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# ***Cultural Clash and Identity Remapping in Monica Ali's BRICK LANE***

Submitted for the fulfilment of a master degree in British Literature

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## Dedications

*I dedicate this work to the inner flame of ambition that keep pushing me forward and enlightening my path...*

*All the love to the one person who believed in me the most . Soufiane, thank you for saying “of course you can do it” in the very moment of lost and despair...*

*I also dedicate this work to my lovely pupils, without whom this work would have been finished months ago.*

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## ***Abstract***

This thesis analyses the representation of cultural clashes and identity remapping in Monica Ali's brick lane. The analysis basically starts from the encounter between the West and the East, reflected by the main environment of the novel itself, Brick Lane, a street in the East End of London, now known as Banglatown, as it is mainly inhabited by the Bangladeshi Sylheti community. This encounter may be seen as a continuous conflict between different cultures or a clash between cultures, or as a continuous negotiation, with 'winners' and 'losers' who exchange places. It is a conflict that takes up different forms: sometimes it is either an open conflict, when two different groups attack one another, or, most of the times, it is an unspoken interior conflict that manifests itself within one individual with one hybrid identity. The main purpose of this study is to see to which extent cultural clash can change the lives of immigrants who long for their roots and try to cope with the new life style at the same time. Therefore, the results support the following theses: immigration creates a difference in identity that exists between the first and second generation which may lead to the creation of a whole new identity. The phenomenon of Diaspora in the postmodern century is affecting not only the life of Diaspora who struggle to accommodate into the fabric of host society but also the broader notion of identity. Henceforward, in the present analysis of *Brick Lane* (2003) the author pronounces the dynamic notion of identity to see to which extent the members of the immigrant community are no longer looking backward to the lost shores of mother nation but are making strides in the adopted nation to build a new identity.

**Key words:** Identity, Cultural clash, Diaspora, Monica Ali, Brick Lane, Bangladeshi immigrants, second-generation immigrants.

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## Introduction

Among the numerous literary trends that have occupied a central place in Contemporary English Literary Canon, issues relating to cultural clash and identity have generated great interest in scholars and readers. In modern English literature studies there has been a considerable attempt to locate themes such as identity crisis and maladjustment. However, this paper shall locate how the process of immigration and settlement in a First World country like Britain might offer possibilities of redefinition of selfhood. For this reason, this paper shall revolve around the topic of cultural clash and identity in *Brick lane* for the writer Monica Ali. My choice for this topic is also motivated by a need to understand how non-English characters survive in a purely English context as I am preparing for a draft of a book that I am working on.

While the English reader was drinking his Indian tea in a Chinese coup, enjoying his Bengali curtains; others forms of cultures and identities from the East were knocking the doors of Britain with the new waves of immigration following the ships of colonization that went back home.

New voices arose from the Diaspora of immigrants and a new form of English literature starts to receive more and more admiration. Writers born in ex-colonies of the British empire have used English to express their experience with multiculturalism. They have brought a different touch to the English literature and even sometimes questioned its “Englishness”. Therefore, new forms of English literature came to light since the colonizer became the host and since the Empire that sent soldiers to some parts of the world started to receive migrants, a breeze of a different culture changed the British Cultural climate starting by literature and spreading into all the other facts of culture.

The works of migrant writers from ex-colonies who now live in Britain (migrants or born of migrant parent in Britain) has also forced literary critics to question the meaning of the adjective “English” in the phrase “English literature”. This form of literature shed light on the cultural struggle that those migrants go through. It gave voice to their desperate thirst to find a place to belong to and to maintain a happy multicultural land. It has also shown their continuous struggle to survive nostalgia and discrimination.

Torn between the nostalgia for the homeland and the desire to fit in within the British society, Monica Ali brought to life the question of cultural clash in the British literature through her debut novel; *Brick lane*. In her work, she sheds light on the reasons behind the success or failure to mix or break with the host society and to which extent can multiculturalism contribute to the creation of a unique identity; the identity of the immigrant.

My argument in this paper shall be to highlight how the multicultural society in which the characters inhabit and physical as well as the cultural displacement that they undergo due to immigration put them under really identity test and pressure and offer them as well possibilities of plural and fluid identities. The initial

resistance that the characters endure and the people they interact with complicate in different ways the space they inhabit and help them emerge as independent beings. Their individualities are in a continuous process of negotiation and self questioning and through this process the characters may succeed to arrive at an identity that is almost complete in itself. The present paper shall study how the novel creates the 'third space' by presenting a dynamic representation of identity in contemporary British society.

Through the different steps of this study I am trying to see whether the Immigrant character succeed or fail to mix with the a new society that is completely different from his mother country. This goal shall be reached gradually through the division of three chapters. The first chapter will deal with the analysis of the characters. The analysis revolves around the main characters. First, Nazneen is the female protagonist who found the sails of her life controlled by an arranged marriage that lead her to leave Bangladesh and join her old husband who lives in a a country she knows nothing about called England . Second , Chanu, who is Naznnen's husband . A Bangladeshi man who went to the UK to realize his dreams but who turned to be a very frustrated man who could not adapt to the British culture. Then , karim, a young man who was born in Britain from Bangladeshi parents. Finally Razia who is nazneen's only friend in the UK and Nazneen's two daughters .

The second chapter goes deeper to study the obstacles that challenged the flowing of multiculturalism in the novel. Through the previous analysis of the characters and precisely Nazneen , my intention to list the reasons is basically built upon Nazneen's own experience. Then the research gets vaster to study the reasons behind the failure of adjustment for the other characters. Therefore , the list starts by alienation as nazneen felt neglected by both the British society and her Bangladeshi patriarchal community. Then the 9/11 events bring to the scene other reasons including discrimination, Islamophobia and the fear of estrangement of children.

The third chapter exposes the aspects of identity clashes in the novel. Through the events of the story different forms of identity clashes appear to the reader. Therefore, the research studies identity and cultural clash evolution that starts from nostalgia and feeling homesick to the clash of generations that keeps new and old waves of immigrants rolling in the deep of identity issues. Then the research goes deeper to understand why the old immigrants resist the waves of change and force their children to be more conventional and traditional. Henceforward the later step takes the study to a whole unexpected level which is the rebellion of every character and there choice either to live or to leave or even perhaps to the formulation of a new third identity.

