

## Gender and Racial Subalternity in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*

*Monica Ali's Brick Lane raises the issue of the gender and racial subalternity. Her novel is significant because of its ambivalent representation of Bengali women. Drawing from the gender and racial subaltern studies, the thesis analyses the representations of the women in the novel, as they are shaped by various cultural signifiers. Similarly, the thesis critiques and notes the novel's narrative practices with the particular attention paid to the gender and racial subalternity discourses. The thesis relies on Spivak's concept of subaltern and Ranjit Guha's discourse of racial subalternity and uses their insights to reflect the case of Muslim women's plight and their rebellious movement to the patriarchal notion. Nazneen, in the novel, resists traditional patriarchal Muslim culture and divorces with her husband who usually suppresses her. She more significantly gets a sense of inner freedom beyond the culture and other various religious practices in her life. As a rebellious protagonist, she struggles for the quest of inner freedom to transform herself from traditional subaltern identities to new one.*

Key Words: Gender and Racial Subalternity, Discourse, Representation, Transformation, Cultural Signifiers

Monika Ali, one of the eminent novelists of English Literature, raises the issues of Muslim women in terms of gender subaltern issue in her novel *Brick lane*. Main character and protagonist of the novel Nazneen lives with double suppression. In her family, she is suppressed by male family members which is recognized by the legacy of male dominated patriarchal culture. Outside the family, she is oppressed by elite culture and identities as subaltern character. She lives with subaltern identities accepting the oppression of gender and culture. The main concern of this study is to

analyze the novel from the perspective of subaltern studies in relation with gender. The study focuses on the situation of Nazeen, the main character and protagonist of the novel who resists patriarchal domination and searches her identities in life. Except her other fameless characters like her sister Hasina and daughter Sahana also resist patriarchal domination and struggle for the transformation of traditional subaltern identities to new one.

The word 'subaltern' refers to the people who are living with lower or marginalized identities. In patriarchal society, women are living with inferior to men; so they are living with subaltern identities. She is equally suppressed by Muslim patriarchal culture and elite western English culture; however, she struggles in life for the hope of transformation from traditional identities. She struggles and resists patriarchy and elite western superior culture through using her sexuality. She is neglected by elite culture and also undermined as low-level female character of the advance society. Her position is similar to the situation of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, one of the prominent literary critics on subaltern studies, who mentioned as subaltern in her stories. She raises the issue of gender subaltern at the first time by projecting the situation of women living in post-colonial society. Spivak has tried to swerve the direction of Subaltern Studies towards feminist issues through her influential write-ups. Spivak can be said to be the first post-colonial theorists with pioneering a feminist agenda in detail. As far as the women of the colonized space are concerned, they are doubly subalternized, according to Spivak. On the one hand, the women, like their male counterparts, are suppressed as colonized subjects, on the other hand, their own male counterparts dominate them. However, it falls short, in its tendency to draw the subaltern as exclusively male. Spivak analyses the problems of the category of the subaltern by examining the position of gendered subjects. In other

words, colonialism appears to be more hazardous to females than to males of the colonized spaces. The subaltern woman is effaced in the text. In Spivak's opinion, the identity of woman is erased in the very process of rewriting subaltern subjectivity:

It is rather, that both as object of colonialist historiography and as the subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keep the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, subaltern as female is even deeply in shadow. (82-83)

Definitely, Spivak aspires to restore the significance of the woman in the context of subaltern studies. It is very conspicuous that the subaltern people took part in the anti-imperialist insurgencies as the members of indigenous elite class and bourgeois nationalists did. Their contribution, however, was simply overlooked by the colonialist and bourgeois nationalist historiographer. The position of subaltern woman can contribute a lot to bring this bitter fact distorted by elite historiographies.

The characters and themes of the novel are based under the shadow of subaltern identity, which Monica Ali was keen to explore. The author's background has affected how her ideas are shaped in this novel. Because Ali is a new author, not much has been written about her biography. The novel portrays the story of Nazneen who comes to England from Bangladesh at the age of eighteen with her husband Chanu, who is both pompous and ineffectual. Chanu is much older than Nazneen as well as being physically repulsive becomes bitter and irritable. Despite his superior education, he is not appreciated by his white colleagues at the council and is shocked. Unlike Chanu, when Nazneen arrives in London she can speak only two words in English. She finds herself in the role of dutiful wife and mother, however, her situation is not so good her family as well as society. Not only that she always realizes

an outsider, a migrant in a foreign land, but her Bangladeshi roots keep her in a submissive role in the family.

Nazneen lives into the situation of transformation and tradition. on the one hand, she lives with her husband as submissive wife and in the other hand she resists such tradition and attempt to transform from her situation. She searches her own female identities and establishes love relationship with Karim. Nazneen gradually gains self-confidence and learns the art of survival. As a result, when her husband plans to return , she determines to stay in the country of her adaptation. The plot of the novel presents the innermost vision of an Islamic woman trapped between two positions of life, one is gender and another is culture. It seems very oppressive and restrictive where modes of socialization and cultural practices are highly based on fate whereas the latter seems to be very open, liberal, flexible as well as prestigious. Through Nazneen, Ali exposes a hidden world, and often a detailed and fascinating glimpse of dialogue and negotiation between Islamic as well as English culture. Social-political culture and contemporary contextual factors expose subaltern identities of characters who live into the dilemma of tradition and transformation.

Spivak is an influential critic of postcolonial studies who suggests a feminist vision and highlights the ways in which factors such as gender and class complicate our understanding of colonial and postcolonial situations. In her influential essay entitled "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), Spivak challenges postcolonial theory to address the silencing of women and other subaltern subjects not only by and in colonial discourses but also in postcolonial responses to those discourses. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak claims that "if, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow"(23). In *Brick Lane* issue of subaltern appears with the connection

of gender issue. The novel projects the socio economic and cultural scenario of Muslim migrated family and the position of women in that family. Ali projects the characters as revolutionary one because female characters attempt to transform from their traditional identities and traditional role. In their struggle, they have faced the problems like a subaltern hero faces in postcolonial world. In post-colonial world, a subaltern hero struggles in his/ her life for his/ her cultural identities.

