map that is twisted, hard, and painful, but it is also the story of a woman who refutes cultural, family, and social standards to chart out her option of agency.

6.3 The Global Relevance of Nazneen's Journey

Prof. Sonba Salve

The problems of Nazneen's character revealed in the book *Brick Lane* are intersections of power and identity of a Third World women migrate to the First World country, a subject that is pertinent in the globalized world. The novel advocates for experiences of numerous immigrant women such as Nazneen who struggle to manage their multiple selves in the globalised world which is in effect a postcolonial world.

When migration is viewed in a globalized context it seems like a form of advancement however the situation is quite dehumanizing, as more often than not female immigrants are alienated, displaced and in conflict with the dominant culture. In this broad sense, Nazneen's struggle primarily narrates alienation and the struggle for acceptance within an impersonal structure as a woman and as a 'third world' worker of color. This conflict, familiar in the novel, reflects a conflict between the desire to maintain the indigenous culture and the need to become assimilated into the community around the globe felt by other immigrant communities as well. As such, one can argue that it is indeed possible to

7. Conclusion

Through this analysis the author of this paper has attempted to establish how Monica Ali's novel, *Brick Lane*, also presents identity crisis through experiences of cultural alienation, gender and immigration. The novel traces the trajectory of character understanding and development of the protagonist, Nazneen, with respect to postcolonial British and Bangladeshi cultures and feminist history. The final discussion of Nazneen's transformation from a victimized, self-effacing wife to a woman who discovers her power, *Brick Lane* presents a provoking critique of identity in the postcolonial globalization context.

The discovery from this research has significant implication for postcolonialism, especially as it relates to literature and identity in the situation of migration and diaspora. *Brick Lane* is an interesting intervention into discussions of the postcolonial predicament since it foregrounds the sexual politics of migration and subjectivity. It points to complexity of the subject in relation to race, class and gender of immigrant women; the ethnicity panoply complicates the understanding of immigrant identity and the text complicates simplified notions of immigrant narrative. This paper also has implications to larger literature in identity studies, particularly with the effects of globalization on cultural identity, gender, and agency.

view the struggle for a self that defines of Nazneen as a representation of the journey many people with the onset of globalization, have to navigate within the fluidity of the self in relation to the other.

Moreover, focusing on the story of Nazneen an immigrant woman in London gender and migration as the two significant concepts and how the experiences of migration of immigrant women are toured on the national and patriarchal regulation and racism in more societies. Despite these particularities, Nazneen's case articulates the struggles many women worldwide face in trying to find her way between tradition and modernity, ethnicity and class.

By making Namrata relate to change from submission to power, *Brick Lane* indicates the immigrant women as a global figure in search of self. It shows us how this search is influenced not only by individual want and need but by the social, cultural and political landscape of the postcolonial, post modern world.

I finally agree with the basic tenet of the study and assert that *Brick Lane* makes a meaningful contribution to the old-fashioned immigrant narrative with its fresh outlook on the immigrant woman character. They present the usual hardships of the women in the diaspora as well as chase universal idea of the identity in the age of globalization. Through the narrator of Nazneen, Ali introduces the migrant life of Bangladeshi women and challenges the reader to explore the different factors that comprises of ethnicity, gender and colour in the lives of immigrant women.

Therefore more research should be carried out in the postcolonial feminist critiques and the immigrant narratives because these are essential in answering the questions concerning the lessons people and societies learn when forced into new cultures and paradigm shifts. *Brick Lane* being a story by Ali, provides a beautiful account to fuel a more informed discourse of migration, gender and identity in a contemporary society.

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Prof. Sonba Salve

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