**Chapter one :**  
**Analysis of the characters' identity and  
culture**



## Introduction

This chapter provides an insight into each of the characters. It sheds light on the evolution of cultural and identity changes that they go through. Through the different parts of this chapter the main characters in Brick Lane will undergo various inner struggles to maintain selfhood and identity. While at the end of the events each of the characters will go in a different direction. Nazneen tries so hard to get out of the shell and break the norms through embracing a different culture and bringing radical changes to her life. Chanu, on the other hand, gets so frustrated by his discriminating racist boss. He gets scared that his family would fit in while he remains isolated. So he tries so hard to feed his daughters pure Bangladeshi culture by asking them to learn by heart some Bangladeshi songs and gets so mad when they speak English at home. Karim as well feels torn between his Bangladeshi roots and his purely British lifestyle. Finally he finds refuge in creating a group of extremists and there he celebrates his feeling of belonging.

### 1- Biography of the Writer

Monica Ali, the author of Brick Lane, was born on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 1967 in Dhaka, East Pakistan. She was born to a Bangladeshi father and English mother, moving to Boston, England at the age of three, where she was raised. There she studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Wadham College, Oxford. She was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 2003 and also voted Granta's Best of Young British Novelists on the basis of the unpublished manuscript.

### 2- Plot and Characters

Brick Lane posits East London as its setting with a reflection on the lives of Bangladeshi immigrants. Ali's novel Brick Lane focuses on the Bangladeshi immigrant population in the second half of the 20th century. The narrative revolves around Nazneen, a Bangladeshi woman who migrates to London after an arranged marriage to an expatriate; Chanu. During the initial years, Nazneen's contact with the outside world was almost negligible. Like any other woman, she remained confined with domestic chores. Moreover her lack of knowledge in English was restricted to two words "sorry" and "thank you".

At this point homesickness, loneliness added with her pregnancy made Nazneen long for her native land Gouripur, in East Pakistan. According to Weedon (2008), in Brick Lane, "as in many diasporic texts, dreams and memories of the lost homeland play a positive role in securing identity and survival". Having limited access to social spaces in London, Nazneen felt secluded and was lost in memories of her life in Gouripur. However, her failure in preventing the death of her first son traumatized her constantly and she got sick of her helplessness.

However, for the first time in London, Nazneen felt empowered when she moved out from her house into the streets and communicated successfully to a stranger in English. Karim's sudden entry into her life feeds this feeling of empowerment. Through him Nazneen gains entry into public sphere completely. When he is around her she feels empowered when casting votes. She also takes up sewing in order to have economic independence. Finally she is able to resist Chanu's decision to return to Dhaka. Asserting her wish strongly, Nazneen refuses to return and forsakes herself from her male counterpart, be it Chanu or Karim.

Being exposed to such a multicultural society that permits its woman to freely move out into social spheres, Nazneen creates an identity that is not dependent on anyone. The novel ends at the point where Nazneen fulfils her dream of ice-skating. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman draws attention to the fact that "the problem of identity" is a modern phenomenon in that it is brought about by the disassociation of the concept of birth and nation as a once single cause-effect factor (2004: 24). For Bauman we are all living in "liquid modernity" characterized by a lack of stability and radical change. In such a life setting, "*identities are perhaps the most common, most acute, most deeply felt and troublesome incarnations of ambivalence*" (2004:97). Ethnically diverse authors born in Britain experience this disassociation and this ambivalence even more since they occupy an in-between space where traditional cultural representations of Britain fail to encompass their 'hybrid' identity. In some respects, following Bauman's postulates, their identity status has to be seen as located in a continuum of opposed forces of belonging and exclusion. Contrary to Nazneen, her husband Chanu is represented suffering from maladjustment. Being tired of tolerating discrimination he decides to return to Dhaka. He finds himself alien in foreign land and fails to connect to the adopted country. Moreover, the change that he sees in his two daughters made him shiver and he began feeling outsider in his own family. Iris Marion Young argues that nowadays space can no longer be equated with a single and homogenized community, and at the same time that the idea of community cannot be associated with a single or homogenous identity (1990: 153). Both space and identity have become complex categories being influenced by divergent factors at the same time.

The novel also reflects how apart from the external differences in opinion there are internal differences as well. No matter how much Chanu tries to force his daughters to learn Bengali and Tagore's songs, they did not want to listen to Bengali classical music, wore jeans and hated Salwaar kameez. Second generation immigrants epitomized by Nazneen's teenage daughters Shahana and Bibi or Razia's children Tariq and Shefali reflect an entirely different perspective of immigrant experience. Contrary to the first generation immigrants, these youngsters enjoy the liberties that London offers them. Their assimilation and negotiation into the British culture offer them possibilities of exploring themselves in a different manner. Moreover, Chanu's observation on his difference from the other Bangladeshi immigrants, and his similarity with the educated Dr. Azad reflects how even among the first generation immigrants there are variations. Chanu criticizes the existence of a homogenized view of all Asians in the British collective imaginary. He asserts his difference by claiming: "*I am forty years old*"

*. . . I had ambitions. Big dreams . . . And then I found things were a bit different. These people here didn't know the difference between me, who stepped of an aeroplane with a degree certificate, and the peasants who jumped off the boat possessing only the lice on their heads". (Ali 2003: 34)*

On the other side, The novel also reflects on the aftermath of the September 11 attack in Britain. After this epoch making event the Muslim immigrants were viewed with suspicion and Karim in Brick Lane stands for such a figure who takes up the path of religious fundamentalism in order to express his resentment against such discriminatory practices. Brick Lane highlights how identities undergo a process of remapping when posited in a foreign land. The liberties that the women as Nazneen, Razia and Mrs. Azad and their children enjoy empower them to come out free from the societal constraints and emerge as independent beings. Nevertheless, the men folk represented through Karim and Chanu are shown to be on the two extremes sides: one forsaking British culture permanently and the other taking the path of religious fundamentalism.

## 1. Nazneen

In her naivety, simplicity and isolation Nazneen represents the very heart of the Bangladeshi minority in the UK. Furthermore, she reflects the lives of many women who live torn between two identities. Her deep belief in faith drives her deaf and blind while she stands in a manner of complete hospitality to the changes of life. Her inner voice is always shut down and if ever she made a choice, it was merely to obey. Her presence, her ideas, her identity was presented by the writer as a thing that was melted down in the voice of a whole society. While she was in Bangladesh she didn't have the feeling of belonging there. It didn't seem to her like a little part of the world where she belonged. Her little town was like the whole world for her since she didn't have any idea about a different world. Her awareness only started to rise as she literally hit the bottom.