Nazneen though is an Islamic Bangali woman by birth but in the course of time, she disregards her orthodox tradition and identity and tries to share the English culture. Similarly, she exchanges her Bangladeshi village home for a block flats in London, east England. Likewise, she tries to learn some English language to do her duty to her husband and to create her own identity. She also faces a lot of obstacles and hindrances to adjust there without the ability to speak English properly. Thus, she finds advanced life in multicultural society. She realizes new culture is quite different from her indigenous culture. Hence, she talks about essential of language and other ways of English life style for the success of every migrant in England. Thus, she understands how cultural ethos ties one's desire to create identity. Since she lives in subaltern identities, however, follows the rule and norms of her society; she cannot oppose fatalism because her Bengali society has been trained to live that way.

Shortly after the publication of the novel, various critics and writers have commented on the novel. In this regard, Eillen Reinbeck asserts, "Nazneen acts as a traditional, dutiful, and useful wife. After accepting whatever fate deals with her, however, she casts a critical eye at the actions of her friends, her sister and her mother"(42). Nazneen represents as dutiful and respectable wife and she seems to be very sincere yet she is able to take right decision at right time. To know more about Ali's childhood background, we may refer what the Telegraph website adds:

Not only was money scarce but Ali's upbringing seems to have been marked by a series of family skirmishes, rooted in cultural allegiance and dislocation. Racism was a fact of life in 1970s in a northern mill town- Ali would walk home past National Front signs- but to have her grandparents talking about 'us' and 'them' was particularly painful. (34)

The protagonist of the novel lives in invisible position, which is fluctuating and has been presented through Nazneen's contingency situations and discursive representations. The formation of the identity of the protagonist Nazneen cannot become complete because of socio-political cultural issues that are attracted to her personality. Nazneen's owning and disowning of subaltern identity as well as her way of living and her struggle in England for survival make her quite rebellious. Nazneen has arrived in the new world in a state of psychological revolution which causes her to pursue emancipation from the oppressive world of males especially from the companionship of Chanu, and the sense of psychological and religious exploitation. She faces many problems both at home and abroad. Nazneen is not directly/ deliberately committed to any sort of pursuit for emancipation but the gradual advancement for her personality creates a situation that she gets prepared to release her from the emotional and cultural male-made codes. Therefore, in course of time, Nazneen frequently expresses her attitude of reminiscent towards cultural codes in general and towards Chanu in particular. The debut of a talented new literary voice for twenty-first century Britain Abu-Jabber asserts commenting on the text, *Brick Lane*:

*Brick Lane* fulfills that early promise and establishes Ali as a writer of real literary depth and dimension. There is elegance and a steadfast, patient, careful construction of observed detail to this prose, a meticulous layering of character

and social observation that endows *Brick Lane* with a sophistication and maturity that might surprise readers who've come to expect flash and dash in modern fiction. (15)

The novel's only shortcoming, some reviewers feel, is delivering a too-neat wrap-up of the strand of plot between Nazneen, Chanu, and Karim. Exasperatingly, Ali's complex story ends with a discordant postscript of mushy self-fulfillment. Other assessments find comic warmth in Ali's characterization of Chanu. Writing in the *Observer*, Lane terms him "one of the novel's foremost miracles: twice her age, with a face like a frog ... and the boundless doomed optimism of the self-improvement junkie, he is both exasperating and, to the reader at least, enormously loveable" (4). Benedicte Brown comments the portrayal of the husband, calling him a wonderfully drawn character: "pompous and an arch self-deceiver, and yet endearing, with his passion for learning and his endlessly disappointed hopes for self-advancement" (8). He seems to have looked at the linguistic aspect of the text. Islamic culture is itself a contentious term. Muslims live in many different countries and communities, and it can be difficult to isolate points of cultural unity among Muslims, besides their adherence to the religion of Islam that Mohammad states, "Anthropologists and historians nevertheless study Islam as an aspect of, and influence on, culture in the regions where the religion is predominant" (18). Life of Muslim people is highly dominated with Islamic culture and religion as if they live in western society. Characters of the novel also face the same problems in their life.

The noted historian of Islam, Marshall Hodgson notes "the above difficulty of religious versus secular, academic usage of the words Islamic and Muslim in his three-volume work" (4). He proposes to resolve it; by only using these terms for purely religious phenomena, and invented the term Islamicate to denote all cultural

aspects of historically Muslim peoples. However, poor treatment in Islamic cultures can be attributed to radical regional customs, which are easily debunked by the words of the Quran. Simone de Beauvoir asserts in her *The Second Sex* (1949):

Man enjoys the great advantage of having a god endorse the code he writes; and since man exercises a sovereign authority, over women it is especially fortunate that this authority has been vested in him by the Supreme Being. For the Jews, Mohammedans and Christians among others, man is master by divine right; the fear of God will therefore repress any impulse towards revolt in the downtrodden female. (23)

Spivak posits women in the role of the subaltern questioning the male constructed voice of women within the patriarchal society. The novel revolves around frequently tragic comic and permanently resigned-to-her-fate Nazneen, born and apparent stillbirth in a village in Bangladesh, and is married to Chanu, with whom she moves to London. Taught from the day of her birth that fighting against one's fate can weaken the blood, she accepts the miserably lonely existence fate bestowed on her in a London council flat. Though there are others from Bangladeshi living there, Chanu believes that other immigrants to be uneducated, illiterate, and uncultured, and he discourages any reaching out Nazneen might do to these people who are below them.

With surety and meekness, Ali has drawn readers into Nazneen's world, a world of regular prayer, regular housework, regular remembrance of Karim and frequent visit with Razia. As the author seems to have focused on the minute details in Nazneen's everyday life, the readers observe equally minute changes taking place in the relationship of Nazneen and Chanu as it waxes and wanes in response to life's daily challenges. Nazneen lives in an isolated and lonely world which is unaffected by the events outside of the Tower Hamlets in East London. She resides and spends



her days alone in a small rented flat. It can be argued that her perceptions to language allow her to widen her perspective in the quest of freedom. The lack of language can have several negative effects on how the user perceives the world. Arguably, Nazneen's language abilities do affect her capability to communicate outside of her own ethnic community. She is confronted with her own inner-most thoughts on the subject of language. "Nazneen could say two things in English: sorry and thank you. She could spend another day alone. It was only another day" (19). This quotation strengthens the argument that language is considered to be a basic tool for the successful assimilation and integration of immigrants in a new society.

Nazneen is kept in a restricted environment where she is bound to obey her male supervisor by negating herself. She is shown as a dumb lady who is forced to do what her society and her husband allow her to do and she is helpless to utter a single word against it. She is forced to get what is made available to her within four walls constructed by her husband. "He does not allow his wife to go alone along the streets" (173). "Why should you go out? Said Chanu. If you go out ten people will say "I saw her walking on the street"... Besides, I get everything for you that you need from the shops. Anything you want, you only have to ask". (45) In this passage, it is seen that how women are caught in the male-constructed cobweb of social traditions. This stereotypical attitude towards women is a universal phenomenon. Hasina's life in Dhaka on another side is far more dramatic. Both Nazneen and Hasina accept subsequent beatings as normal, and neither questions the circumstances surrounding the death of their mother when they were younger.

Women are bound to live under surveillance in the homes. This is not the matter of gender discrimination but it is the concern of individual conduct and is built on different social institutions. They are treated as non-entities without any individual

wish. This unequal treatment of women leads to a turmoil and rebelliousness in women. This unequal treatment of women leads to a turmoil and rebelliousness in women. Ali asserts in the novel:

We have love. Love is happiness. Sometimes I feel to run and jump like goat. This is how we do on way to school. But not much room for running here and I sixteen year old and married woman. Everything is good between us now. I do not let my tongue make trouble for it as my husband say. Just because man is kind to wife it do not mean she can say what is like. If women understand this, no one will beat. (25)

This passage is a piece of correspondence between Nazneen and her sister Hasina regarding the view of a happy marriage which is in reality based on unconditional compliance with male-constructed vision. Like her sister, Hasina is also kept under male hegemony. She is brought up with the notion to keep her family happy. She is told that a female should be a symbol of endurance. Through her letter, she narrates to Nazneen that she is happy because now she has realized that family's happiness is dependent on a woman. She further says that her husband advised her to keep silence against all his complaints in order to avoid quarrel.

Nazneen's place in the multicultural society that is heavily dominated and influenced by the Islamic way of life cannot be much different from Hasina. Nazneen's opinions are no more valued and prioritized by Chanu since he does not consider her capable of making serious decisions. The very psychological exploitation gradually and slowly takes an immense form of reaction. And when the reaction from Nazneen begins coming, the constant waves of revolution do not seem to take any break.

While telling her life's story to her daughters, Nazneen expresses similar mood of endurance and resignation. She says to her daughters that she does not have any doubts about her life. But in reality, her biggest complaint is her subaltern identity. She has a true faith in God. She believes that God is the only one who knows about her life. She has come to believe that if male dominated world cannot be changed, it must be endured. She has actually abandoned her claim for equality with men but here she is expressing her willingness for a space for self-existence under male domination. "I have no complaints or regrets to tell you, said Nazneen. I will tell everything to God. What could not be changed must be borne and since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne. This principle ruled her life.(15-16). Nazneen resolves the conflict by rejecting the belief that lives of women are fated and she decides to live independent of men and male-constructed beliefs and assumptions about women. Finally, she decides neither to go back to Bangladesh with her husband nor to marry Karim. Hence, this is the process of quest for inner freedom and self-actualization through which Nazneen has gone through after critical encounters with her husband in their life.

The novel projects female characters do seem to have been in search for liberty. Hasina, the sister of Nazneen, has sought for freedom by denying the arranged marriage and eloping with a man she was in love with. Similarly the daughters of Nazneen and Chanu: Shahana and Bibi do seek for liberty in order to put on English dresses that Chanu entirely opposes against. They do not take any interest in reciting poems by Tagore as well. Moreover, they do not get ready to go to Bangladesh, as they are preoccupied with the fact that they will have to put on Islamic female dresses. They are sure that they will not enjoy the Bangladeshi culture.

The world of Nazneen's romantic love affair with Karim is different from the world prescribed in the Islamic culture. She enjoys a beautiful life full of feelings and romance that cannot be digested in the orthodox Islamic culture. Nazneen has thus sexually got emancipated by searching subaltern identities. Her liberation from the Islamic way of life is indeed a great slap on the face of the imams themselves who have drawn a biased and partial map as the domain of women.

Issue of subaltern reflects through characterization of female characters who struggles in life for their self-recognition and emancipation. Nazneen struggles in her life to liberate from traditional situation and ultimately she transforms from her previous situation and divorce with Chanu. Her journey of life is similar to the journey of subaltern hero who struggles in life for self-recognition and self-dignity.

Nazneen feels alienated in England like a caged bird of gender within her own flats. She is not allowed by Chanu to go out and therefore she suffers from isolation, alienation and monotony due to repetitive household chores. Whenever she throws up the idea of taking up an employment, she is thwarted by the male chauvinist, who forwards an absurd justification for denial: "Why should you go out? said Chanu. If you go out, ten people will say, I saw her walking on the street. And I will look like a fool" ( 30). She remains confined to the domestic environment. About the subaltern, Ranjit Guha writes "Subaltern" is " a name for the general attribute of subordinate, whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any way" (27). He further adds, "The aim of subaltern studies is to promote the voice of margin" (427). Due to the hierarchy, women are suppressed and their voices are ignored, pains and sufferings are unheard. Guha realizes the male domination upon the women consequently forces the women to surrender for the social, cultural, economic and educational rights.

From the beginning of the novel, Nazneen is projected as subaltern character because she is suppressed by elite culture in London. She is migrated from Bangladesh, from Muslim community. Being a female character, she is also dominated by patriarchal male dominated Muslim culture. In her life she lives in double suppression. Nazneen lives as a wife and mother and has not, for many years, thought of herself as an individual except in stolen moments. Nazneen is treated in London as subaltern character because is from inferior culture. In the novel, all the characters are living in low social position; however, they try to assimilate with western culture. The situation of the characters is similar to the idea of Ranajit Guha that he mentioned in his essay "Dominance without Hegemony and Its Historiography." In his essay, he focuses on hegemony and exclusion. Bangladesh immigrants also live in low social status with accepting hegemony and hesitation. They love to assimilate but the process is not so easy. In the context of women, they are suppressed by culture and gender. In this context, Nazeen tries to resist such oppression by using her sexuality. In this regards, Guha says:

whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way . . . Subaltern Studies group sketched out, its wide ranging concern both with visible history, politics, economics and sociology of 'subalternity' and with the occluded attitude, ideologies and belief system-in short, the culture informing that condition. (vii)

As Ranajit Guha sees the contrasts politics of the people with elite politics, he privileges the former over the latter. He thinks that politics of the people "was an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite politics, nor did its existence depend on the latter" (4). Spivak is credited to have gendered subaltern studies with the feminist mode as can be seen in the same essay where she raised the feminist

issues. Slowly and gradually, subaltern studies was moving towards representation, critical theory, and cultural studies from subaltern politics. Spivak, in her essay, announces, "The Subaltern ... generally perceive their task as making a theory of consciousness or culture rather than specifically a theory of change" (330).