The novel focuses on Nazneen and her development. Her perspective is privileged—in terms of narrative space as well as in terms of sympathy. Readers are invited to identify with her, empathize with her and approve of her decisions. Nazneen's change and identity formation have to do with the exchange processes she is involved in. In this context, she grapples with different cultures, languages, gender conventions, religion, and class conventions. Nazneen's characterisation through her own thoughts and actions as well as through comments by the narrator and other characters is particularly interesting in *Brick Lane*. Nazneen is the most dynamic character in the novel and a large part of "what happens" in the novel actually happens inside her head. Through the narrator, readers learn about Nazneen's motivation to engage in cultural exchange and her evaluation of these processes.

Nazneen changes from someone who never questions any of the conventions that control her life to someone who frees herself of these cultural constraints. At first, Nazneen's mantra is: "*What could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne.*" Nazneen shows signs of self-denial and self-sacrifice. She does not even own up to her own wishes: she sometimes starts a thought with "*if I were the wishing type*" (18), but then she brushes it away. The story of "*How You Were Left To Your Fate*" (236) was frequently told to Nazneen when she was a child and so she believed in fate and never questioned its logic. Nazneen accepts the husband her father chose for her, even though he is much older than she is and has "*a face like a frog*" (17). Sometimes, she is even disgusted by Chanu, seeing his "*puffy face on the pillow next to her, his lips parted indignantly even as he slept.*" (18) Nazneen also accepts that she is sent to London, confined to a small apartment filled with clutter. Nazneen's mother Rupban serves as Nazneen's role model for a long time. Rupban is said to endure whatever she is confronted with without ever rebelling or questioning her situation, not even when her newly born daughter's life is at stake. It takes Nazneen some time to see that her mother's way of tackling life does not work for herself, nor did it work for her mother who commits suicide. After a long struggle with her conscience and indoctrinated ideals, Nazneen finds a different 'solution' and gets rid of the limiting conventions with the help of mediators such as her daughters, Razia, Hasina and to some extent also Karim.

One of the main motivations for Nazneen's change is her loneliness and confinement to a very limited space and gender role. Nazneen feels "*trapped inside this body, inside this room, inside this flat, inside this concrete slab of entombed humanity*" (76), she even dreams of being locked up in the wardrobe or the wardrobe crushing her . Nazneen's bad conscience (among other things because of her affair with Karim) even makes her sick. She has an apparition of her mother who tells her to endure everything and tries to pull her down, physically and metaphorically . Nazneen collapses and the doctor diagnoses her with "*nervous exhaustion*" (339) and depression. In the time that follows, Nazneen finds relief in reciting "*You are nothing. You are nothing*" (332) because this frees her of responsibility.

When she looks for familiar soothing passages in the Qu'ran she cannot find any or doesn't seem to fully understand it. When she reads Hasina's letters, she recovers a bit and finds peace . Hasina's letters seem to trigger a change: they make Nazneen think about in how far things are her own responsibility and how much of it is fate, if there is such a thing at all. So she comes to the conclusion that she has some responsibility for her life – and thus also decides to take matters in her own hands. When Chanu keeps annoying Nazneen, she has finally enough and tells him "she's listening. But she is not obeying." (341) Her fight for her right to work (compromise: work at home) and learn and speak English as well as her affair with Karim are further results of change, although her working can also be seen as a trigger for new changes – she has the impression of doing something useful, her self esteem rises, she meets Karim, an attractive young man who gives her the impression that she is being listened to . Not only Nazneen's development is interesting, but also how she is characterised by different characters. Tourists see in her an exotic motif and a part of their multicultural Brick Lane experience , Chanu sees in her the "*unspoilt girl from the village*" (22) and Karim sees in her "*the real thing*" (385), an 'authentic' Bengali woman who is neither too religious or prudish to sleep with him, nor a 'westernized' girl whose self-confident sexuality might scare Karim off . In a way, Nazneen serves as projection space for other characters – partly because she reveals so little about herself. For a long time, she does not know herself who she is and what she wants . When she learns that she can do whatever she like, she experiments with different ideas and tasks in order to find out what she can be.

## 2.Chanu

Chanu serves as a counterpart to Nazneen. In the beginning, he has power over her and makes all the decisions that affect his family's life. However things start to take a different direction later on: while Nazneen is rather obedient at first, she gains financial independence and discovers her own will and the power of emotional blackmailing in the end.

Yet, it is not only the power relations that develop in the course of the novel: Chanu's characterization also changes. At first he appears rather shallow and boring, among other things because of his continuous rambling about pointless matters, his slightly derogative talk about Nazneen and because of Nazneen's descriptions of his ugly looks and repulsive habits. Furthermore, he confines Nazneen to the apartment, does not want her to go out or learn English and constantly wants to teach her things while he is not interested in her opinion at all. He treats her like a thing he brought with him from home. Later, however, this changes. When Nazneen stays in the hospital with their son and after Nazneen's breakdown, he cooks and cares for her, he lets her decide on her own whether she wants to stay in London or move to Bangladesh together – and even Nazneen discovers some affection towards him. While Nazneen's case is an example for successful cultural exchange – successful in the sense that she frees herself from restrictive (Bangladeshi) conventions and encounters happiness through the change – , Chanu serves as an example for obstacles of cultural exchange and resignation. His frustration caused by discrimination culminates at times in a rejection of everything British. However, Chanu's cultural affiliation changes according to the respective context. One example is the way the girls are to dress: it depends on “*where Chanu directed his outrage. If he had a Lion Hearts leaflet in his hand, he wanted his daughters covered. He would not be cowed by these Muslim-hating peasants. If he saw some girls go by in hijab he became agitated at this display of peasant ignorance. Then the girls went out in skirts.*” (265) So Chanu's ‘cultural policies’ are not governed by principle, but depend on the context. Similarly, he confines Nazneen to their flat at first and justifies this with the conventions of the community. He only allows Nazneen to work when it becomes an economic necessity. This does not keep him from boasting how liberal he is. Chanu speaks of his upcoming “promotion” countless times – but after many disappointments his accounts move from “when” to “if” (90). The experienced racial discrimination sends him to a state of depression and fear. In the beginning, he still complains about institutional racism and a glass ceiling for migrants (cf. 72), later on his state turns into a serious depression . He stopped making plans. [...] Before that, each collapse of ambition, though it dented his surface, had goaded him to new determination, a more urgent reaching. He started every new job with a freshly spruced suit and a growing collection of pens. His face shone with hope. And then greyed with frustration, with resentment [...] But he was slighted. By customers, by suppliers, by superiors and inferiors. He worked hard for respect but he could not find it.