She was raised in a devout Muslim community in Bangladesh, has long been nurtured in the belief that fate is not to be questioned. When she finds herself married to Chanu, a roly poly blowhard more than twice her age, it becomes apparent that her parents have bitten off more fate than Nazneen can chew. Chanu whisks her away to London, where he already spent 16 years trying to break through the English caste-system. He, who puts great stock in his many degrees from a third-rate Bengali university, thinks of his wife as little more than a servant. Due to the force of transformation, she tries to live her subaltern identities and resists both patriarchy and elite culture. The following lines of the novel show subaltern identities of Nazneen as:

As Nazneen grew, she heard many times this story of How You Were Left to Your Fate. It was because of her mother's wise decision that Nazneen lived to become the wide-faced, watchful girl that she was. Fighting against one's it can be fatal. Not once did Nazneen question the logic of the story of How You Were Left To your Fate. Indeed she was grateful or mother's quiet courage, her tearful stoicism that was almost daily in evidence. (15)

Her subaltern identity plays a vital role in the process of psychological development. Nazneen was trained in such a way by her mother that she did not see any ground to voice against the determining power of fate. Nazneen's mother had a belief that nothing could be changed. That is why everything had to be borne. This principle has been ruling Nazneen's life since her childhood. She has got married to an educated man and is never beaten by him, is simply because of her fate. Furthermore, she

accepted the marriage proposal forwarded before her by her father replying that it was good that he had chosen her husband to whom she could be a good wife like Amma. This must have been because of her belief in fate. Nazeen, her sister, Hasina, who listened to no one, eloped to Khulna with the nephew of the saw-mill owner at the age of sixteen when her beauty was becoming almost unbearable town. Nazneen is too concerned to Hasina's elopement as it troubled her:

It worried her that Hasina kicked against fate. No good could come of it. Not a single person could say so. But then if you really looked into it, thought about it more deeply, could you be sure that Hasina was not simply following her fate? If fate cannot be changed, no matter how you struggle . . . , maybe she struggled against that, and that was what she could not alter. (22)

Nazneen wants to transform from her earlier subaltern identities and became very logical regarding to the matter of Hasina's elopement, when everything is determined by fate and non can struggle against it, Hasina eloped to a person she was in love with due to the fact that she must have been fated to do so. Such activities indicate the ongoing transformation that occurred in Nazeen's family. Nazneen speaks in the favor of Hasina as well as adds the strength to fate itself. In course of Nazneen's life in the companionship of Chanu, she finds him as a man who is highly inclined to fate. She further adds: "He cannot accept one single thing in his life but this: that my sister should be left to her fate. Everything else may be altered, but not that" (70). It shows the resisting activities of the women because they want to change their traditional subaltern identities through transformation. Generally female characters use marriage and elopement as main tools to resist patriarchal domination.

Nazneen's struggles reflect the situation of subaltern women how she is suppressed by elite culture and dominated by patriarchy. She lives in traditional life in

London; however, she attempts for transformation and resists the male dominated elite culture. Culturally she has been made to succumb to the power of the invisible God. So, she often appreciates the God who in her view determines the fate of every individual, “She put her hand on Raqib’s forehead. Just for the feel of him. To give him strength. Although, of course, only God gave strength. Whatever she did, only God decided. God knows everything. He knows the number of hairs on your head. Don’t forget” (135). Nazneen going to back to the past days remembers that her mother used to deal with her situation. The God is all in all since. He is the source of strength, energy, intellect, knowledge, good life, and even capacity to decide something. The God has the healing power. Nothing can cure except the God’s will and longing for mercy to the human beings. She resists such traditional concept and says:

Nazneen turned and looked at her and Amma smiled, showing her curved yellow teeth. God test us’, she said. Don’t you know this life is a test? Some He tests with riches and good fortune. Many men have failed such a test. And they will be judge. Others he tests with illness or poverty, or with jinn who come in shape of men or of husband. She took hold of the hem of Nazneen’s nightdress and began to tug at it. Come down here to me and I will tell you how to pass the test. (322)

Subaltern identities reflects through culture based fatalistic life enforces Nazneen to walk in the path drawn by the imam in the habit in spite of the fact that she is in the cultured society where everything seems to be possible through human incessant efforts. Nazneen is herself immigrant from Bangladesh. The way people behave in the English culture is quite different from the indigenous Bangladeshis in their homeland. Nazneen is not an exception that she as immigrant faces a number of obstacles and hindrances to adjust her in the new world due to being non- white and not having



capacity to speak English sufficiently. Rather there have been huge numbers of immigrants who have undergone many ups and down in England in course of their stay and professions.

As subaltern character, Chanu and his wife Nazneen have to perform their job and the very person cannot be good at dealing with. Chanu, a boastful person expresses his disgusting attitude towards the working migrants and tries to prove him superior to other migrants before Nazneen. He is a misfit who seems to have to mix up neither with the whites nor to the Bangladeshi migrants. He only dreams of being promoted, "Chanu filed the silence with his laugh. My wife is just settling in here. He coughed shuffled in his chair. The thing is, with the promotion coming up, things are beginning to go well for me now. If I just get the promotion confirmed then many things are possible" (32).

In fact as being subaltern character, they live full of hope in the initial phase of their transplantation. They see possibilities a lot. Chanu, a Bangladeshi migrant thinks of getting promoted so soon that many things can get possible. Although his wife, Nazneen has been village girl, she is slowly setting in the new commercial world where reason rules over emotion. Nevertheless, before Chanu's arrival in England, he had uncountable number of ambitions and dreams for he has got certificates. As he gets to the intended place, England he finds things entirely different from his preconception. No doubt, Chanu is educated, university scholar and highly optimistic. He is a migrant from the east as well which stops him from being successful. For the white people from the east as subaltern whether they are university graduates or peasants:

When I came, I saw a young man. I had ambition. Big dreams. When I got the earphone I had my degree certificate in my suitcase and a few pounds in my

pocket. I thought there would be a red carpet laid out for me. I was going to join the Civil service and become private secretary to the prime minister. As he told his story. ... These people here didn't know the difference between me . . . and the peasants who jumped of the boat possessing only the lice on their heads. (34)