Henceforward, Chanu completely fails to adapt with the British society and decides to walk away. He encapsulates himself in a (self-)constructed version of Bangladeshi culture and attempts to extend this to his family – until the point of making plans to go back to Bangladesh.

### **.3. Karim**

Karim cannot be analysed in the same way as Nazneen or Chanu. He is a pure Bangladeshi blood born and raised in Britain. He functions as a mediator or catalyst for change. Through her affair with Karim ,Nazneen breaks a number of conventions.

Karim helps Nazneen to discover a different way to see her body, express her desires and explore her sexuality. On the one hand, the affair has a liberating effect on Nazneen. On the other hand, she becomes paranoid because of her indoctrinated feelings of guilt.He gave her both feelings ; burning passion ,which could not be called love, and at the same time dark guilt. In addition, her affair with Karim is not represented as a relationship between equals. He orders her to “*get undressed ... and get into bed*” (288) and “*picked her up like a child and held her.*” (385) still presenting an authoritative controlling man in her life. Yet he does this in way that shows love and not carelessness. Nazneen doesn’t mind if a man is ctroling as long as he “sees” her and show her that he is interested in her and this makes the whole difference between karim and Chanu . Nazneen “*was willing to be claimed*” (263) and Nazneen enjoys that he listens to her and gives her the feeling that what she says is important. However, Cormack rightly points out that this happens predominantly on occasions where Nazneen is agreeing with Karim anyway or emphasizing something he said. In the end, Nazneen does not exchange her relationship with Chanu for a partnership with Karim. She realizes that in order to find out what she wants and lead a self determined life, she needs to get rid of Karim, too.

Karim’s character is interesting because he forms a contrast to Nazneen: he was born and raised in the UK and feels British. More importantly, he appears self-confident and comfortable to mix and match both British and Bangladeshi elements equally. To the reader, Karim is introduced as an attractive young man, sure of himself, with short hair, tight jeans, sleeves rolled up and a gold chain. His English is said to be better than his Bengali when Nazneen discovers he stammers in Bengali . Nazneen is attracted by his confidence and believes that Karim had something that she, Hasina and Chanu could not find: “*a place in the world*” (264).

However, after he starts the affair with Nazneen, Karim becomes increasingly ‘devotional’, which becomes visible e.g. by his growing a beard and starts to pray more often. After 9/11, it gets even worse: he changes into Panjabi pyjamas and other signs of his opposition to mainstream British culture even in the way he dresses up. Because of the islamophobic climate in Britain, he decides to highlight his “difference” even more. As a letter of fact, karim has never been religious and it is not mentioned in the novel if he was influenced by a certain group of extremists . However , one can clearly see that karim chose this path simply because he was so filled with frustrated with the absence of a stable identity in his life that he needed to express his frustration and anger in any kind of riot . The meeting with his group also gave him a certain feeling of belonging to a solid and powerful



group. He was deeply addicted to this feeling and to pleasing his ego in the meeting and the speeches he made that things went out of control. In the end, there are even rumours that he joined a jihad training camp in Afghanistan. In this respect, Karim's characterization degenerated to a stereotype of a young radical Muslim. Later on we learn that Nazneen's notion of Karim having secured his place in the world was only true "*in her head*" (448). She realizes that Karim looked foreign to the English, and to Bangladeshis he appeared British, e.g. because of his lack of Bangladeshi language skills, his looks and the fact that he had never been to Bangladesh. Nazneen believes that Karim used his idea of her – "*the real thing*" (385) – in order to come to terms with his Bengali identity. According to Nazneen's interpretation she was for him: "[a] Bengali wife. A Bengali mother. A fragrance of an unknown home. *An idea of himself that he found in her*" (454). When she breaks up with him, she claims that she had to make this choice because of her children in order to "lighten[...] his load" (452). However, Nazneen finally states: "*From the very beginning to the very end, we didn't see things. What we did – we made each other up.*" (455)

#### ***4. Nazneen's Daughters and Razia***

The relationship between Nazneen and her two daughters, in particular the eldest daughter Shahana, is probably one of the most interesting dynamics throughout the film. Shahana and Bibi remind Nazneen of her own childhood with her sister, which is of course where her homesickness stems from. Shahana is entering that age between childhood and adulthood and is consequently becoming far more aware of the power dynamic between her parents. She is also acutely aware of just how unhappy her mother is. Her feisty attitude toward her father is reminiscent to Nazneen of her younger sister back in Bangladesh. During a climactic scene in the film, Nazneen chases Shahana through the East End (catching her up at what I believe was Liverpool Street station, and if I'm right I will be impressed with my geographical knowledge). As they run through the streets, we see flashbacks to Nazneen with her sister. It's a nice touch and a powerful statement on the relationships between sisters, mothers and daughters.

Nazneen and Shahana also represent the difference in empowerment and independence between generations. After the death of Nazneen's mother, she is scared to be sent to the UK but at the same time, she understands that this is the best life possible for her in the circumstances. Shahana, on the other hand, has grown up in London and seen how her father dominates the household. Her mother is quiet and subservient most of the time and Shahana rebels against this idea of what women should be. Karim touches on this subject when he tells Nazneen he likes her because she is 'a girl from the village' – meaning she isn't too religious or too Westernised. Whilst Nazneen plays this role for most of the film, she steps into her own role at the end and proves that she is her own person. This is partly influenced by Shahana, and partly because she knows she must make a better life for both her daughters.

The most important mediators who encourage Nazneen to change are her daughters And her friend Razia. The advocates of more traditional conventions, in this case e.g. self renunciation, piety and submission to the husband, are Nazneen's parents, Chanu, Karim and Mrs Islam.

First and foremost, Nazneen's daughters simply "*demand to be understood*" (194). This pushed her learn more English than she had previously done through Razia's accounts of her English lessons, "*television, the brief exchanges at the few non-Bengali shops she entered, the dentist, the doctor, teachers at the girls' schools*" (194). In addition, her daughters also demand of Nazneen that she thinks about what would be best for them (especially in connection to the question of whether they should go back to Bangladesh or not) and then take a stand for them.