As a matter of fact, the family members and other related people to expect money and other sorts of co-operation from those who as work as subaltern and work in the developed countries like England. How complicated and challenging life migrants are living in the foreign land can hardly be thought by the relatives since they have never undergone such diaspora experience. Through the view point of Chanu, the difficulties people face in London can be seen and realized. Nazneen is in transformation stage for the new world, she is instructed how the Bangladeshi do live in tower hamlets. Chanu explains:

Three points five people to one room. That is a council statistics, Chanu told Nazneen. All crammed together. They can't stop having children, or they bring over all their relatives and pack them in the like fish in a tin. It's a Tower hamlets office statistic: three point five Bangladeshis to one room. (49)

Two things simultaneously get clear through Chanu's detail about the Bangladeshis, one he is educated, learned, conscious, civilized superior to others and another they do strictly follow the Islamic way of life that is to say the family planning is forbidden. They go on having children. Hereby obviously, be spoken that the illiterate are emotional enough to welcome their relatives. They are less calculative than the educated like Chanu. In fact, Chanu's assertions are the medium to know his psyche and the life of degree holder in the foreign lap. Chanu is in dilemma and not sure whether he gets promoted or not. Subaltern characters live in hope to be assimilated

with elite western cultural identities . Like that, Chanu thinks he would be promoted sooner if he were a white. He suspects the whites and sees the racial discrimination swarming through England, “All the time they are polite. They smile. They say ‘please’ this and ‘thank you’ that. Make no mistake about it, they shake your with the right and with the left they stab you in the back” (72).

Frankly speaking, Ali’s *Brick Lane* is a mirror in which the hardcore prevailing reality in the text regarding suffering, misery struggle, domination, suppression of the Bangladeshi. No doubt, Ali has maintained her standpoint by balancing the drawback in the Bangladeshi Muslims and predicaments they have been facing since their arrival in England. The culturally set-up mind does hardly permit one to welcome another culture entirely different from her or his own. Acculturation demands flexibility, sense of humanity, easy-going nation and inclination towards psychological mutability. Chanu seems to have been a racist himself. He cannot stand the English society as he sees many discrimination factors extending over there. As the matter of fact, his bringing-up in the strict Islamic culture has overpowered him in such way that he can’t go beyond the cultural boundary:

I don’t need very much. Just enough for the Dhaka house and some left over for Ruku’s education I don’t want him to rot here with all the skinheads and drunks. I don’t want him to grow up in racist society. I don’t want him to talk back to his mother. I want him to respect his father. (111)

In order to reflect on the clash of culture existing in England, writer projects the subaltern situation of Chanu as her mouthpiece. Chanu talks about a deeper tragedy behind the success of every immigrant. He further explains the very tragedy:

I am talking about the clash between western values and own. I’m talking about the struggle to assimilate and the need to preserves one’s identity and

heritage. I am talking about the children who don't know what their identity is. I am talking about the feeling of alienation engendered by a society where racism is prevalent. I'm about the terrific struggle to preserve one's sanity while striving to achieve the best for one's family. I'm talking. (113)

Subaltern identities obviously emerged out of the multicultural situation, is blurred and hybridized. The older culture becomes intolerant to the children born in the new culture. Right from the birth, they have certainly adopted the ways of life from their surroundings. No doubt parent make ceaseless effort to preserve their identity and heritage due to which an immense rift gets created between the old generation and the newer one. Nazneen advocates against the loss of heritage and identity on the part of the new generation. She wants them to know their real identity and become serious about that. Subaltern people feel alienated in the world of commerce, business and industry and precisely of money. Further, the more the world of reason and mathematics is too challenging to the immigrants. They are bound to the struggle a lot since their fundamental objective to have come to the foreign land is only to earn money. There are many chances of being failure as there are class conflict, culture conflict and even racial clash. Indeed humanity is withering in such a place where the mind rules over the heart.

Nazneen lives in double suppression because she is suppressed by gender and culture. As the matter of fact, Nazneen doesn't know English more than two phrases, "sorry and thank you". She has merely been trained to believe in fate and its determining power to daily happenings. She is a woman who is considered to have locked the decisive power. Her state is indeed fragile to develop in the new world. Truly speaking language creates power. Nazneen grown-up in the orthodox Islamic culture finds England puzzling and odd. However, her immense longing for education

glorifies her and gradually energizes her to seek for liberation from divergent barriers. Chanu does not seem to have freed Nazneen in order to quench her thirst of education, "I would like learn to some English, said Nazneen. Chanu puffed his cheeks and spat the air out in a full. It will come. Don't worry about it. Where's the need anyway? He looked at his book and Nazneen watch the screen (37). Nazneen, a village woman has not got university degree like Chanu. What is needed when can easily be realized by her. Indeed every individual is always in the process of becoming. Nazneen is the very process as well. The desire for learning English is self-evident that she want to make her adjustable in the English culture frankly speaking she dares cope with the multicultural society the despite the fact that she has the scarcity of many things such as English language, self-earning academic certificate and freedom. She is very inquisitive and interested. Moreover, she brings about the intimate friend Razia who is going to college to learn English. But Chanu makes efforts to deprive of her to the going college:

Razia is going to college to study English. Ah, good'. Perhaps I could go with her, Well perhaps he didn't look up from his book. You know, I should be reading about politics. To the college. With Razia' What for? For the English lessons' You are going to be a mother. (76-77)

Nazneen is emotionally controlled her and resists patriarchy by using silence. her situation is similar to the situation of other non-western people who lose cultural identities in their life. Subaltern consciousness is another hotly debated issue about Subaltern Studies. Spivak, in her seminal essay "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" gives a deconstructing reading to the activities of subaltern studies Group. She tries to assess their work in her writing. Like many other critics, she, too, finds problem with their compartmentalized views of consciousness. While assessing

their work, she comes to realize that it somehow resembles deconstruction that puts the binary oppositions like elite/subaltern under erasure. Their project, in her view, is rather a positivist one as it aspires to investigate, discover and establish a subaltern or peasant consciousness.