In the beginning, the other women who live on the estate, in particular Razia and Mrs Islam, are the only contacts Nazneen has. Razia is more than just friend of Nazneen. She is her refuge. Razia is more liberal and emancipated than her other friends. She functions as a mediator and tells Nazneen: "*You can do whatever you like.*" (492) Razia is characterised by Nazneen as a funny and kind-hearted , sometimes mocking woman who is very outspoken. For example, she criticizes Mrs Islam openly and flicks her fingers at the gossipers. Razia takes the challenge and goes through a lot of trouble because she wants her children to have a better life . So she attends English lessons . Her children already speak English because they went to school in London – and works at a sweat shop. Her husband, who forbade her to work at first, dies in an accident and cannot get in her way anymore. Razia functions as a mediator for Nazneen – among other things she teaches her English, goes out with her and acts as a supportive friend and breaks Nazneen's loneliness.

Chanu does not like Razia in all the ways a Bangladeshi man can hate a woman; he criticises the way she dresses, raises her children, leads her life , and if he could he would forbid Nazneen to see her. Razia has a special status among the characters in *Brick Lane*: she applied for British citizenship and got a British passport. She usually wears a Union Jack shirt and defends the English and the welfare system when Chanu says the English or at least 'the system' was racist: "*There are good ones, and bad ones. Just like us. And some of them you can be friendly with. Some aren't so friendly.*" (73) She says "*Ask him this, then. Is it better than our own country, or is it worse? If it is worse, then why is he here? If it is better, why does he complain?*" (72) Razia has a rather pragmatic approach to many things and, as already mentioned, keeps the future of her children in mind. However, there are also some contradicting examples: she does not want to admit that her son has a drug problem and waits rather long to finally help him.

### 3. Symbolism in the novel

#### 1. *Brick Lane*

The title itself presents the who problematic of the story. A wall that stands between two culture with all the forms and interpretations that a wall can symbolize whether it is isolation , challenge , separation or even entrapment , it is up to the reader to build his own understanding.

The real Brick Lane that the story revolves around stands inside the minds of the characters; some of them manage to break the wall and get through it and other decide to walk away as they never manage to pass it .

Brick Lane might be a symbol of Bengali culture inserted into the urban Western environment, just as bricks are crafted from natural materials. Like a solid border of the known world. Brick Lane is where Bengali culture spills from the shops into the streets. This is a world where the uprooted immigrants can feel at home outside of their residences. Beyond Brick Lane is an alien world of Western capitalism where people are always rushing about. One has to go beyond Brick Lane, as Nazneen does in her first solitary adventure, in order to meet the challenge of the outer world, beyond the security of family and nation.

#### 2. *Names of the characters:*

Monica Ali's choice of names was based more on the identity they presented then on the meaning of the name itself. The fact that Nazneen and Chanu, Razia and her husband as well as Karim's parents decide to give their children names that at least do not sound English says something about the parents. I interpret it as another hint that they do not identify (fully) with the British culture, and as an attempt to reassure themselves of their cultural heritage. In addition, for Nazneen in particular it would have been absolutely strange to give her children English or mixed names as at the moment of their birth she did not have contact with London outside Tower Hamlets and did not know much English except for the words 'sorry' and 'thank you'

#### 3. *The Number Three*

The number three is a frequent motif in this book. It presents a third choice and a rejection of the first culture and the second culture. Three in the novel is the choice to create a third culture that takes its roots from both east and west. This number reveals the third path that is understood in physics as quantum entanglement, the third path of the unknown place of balance and compromise.

#### ***4.The Tattooed woman***

The tattoo lady symbolizes the western culture .She is slightly involved and detached in the story. She lives with them in the same building . She is standing there behind her curtain watching them watching her but each of the two stays always with the other . Though Nazneen felt very curious about her all the time , she never broke the glass to talk to her.

**Chapter Two:**  
**Obstacles Against the Flow of**  
**Multiculturalism**  
**in the Novel**

## Introduction

The omniscient narrator provides insight into many characters' minds and thus unveils various reasons for a rejection of cultural exchange, but also motives for appropriation processes. One big motivation for (ex)change is the discrimination the (British-)Asian characters face in London. As a result, many characters choose to live in the segregated community, Chanu goes back to Bangladesh and Karim becomes radical. The main reasons that are explicitly mentioned for some characters' refusal to engage with the British host community are the fear of assimilation and the fear of an estrangement of their children. This is shared by a number of characters, in particular the older ones. Furthermore, another simple reason of a lack of contact and exchange is the confinement that many female characters face.

### 1. Alienation and Isolation

In *Brick Lane*, Monica Ali shows the most significant problem of the immigrants, that is alienation. As we see, the alienation of the immigrant woman caused not only by the other in point of the host society but also by the oppressive attitude of the society's patriarchal and traditional background results with the feelings of isolation, loneliness, weakness or despair. In this way, as both immigrant and as woman, those women presented by the character of Nazneen in *Brick Lane*, go through double alienation in the society. However, in the novel, this alienation, which has both sociological and psychological dimensions, is resolved with the freedom and integration of Nazneen. She frees herself from the chains of isolation through many experiences proving her struggle with feelings of alienation and powerlessness, as Bentley emphasizes, "the novel as a whole, follows her gradual empowerment as she begins to come to terms with the alien environment in which she is placed at the beginning of the novel" (Bentley, 2008:88). Accordingly, what emerges is Nazneen's struggle to find her identity through her growing confidence and self-determination" (Kanal, 2008:56). At the end of the novel, Nazneen's passes the challenge and get her own choice to take her own decisions such as not going back to Bangladesh with her husband, breaking up with Karim and beginning a new life with her daughters standing on her own feet, makes it possible to take over alienation and to integrate into the society as an independent immigrant woman.

Monica Ali's story is shaped by different contemporary issues that revolve around the integration or the refusal or multiculturalism. Depicting the struggle of a Bangladeshi woman a slice of the modern western world where personal freedom is gained by sharing work and personal experience with other local, non-conforming Bangladeshi women. Thus, Nazneen finds her place in the world which she has watched from the outside for years. "What Monica Ali tries to probe and highlight is the concept that although displacement leads to alienation and self-searching, it is important to reconcile oneself with the concept of acculturation" (Kanal, 2008: 54). So, at the end of the novel, we see that this acculturation process results in Nazneen acquiring a changed identity that is governed by her own individual logic and homespun wisdom not by a male dominance.

## ***2.Discrimination***

In reality, discrimination is often when a person judges another person or thing based on the group, class or category that they belong to rather than on individual merit. They act as if the person they see is the representation of the whole group. The person might need to bear others' aggressive behavior, even though the person may be an innocent party.