He is pompous, oppressive and vainglorious who divests Nazneen of her fundamental rights. Right to educate to one is the unalienable virtue. Perhaps Chanu represents the male dominated society. Though he does not seem to have been dominating Nazneen, he is indeed a great exploiter. He frequently indicates university certificates and directs her to gain knowledge a lot from novels which are about society, politics, land, reform, and social division. In spite of the fact that Nazneen makes ceaseless attempts to go to the college, he doesn't sympathize with her yearning for English. She tenderly expresses her wants before him but here is no favorable response. As a matter of fact Chanu is a great criminal in the sense that he has killed someone but on the basis of his treacherous nature, behavior, and treatment with an innocent, lovely, meek and optimistic wife, Nazneen. He deals with her in such a way that he is the ruler and she is the ruled; he is the king and she is the subject; he is superior and she is inferior; he is the master and she is the slave and so on. The dichotomy has automatically emerged in the family of Nazneen and Chanu. She is tolerant, patient, sanguine and cheerful enough despite his selfish, tyrannical and ruthless demeanors.

The subaltern historiography approach spearheaded by Guha and he challenges and rewrites the imperialist and nationalist constructions of the colonial period in Indian history. In addition, Subaltern Studies has become the global concern. "It has gone" Dipesh Chakrabarty, one of the members of Subaltern Studies Group says, "beyond India or South Asia as an area of academic specialization" (9). The reason

behind its global presence is that, "Subaltern Studies has participated in contemporary critiques of history and nationalism, and of orientalism and Eurocentrism in the construction of social science knowledge" (9). Moreover, Subalternist analysis, as Gyan Prakash remarks, "has become a recognizable mode of critical anthropology" (1476). Jon Beasley Murray and Alberto Moreiras in their essay "Subalternity and Affect" add that, "Subalternity is a situation of relative inferiority with social order, structured according to the principle of hegemony which defines and calibrates that relation of inferiority" (1). So, Subaltern Studies deals with inferiority and domination structure of every global society.

Chanu has not been villainous only to Nazneen but to Bibi and Shahana as well especially regarding their education. He forces Nazneen not to send them to English school in England. In order to persuade Nazneen he glorifies the Quran, Hindu philosophy, Buddhist thought and Christian parables. He is very much proud of the lingering culture and tries to impose his views over children. Nazneen does not react. Rather she bears insistent manners of Chanu. Shahana and Bibi are also female victims in the family who are trying to be deprived of having English education:

Shahana and Bibi were supposed to go after ordinary school had finished for the day but Chanu forbade it. He raged. Do they call it education? Rocking around like little parrots on a perch, reciting words they do not understand. He would teach them. The Quran but also Hindu philosophy, Buddhist thought, Christian parables. Don't forget, he told Nazneen, Bengal was Hindu long before it was Muslim and before that Buddhist, and that was after the first Hindu period. We are only Muslim because of the Moguls. Do not forget.

(197)

Nazneen is very boastful of her heritage and nationality but that could not outcome in her life because of her subaltern identities. In fact, he has nothing but shows as though he has got everything and is very worthy in lineage. As a matter of fact, no individual desires a caged life what culture or religion one belongs to. Muslim women are trained to put on burkhas and girls have been grown in hijab. However, as they get conscious, they start raising voice for liberation from the orthodox and inhuman practice: “The girls in hijab had grown more relaxed. They no longer whispered but talked to each other without raising their hands. And they shouted out suggestions freely. Women’s rights, called one: “sex education for girls, called the other” (240).

Though the female characters follow the Islamic way of life, they use their reasoning faculty and argue. In Karim’s view they are forbidden to argue and if they do, they are not good women. Hence we do see male chauvinism on the part of Karim as well. He presents two distinct choices before Nazneen:

There’s your westernized girl, wears what she likes, all the make-up  
 Going on short skirts and that soon as she’s out of her father’s sight. She’s into  
 going out, getting good jobs, having a laugh. Then there’s your religious girl,  
 wears the scarf or even the burkha. You’d think they know best because  
 they’ve been off to all these summer camps for Muslim sisters. (385)

As a matter of fact, Karim seems to be another male figure, which has tenderly entered the emotional world of Nazneen. No doubt, he has brought a good solace of life in the Nazneen’s world of romance and sexual intercourse. However, he does follow the way of the Islamic intolerance and dominated as controller. Nazneen is suppressed by him too. In course of time he seems to have taken women as the instrument simply because he compares the religious girl who wears the burkha with good wife material.



Hanufa another Muslim women also live in subaltern female identities who once attends a massage course with a purpose of curing her husband's a bad back. Despite she has done this act with a beneficial objective, she has been tried to be forbidden from doing so accusing her of conducting un-Islamic behavior:

Only recently, Hanufa has been frozen out when it was discovered she has been attending a massage course. It was un-Islamic behavior and apparently, the imam the Jamme Masjid had preached against that very thing. Hanufa protested that it was a woman-only course and that she was praising for the sake of her husband who suffered with a bad back. (391)

Hasina is already out of Islamic code of life. When she writes a compassionate letter to Nazneen, she expresses her innovative and revolutionary attitudes. She shows a contrast between her and Amma. In her view, Amma was passive and docile but she is the seeker of liberation from the oppressive religious and cultural boundary. She prefers the life of her own despite the fact that it is challenging and miserable. In the letter she writes:

Amma always we are women what can we do? If she here now I know what she say I know it too well. But I am not like her. Waiting around, Suffering around, she wrong. So many ways, At the end only she act. She who think all path is closed for her. She take the only one forbidden. (434)

Because of her subaltern situation, she behaves as inferior to men and can't anything against the culturally drawn path of life. Hereby Amma may stand for the traditional and superstitious women while Hasina for the new and revolutionary ones of the present and protests against male domination in the name of culture and religion.

Ali's first and foremost attempt seems to have been voiced against the false message prescribed in the hadith by the imam. When it is looked at from her

standpoint, it becomes pretty clear that the imam doesn't speak the word of God. There is an unbridgeable rift between the words of God and what the imam speaks. The one generation passes the false message to another. The children do not get a chance to question since they have already been trained not to rationalize especially in the matter of messages handed down by the imam and caliphs "When the imam speaks, it is not the word of god. Does he speak true? It is easier to believe than not believe. Just think about gossip. The things our mothers told us, that fill our bones like marrow. We learned them before we learned to question" (78). Thus Nazneen is evolving psychologically through rationalizing and suspicion on the word of the male imams. She might think why there have not been any female imams. Had there been female imams, women would not have been prohibited from using their reasoning faculty. Rather they would have been free to go out and experienced diversity of the materialistic world.