In the novel, the issue of discrimination could be found in different forms and aspects; gender, religion or even identity or ethnicity.

The characters in Brick lane personify an over dose of discrimination toward the minority communities in the modern world. Nazneen is doubly discriminated against – by the Bangladeshi community because she is a woman and by the British because of her ethnicity. So Nazneen's change to more independence means that she neither assimilates totally to the British mainstream nor submits to the (misogynist) Bangladeshi community rules. Among the main motivations for exchange are respectively the wish for an escape of the community's confinement, which different life styles seem to offer, but also the desire to provide a better life for their children. And finally, the quest of some characters to find their own "place in life" leads them to try out different practices, ideologies, etc., such as different gender and family conceptions in Nazneen's case and radical Islamism in Karim's case.

In the novel, Brick Lane Street is a place like concentration camp in which most Bangladeshi immigrants are concentrated. However, Bangladeshis are not the only resident there. There are also residents who came from different ethnical groups living around. In such a multi-racial city, where Bangladeshis have equal influence to the local citizens, the native feels threatened. There was a group that was led by a white who was named Lion Hearts. The ideology was built on the worry that Muslims would take away their street, which means in other words, they could not stand the Islamic culture penetrating into their life. Thus, flyers that have been distributed by Lion Hearts can be easily found in their community. As a reaction against Lion Hearts accusation, Karim and his followers formed their own group and named it the Bengal Tigers. This conflict has been raised up since the 9/11 attack took place. The non-Muslim people threw tantrums at the people who are of the same religion as the terrorists. In the non-Muslims' eyes, Muslim became the synonym of terrorism. They regarded people of other religion as a group but not as individuals.

However, For Chanu, things took a different perspective and direction. Chanu came to the uk full of hopes and dreams however the bubble was burst up by a touch of reality. His efforts and good will were underestimated by his employers who could only see his skin color and different accent as a doomed path to his failure. Chanu

was a direct victim of racism and discrimination and the mixed feeling of anger and frustration led him to leave his dreams and family there and go back home.

Also, During the community meetings, Chanu spoke out his opinion against extremist militancy, he thinks that Islam is a belief that is worth defending, in favor of a faith not based on politics but in the heart. Chanu is able to view this process with far more humanistic caution and historical context than Karim can or will.

### **3. Islamophobia**

Brick Lane depicts the reactions of those in the UK (particularly on the estate) to the 9/11 bombings. The news plays out on the television which is so central to Nazeen and Chanu's life, and Chanu comments that things are now going to change for all of them. Before now, we have watched the way people have looked at Nazeen when she is out in public, obviously reacting to her traditional Bangladeshi dress. After 9/11 however, Nazeen watches from the window as a young Muslim male is verbally attacked on the estate. In Western countries (predominantly the UK and US) attacks against Muslims rise dramatically following terrorist incidents. Recently, in the wake of the Paris bombings – [racially motivated attacks against Muslims tripled](#). Gavron comments on this prejudice through the eyes of Nazeen who (like the vast majority of Muslims) have about as much to do with terrorism as the average white Christian has with the KKK. Using Nazeen's experiences and showing the later split of the community group on how to respond to the increased racism, the novel shows why Islamophobia is so poisonous. Arguably, the story resorts to stereotypical imagery of extremism (Karim becomes 'radicalised' following the 9/11 bombings) but there is a very valid point being made underneath all of this. Isn't the demonization of the Muslim community as a whole only going to lead to more (young people particularly) becoming radicalized? *Brick Lane*, whilst by no means acting as the final say on the issue, attempts to show just how dangerous and harmful Islamophobia is.

### ***The fear of Children's Estrangement***

Right from the beginning the reader can clearly see that Chanu forces Shahana and Bibi to speak Bengali at home without further explanation. So in their case it is not a choice. On top of this, he forces them to recite Bengali poetry. The reason for his 'lessons' is that he wants his daughters to learn about Bangladesh's cultural heritage and culture – and does not trust the English school to provide reliable information – , in particular since he decided to go back. "Chanu was taking his family back home and Tagore was the first step on the journey." Chanu decides that no English is allowed in the house, but we learn through Nazneen that their daughters do not really follow this rule. Nazneen is not that strict and allows them to switch: "Nazneen let it pass. Perhaps even encouraged it." In the case of the poem, the readers have to do with a transcription of the verses, followed by an English translation of the poem.



Their daughters don't react in the same way. It is above all Shahana who is annoyed – because she is forced to recite a poem she does neither like nor seems to understand. Shahana did not want to listen to Bengali classical music. Her written Bengali was shocking. Like all teenagers She wanted to wear jeans, she hated her kameez and spoiled her entire wardrobe by pouring ink on them. Moreover, If she could choose between baked beans and dal it was no contest. When Bangladesh was mentioned she pulled a face. She did not know and would not learn that Tagore was more than poet and Nobel laureate, and no less than the true father of her nation. Shahana did not care. Shahana did not want to go back home. Chanu wants to prepare them for what he calls return , when for the girls it is an act of forced migration. The expressions “her nation” and “back home” in the quotation above are ironic – Bangladesh is not *her* nation and she cannot go *back* to a place she has never even visited.

So Shahana rejects the idea of moving to Bangladesh and also the language. But why does Chanu insist? This can be interpreted as a sign of his fear of losing his identity. The Bengali language and history are two conveniently tangible aspects to which he clings. In the context of the novel, this is just another possible reaction to living abroad.

# **Chapter Three:**

## **Identity Clashes**

### **in the Novel**

## Introduction

Brick Lane portrays the rising identity changes that occur with the first and second generation immigrants. The novel reveals that when it comes to immigrants, due to a difference in their surroundings and exposure to different cultures the second generation experiences a different setting which contributes to their developing identity. However their new identities become a contrast to the identity of their parents; thus creating a “cultural clash”. First generation characters share the traits of being indignant of changing cultural values during immigration while the second generation are keen on conforming and leave their root in exchange for freedom of being accepted by the British society. Through the characters and the use of language, Monica Ali demonstrates how immigration creates a difference in identity that exists between the first and second generation.

### 1.Home and Identity struggle

Life of Nazneen turns into a maze when she crosses the barriers laid by her parenting, society, nation and individuality to cut a niche for herself and her daughters. Leaving a deep influence on Nazneen, Nazneen’s mother was dominated by father who never gave her the opportunity to speak up her mind and feelings. Nazneen’s mother tries to mould the personality of her daughters Nazneen and Hasina by teaching them the importance of fate and submissiveness in women’s life. Nazneen’s life and her birth itself stand as the testimony of her mother’s believe in fate.