Nazneen has indeed spent her maximum time for others, however she live in subaltern identities. She has never been selfish and thought of her own individual identity. By nature she is virtuous, kind, merciful, sacrificing, innocent, emotional, co-operative, and passionate and a source of compassion. As the matter of fact she has been a product of the Islamic society in which the male is considered to be superior to the female. Women are mostly in the service of the male in the very culture. They rarely think of their own life. Nazneen proved an obedient daughter of her parents in the affair of marriage that she married to an old man without questioning has been serving her husband, Chanu starts rearing the son. Here compassionate inclination towards baby can be asserted:

For Nazneen, the baby's life was more real to her than her own. His life was full of needs: actual and urgent needs, which she would supply. What was her

own life, by contrast, but a series of gnawings, ill-defined and impossible to satisfy? (83)

Nazneen remains fully dedicated to the baby's life. Though male always claims that the children are theirs, they rarely seem to rear the child. A mother is mother because she is selfless. A mother is mother as she is indeed superior to the male. A mother is mother since she has the immense quality of mothering which men are deprived of. If men boast stating their fake ideological philosophy about the women and men relationship, it will be a great blunder on their part. Nazneen never boasts. She simply does whatever she sees essential and urgent. The life of a baby entirely depends on the good mothering.

Nazneen wants to liberate from her subaltern identities and struggles in life by resisting male dominated culture. In fact the creation of the human world is impossible without Nazneen like personalities. Nazneen proves a mother who thinks of children not about her happiness. Her happiness lies in the betterment and satisfaction of her children Bibi and Shahana. When the times come before her to decide whether to go to Dhaka or not, she starts thinking a lot about the adjustment and life of Bibi and Shahana since they have grown in the world of freedom and individuality. So they will feel complicated enough to adapt to the restrictive world which does not allow girls and women to put on shorts and jeans. Rather it compels them to live the caged life. Naturally Nazneen is very loving, empathetic, laborious, dutiful, active, responsible, considerate, and patient. She has been serving Chanu since her marriage not because of being his servant but out of love and the Islamic compassion.

The subaltern historiography is popularized by Ranjit Guha and he challenges the imperialist constructions of hegemony. While pointing out the vulnerable points of racial subalternity, he made it clear that it is a discourse to speak on behalf of

marginalized groups, and it has not paid much attention to women as it should have. According to Guha, "It concerns with the plight of the subalterns who are in suffocation and neglected in the mainstream of society" (12). The predicament of female subaltern is the victim of racism, particularly, of the primarily subjugating ideology of patriarchy. The dream of transcending the threatening powers of oppression rather remains elusive to the woman.

Male dominated Islamic culture behaves women as subaltern characters and creates hegemony about the role and relationship. The hadiths that have carried up biased rules and restrictions are rarely suspected by the Islamic women. When Nazneen sees Chanu never do *navaz* and pray, the old Nazneen gets sublimated and the new Nazneen is filled with white light, glory and reasoning power. Knowledge is the outcome of experiences. Nazneen has long experienced that Chanu has only been imposing the Islamic rules and obligation on Nazneen and girls but never applied in his daily activities. She has never seen him with the Holy Koran. Then suspicion arises in Chanu's behavior and his pretentious nature. Chanu has drawn a boundary for Nazneen. When she prefers to go out, Chanu interrupts her stating she should not go out simply because people will see her in the street and Chanu will be like a fool if seers say something about her. Thus he emotionally and culturally compels her to live a caged life like a domestic parrot. He does never intend her to live in the natural condition. But the poor Nazneen says nothing to such fake instructions:

She did not often go out. Why should you go out? Said Chanu, "If you go out, ten people will say", I saw her walking on the street. "And I will look like a fool. Personally, I don't mind if you go out but these people are so ignorant . . . it is lucky that you married an educated man. That was a stroke of luck. (45)

Chanu's severe oppression goes to be intolerable and indigestible. When atrocities reach the climax, Nazneen commences revolting against this barbarian and nefarious figure. Ali's woman character, Nazneen exposes the bitter truth that men are selfish social products who seek for opportunities to dominate females who are indeed sources of their origins. Similarly, she also respects her Bengali culture and roots. So, she could not fight against the fate even in England.

In the novel, Ali projects subaltern issues by projecting cross-cultural hegemonic relationship between Muslim and Europeans where people from different culture and race try to develop a bond of assimilation to western culture. At times, they preserve their heterogeneity but their sole concern is to develop a reciprocal relation in order to share a common cultural way of life. In this regard, Chanu's quotations seem very remarkable:

I am talking about the clash between western values and our own. I am talking about the struggle to assimilate and the need to preserve one's identity and heritage. I am talking about the children who do not know what their identity is. I am talking about the feeling of alienation engendered by society where social racism is prevalent. I am talking about the terrific struggle to preserve one's sanity while striving to achieve the best for one's family. I am talking about crap! Chanu looked at Dr Azad but his friend studies the backs of his hands. "Why do you make it so complicated?" said the doctor's wife.

Assimilation this, or alienation that! Let me tell you a few simple facts. Facts: we live in a western society. Fact our children will act more and more like westerners. (93)

Subaltern identities appear in the life of characters as hybridized and hegemonic form. The older culture becomes intolerable to the children born in a new culture. Right

from the very beginning of the life they have become adaptive and get assimilated with the ways of life from their surroundings. Furthermore, the parents also attempt to preserve their identity and heritage.

Gender subaltern reflects as Nazneen's husband attitude and behavior because he tried to suppress his family members in the name of culture, however, he himself as a subaltern character in London. He advocates against the loss of heritage and identity on the part of the new generation. He wants them to confine their real identity in a limited space and does not show seriousness about that. In the name of preserving identity and heritage, Chanu doesn't seem to give freedom to Nazneen and his daughters Bibi and Shahana to acquire education in foreign land as:

"I would like to learn some English" said Nazneen. Chanu puffed his cheeks and spat the air out in a puff. "It will come. Don't worry about it where's the need any way?" He looked at his book and Nazneen watched the screen. "He thinks he will get the promotion because he goes to the pub with the boss. He is so stupid he does not even realize there is any other way of getting promotion!" Chanu was supposed to be studying. His books were open at the table. Every so often he looked in one, or turned a page. Mostly, he talked. pub, pub, pub.