As Nazneen grew she heard many tales of this story of “*How You Were Left To Your Fate*”... Fighting against one’s fate can weaken the blood. Sometimes, or perhaps most of times, it can be fatal.

The place where Nazneen is born present an example of closed confines of cultural boundaries and conventional set up that treats women as subordinate. As human being born to obey and to be controlled by everything around them.

On the other hand, The multicultural ambience of the West gives Nazneen the chance to challenge the hegemonic practices of both East and west. She is uncomfortable with her boring life in the concrete quarters of Brick Lane. Away from the open skies of Gouripur in the initial years of her advent in the foreign nation she feels a complete stranger. There is a constant ghost of home following her wherever she goes. In her dreams she always finds herself hand in hand with her sister Hasina. Flashbacks from her childhood keep occupying her present. The only solace in her mundane life is the company of ghetto which is a closed cultural group. In the party of Bangladeshi women, she gets a chance to speak in her own language, celebrate home festivals and discuss with nostalgia the memories of land left back.

Nazneen's household revolves around Chanu. She keeps herself busy entire day by keeping the apartment clean, preparing meals and looking out of her apartment's window either watching the by-passers or the 'tattoo lady'. Nazneen is an embodiment of all those women who accompany their husbands into the foreign land not in pursuit of any personal endeavor but to fulfill the social responsibility of wife. Like a mute animal following its master, Nazneen follows Chanu to London. She is a complete outsider without any knowledge of foreign language, its people and the challenge of assimilation.

The scope of novel revolves around the metamorphosis of Nazneen along with her journey in the foreign land. She marries a man older to her due to social obligation. It is only in the open environment of west that she gets the confidence to exercise her agency as a potent individual who has the capacity to challenge the gendered divisions of work and society in her home. She gradually develops confidence to explore the world of earning finances, giving voice to her hidden sexual desires with Karim-a young Bangladeshi boy and to evolve emancipated from all barriers.

The augmentation of Nazneen's persona undertakes with her the experiences of loss, happiness, motherhood, friendship and the final rejection of subordinate status. The novel is divided into two phases that signifies Nazneen's individual growth. The first period ranges from her advent in London and ends with the death of her first child Raqib. The next phase of empowerment varies from the birth of her two daughters Shahana and Bibi, affair with Karim, Chanu's difficult time at job and ends with Nazneen's financial evolution in foreign land stand to fulfill her daughter's dream of assimilation. The transmutation of Nazneen from subordinate to equal participant in society is fuelled by her friendship with Razia.

All traditional Bangladeshi women characters of this novel flutter in the confines yearning to have a slice of West. It is the contest of home confinement and inherent zeal to experience the whirlpool of progressive West that gives impetus to the Bangladeshi women diaspora of Brick Lane to challenge and claim emancipation from gendered roles.

## **2.The Clash of generations**

In Brick Lane, Monica Ali presents second-generation immigrants whose aspirations and preferences usually clash with those of either parents, or of the Bangladeshi community, or of the mainstream of the British society. The novel offers abundant material on the clash of cultures and clash of generations.

On the one hand, in the novel, Ali provides a detailed picture of devout Muslim youth who are obviously agitated and infuriated by racist gangs in the neighborhood and racist and discriminatory practices in the society. On the other hand, the writer portrays young Bangladeshis, Shahana, Shefali, Azad, who were born and raised in Britain and therefore adapted to British culture, British society and British identity as they voice their distaste

with Bangladeshi culture, language and life style. The third group of Bangladeshi youth comprises boys like Tariq, Razia's son, who are involved in gangs and drug abuse, which is evidently a serious problem among the Bangladeshi youth. The novel represents how these kids found refuge in this kind of life because they failed to completely fit in one society. The glimpses offered by Ali on the 2001 riots and the impact of the 9/11 attacks on the lives of Bangladeshi immigrants complement the big picture. None of these second-generation Bangladeshis silently bemoan or resign to their status in the society; on the contrary, they rebel against all aspects of their life including the prevalent racist and discriminatory practices, cultural, traditional and familial pressures, and economic problems on their own ways. Ali portrays Bangladeshi girls who resemble British girls of their age by their interests, clothes, tastes, education, linguistic skills, and manners as they have been exposed to the hegemonic effects of the British society and culture since they were born. Shefali is absolutely different from her mother as she is totally absorbed in her exams to be accepted into university; however, she stuns her mother by expressing her desire to spend one year doing nothing before university like most teenagers do in Britain. In a similar manner to Shefali's, the boy Azad is totally assimilated in her outlook and manners because she has discolored hair, wears short skirt, chews gum in front of elders and goes to pubs with her friends. Azad, Shefali, Shahana and Bibi are fluent speakers of English and are having British education at school. Therefore, mastering a different language offers Shahana an opportunity to show her difference and to become critical of her parents. Unlike her mother who can barely speak a few words in English, Shahana learned English as her second language. Although Chanu speaks English fluently he does not like his daughters speaking English at home but as soon as he is out the girls switch to English as the medium of conversation. But unlike Azad and Shefali, Chanu remains conventional and does not allow Shahana and Bibi to enjoy the freedom fluency and schooling in English are supposed to provide them with. Chanu's fury stems from his assumption that the girls fit Karim's pejorative description of westernized girl who "*wears what she likes, all the make-up going on, short skirts and that soon as she is out of her father's sight. She's into going out, getting good jobs, having a laugh*" by speaking their language and by imitating their behavior, manners and tastes" (Ali, 2003: 384). Evidently Shahana and the girls like her do not wish to live like her parents and they are completely different from their parents. Unlike her mother, Shahana refuses to wash her hair with liquid hair and demands shampoo and moisturizer for her skin. When Chanu attempts to teach his daughters how to use a computer and have an access to internet, he is surprised to see that Shahana knows much more about computers than her father.

Clothing is another source of dispute between the girls and their parents. Shefali's clothes annoy her mother from time to time. Once Razia held one of the glittery vests and bitterly complained that "*Shefali tried to go out of the house wearing some little thing like this*" (Ali, 2003: 231). In like manner, Shahana refuses to wear traditional Bangladeshi clothes and insists on wearing jeans and skirts like her British friends at school. Chanu gets often angry with her because of her inappropriate clothes and warns her "*to put on some decent clothes*" (Ali,

2003: 252); however, Shahana seizes every chance like her mother's nervous breakdown and her father's consequent distraction as an opportunity to wear "her tight jeans" (Ali, 2003: 327). When Chanu warns her about rubbish on TV, she dares to talk back to her father: "How do you know it is rubbish if you even don't know what it is?" (Ali, 2003: 319). Ali portrays Shahana as a disobedient, confrontational and westernized girl who refuses to do anything with her parents' culture, habits, values, likes and customs. Shahana is one of the second-generation immigrants who are "stranded between two cultures, in conflict with their parents, facing difficulty of negotiating two incommensurable value systems. The problem was that they might not integrate smoothly into British society; the authoritarian and old-fashioned cultures of their parents deemed to be holding them back" (Parker, 1995: 12). She bluntly expresses her dislike of Bangladeshi music during the preparations for the mela. Chanu plays music by famous Bangladeshi singers but "*Shahana put her fingers in her ears and screwed up her face*" (Ali, 2003: 359). She refuses everything she associates with Bangladeshi people and culture: Shahana did not want to listen to Bengali classical music. Her written Bengali is shocking. She wanted to wear jeans. She hated her kameez and spoiled her entire wardrobe by pouring paint on them. If she could choose between baked beans and dal it was no contest. When Bangladesh was mentioned she pulled a face." *She did not know and would not learn that Tagore was not more than poet and Nobel laureate, and no less than the true father of her nation. Shahana did not care*". (Ali, 2003:180) Chanu fervently tries to teach his daughters about Islam, Bangladeshi history and Bangladeshi culture; however, Shahana evidently considers her culture and traditions to be inferior and despicable. Her self-consciousness and self-despise become tangible during their first and only excursion in the bus as she becomes worried her parents will "*stink the bus*" (Ali, 2003: 290), which shows that she has come to believe the stereotype that sub-continentals stink. Her discontent with her family and the culture they are representing turns into frustration and overt disobedience with Chanu's decision to return to Bangladesh for good. She does not want to go to Bangladesh at all and she regards her father's decision as "kidnap" (Ali, 2003: 374) because for her Bangladesh is a foreign country which she identifies with backwardness, oppression and degradation. For Shahana, Bangladesh is a country where people use twigs instead of toothbrush and water instead of toilet paper and where husbands beat their wives. She has a such pessimistic view of the country that she is assured that Bibi would be made to marry in Bangladesh and that her husband would keep her "locked up in a smelly room and make [her] weave carpets all day long" (Ali, 2003: 395). In addition to her tantrums, hysteria fits and physical attacks to her sister, Bibi, and her mother, she resorts to more drastic measures. First she tries to cajole her father with various forms of self-mutilation as she wants to have her lip pierced and a tattoo which she believes would provide an immunity as her father would not take her with those shameful marks. However, this attempt does not work and "the children were distorted with anxiety" (Ali, 2003: 438). She takes another step and tries to break his leg to prevent or at least to delay their return as "Shahana had - 564 - stamped on her foot ... 'I hope it's broken,' said Shahana. She cracked her thumb joint" (Ali, 2003: 438). She declares her ultimatum by biting her father's hand to her parents that she would run away rather than go to Bangladesh. Desperately

realizing that she will not be able to make her father change his mind, she runs away from home with another girl of her age to Paignton where “there were no Bangladeshis and they could do as they pleased” (Ali, 2003: 466). It is noteworthy that Nishi with whom Shahana escapes does it so because Nishi does not want to marry like her elder sister who was made to marry at 16. Indeed Shahana expressed her plight very clearly when she said “I didn’t ask to be born here” (Ali, 2003: 181). From the moment she was born she was exposed to the irrefutable impact of the British culture and gradually and inevitably she is becoming anglicized. The hegemonic British culture minimizes the effect of the Bangladeshi culture which Chanu has desperately been trying to imbue. Therefore Shahana can not conform to the standards her father and the greater Bangladeshi community expect her to have. Her rebellion is consequential to her life style which exposes her to the hegemonic impact of the British society and culture. As a typical second-generation teenager who was born and raised in Britain, she is totally receptive and responsive to the cultural impositions of the British culture. If it were not for her parents, her integration into the British culture would be smoother and quicker. Despite all the setbacks, Shahana, Shefali, Nishi and Azad daughter veer towards inevitable integration into the dominant culture.

### **3. Creating a New Identity**

Brick lane portrays the struggle of different characters who are torn between their Bangladeshi roots and the new British society in which they couldn’t completely fit. This cultural dilemma tears apart the community and the one family characters feel obliged to take different directions. Nazneen, the female protagonist of the story gets fed up of trying to carry a heavy past of childhood which always followed by the remains of her Bangladeshi culture that forces her to obey her husband blindly and live like a shadow. Nazneen fails to maintain balance and realizes at a very late time that she should have chosen a different path . So , for the first time in her life she stands in her husband’s face and refuses to go back home to Bangladesh . Her decision to stay in the UK is mainly encouraged and motivated by her desire to stay with her daughter. Nazneen doesn’t want to compromise anything to her daughters. Therefore she embraces the change and feels free to make her own choice for the first time in her life.

Henceforward Nazneen creates a new identity that is half Bangladeshi half British . An Identity of a woman who keeps her Bangladeshi style of life and yet goes to work , makes her own decision and above all adapts to the changes of life.

## General Conclusion

So, we finally arrive at the conclusion that Monica Ali has amazingly depicted the lives of various characters who are just torn between two worlds: between their own origin and the acclimatization into new cultural environment. two generations as portrayed by Ali, are like what Rudyard Kipling calls “East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet”. Ali seems to successfully prove the thesis that the clashing Ideologies and conflicting generations will always remain like the horizon, where the earth (conflicting generations) and the sky (clashing gender ideologies) shall never unite and coexist and therefore the writer proves that this clash of culture will only lead to the creation of a new identity. The novel also sheds light on the different influence of cultural clash on both genders. While all the male characters fail in establishing their cultural and social identities and eventually give up admitting defeat, the female characters come off in flying colours and succeed to build a new identity out of the broken pieces of both identities. Unquestionably, both Brick Lane and Nazneen Ahmed will surely prove to be ‘sirens-of-awareness’ for all the 21st century diasporic immigrants struggling to establish their identities and authentic selfhood amidst a testing social milieu of clashing ideologies and Inter-generational conflicts.



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