(28)

Indeed, every individual is always in the process of becoming. S/he wants to live with a prestigious life in their life. Nazneen is in the very process as well to create her own identity and herself empowerment. The desire for learning English is self-evident that she wants to make her adjustment in the English culture. Frankly speaking, she dares to cope with the multicultural society despite the fact that she has the scarcity of many things such as language, academic qualification/certificates, self-earning and so on. Therefore, she is very inquisitive and interested. Moreover, to prove it, Nazneen

brings the reference of her intimate friend Razia who is going to the college to learn English. As she says:

'Razia is going to college to study English' 'Ah good' 'Perhaps I could go with you, do you know why I am going to learn English?' 'Well perhaps!' He didn't look up from his book. I can go then? You know, I should be reading about politics, Nineteenth century elections. But they make it so dry you can learn a lot from novels as well. All sorts of things you can pick up about society politics, land, reform, social division, And it is not so dry.' 'Will it be all right from me to go?' 'Where?' He rolled on to his back to look at her. His belly showed.' 'To the college with Razia' 'What for?' 'For the English lessons:' 'You're going to be mother'. (162)

Nazneen struggles in her life for the hope of transformation and engaged in complaining against the English culture and in boasting his disagreements. She is pompous, oppressive and he restricts one's unalienable virtue, i.e., to educate, although, makes ceaseless effort to go to the college. Similarly, in course of time, Nazneen becomes the mother of three children. Her first child Ruku dies untimely and the last two daughters Bibi and Shahana remain alive and are highly influenced by the English culture. Their dressing up, language, mannerism and so on is English. They are more inclined towards Nazneen than Chanu. Thus, Nazneen makes her daughters aware of the cruel and monopolizing nature of Chanu. He forces Nazneen not to send them to school in England. In this regard Nazneen says:

Shahana did not want to listen to Bengali Classical music. His written Bengali was 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 dals 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 on her notion.

Shahana did not care Shahana did not want to go back home. (147)

New generation try to subvert subaltern identities and attempt to transform from traditional past culture that followed by old generation . Thus, Chanu's daughters are highly affected by the European life style. They don't believe the 16<sup>th</sup> century traditional notion of Bengal as "paradise of Nations." Similarly, they show high inclination towards European fashions as talking in English, wearing jeans and T-shirt. They didn't wear burka even if Chanu's forces them. Similarly, Bibi and Shahana are not ready to go back to Dhaka. They are highly influenced by English Culture, "we go on the interest at school" said Shahana in English. Chanu pretended not to hear. Bibi held on to her plaits. She tried so hard that she could not think of anything else." I'd like to see Kadamagain," said Nazneen (164), but Chanu wants to restrict her about such misdeed towards their culture. So he says:

"In the sixteenth century Bengal was called the Paradise of Nations. There are our roots. Do they teach these things in the school in England? Does Shahana know about her Paradise of Nation? All she knows about is flood and famine, Whole Bloody country is just a bloody basket case to her". He examined his text further and made little approving, purring noises. If you have a history, you see, you have a pride. The whole world was going to Bengal to do trade. Sixteenth Century and seventeenth century. Dhaka was the home of textiles. Who invented all this Muslim and damask and every damn things? It was us. All the Dutch and Portuguese and French and British queuing up to buy. (151)

Thus, in order to reflect on the hybridization of cultures existing in the England Ali has taken Nazneen, her sister Hasina and her two daughters Bibi and Shahana as



major characters who want to transform from traditional subaltern culture . Nazneen talks about essential of language and other ways of English life style for the success of every immigrant in England.

Ali highlights the transformation issue of subaltern female characters from their traditional identities. Nazneen who herself is an immigrant from Bangladesh brought up in Islamic modes of socialization gets some trouble in English culture in the beginning. For Nazneen the way people behave in the English culture is quite different from indigenous Bangladeshi culture of their homeland. Nazneen is not an exception that as an immigrant. She also faces a number of obstacles and hindrances to adjust there without the ability to speak English properly. So, large number of immigrants face many ups and down in England in course of their stay and professions.

Nazneen is living in the world of diverse clashes in term of class, culture, race and gender. Nazneen does not know English more than two words/phrases. "I can just speak two words as sorry and thanks"(56). She gradually energizes her to seek for liberation as well as identity from divergent barriers. In this regard, her husband, Chanu does not seem to have freed Nazneen in order to quench her thirst of education and English language. Thus, Ali provokes that Islam women do have long for free and open life style. Nazneen is in her 'Melting Stage' in the new world for she is instructed how Bangladeshi live in Tower Hamlets:

The room was almost square, like her own sitting room, with a door to the hallway and another to the bathroom. Half the space was filled with Children's paraphernalia, plastic toys, colonies of dismembered dolls, a small and rusting bike, a high chair folded against the wall, two neat piles of children's clothes, an array of footballs in various states of deflation, a child-size wooden table

covered in crayon scribbles. A single bed stood against one wall, and the other furniture crowded together beneath the window. So ,that the arms of the chairs and sofa touched one another. . . .They can't stop having children or they bring over all their relatives and pack them in like fish in a tin. It's a Tower Hamlets official static, three point five Bangladeshi to one room. (39)

Among the migrants, subaltern identities is transforming through assimilation, however, it also changes as form of hegemony. Thus, Immigrants are alienated and face a lot of problems in foreign world. As migrants they and their children are to be brought up in a new culture. Then, obviously, parents remain in dilemma which culture they should better to follow by their children. People must be accustomed to their own way of life. So, naturally they prefer their children to follow the same way. Nazneen speaks no English and Nazneen's new land becomes so narrow. London is not home for Nazneen although she wants to adjust due to her husband's victimization as well as victim of Bangladeshi culture and Islam. So, she is doubled and being subaltern in both home and abroad.

Nazneen has been grown up in the Islamic culture, she accepted marriage her father arranged for her after the death of her mother. Her younger sister, Hasina, who eloped in a love marriage. Now Nazneen's only contact with home is through letters she exchanges with Hasina, whose own fate back home in Dhaka changes throughout the fifteen years of living in London. Through Hasina's letters, Ali shows how issue of gender subaltern project in the novel and why Muslim women like Nazneen and her sister resist traditional subaltern identities and silently struggles for transformation with new identities.

Female characters of the novel like Nazneen, her sister and her daughter resist the male dominated Muslim culture and try to attempt transformation from tradition to

new one. Nazneen family migrated from Bangladesh to London, Brick Lane and struggles for survival. Her family lives in subaltern identities because they could not assimilate with British culture. She is not only dominated by western culture but also is suppressed by male dominated Muslim culture. So, she lives into the situation of double suppression. She is known as the gender subaltern that Spivak used the term for the first time to project the situation of women in post-colonial society. In post-colonial world, women are not only victimized gender but also marginalized by culture and they live with the identities of gender subaltern.

From the beginning of the novel, Nazneen wants to transform from traditional subaltern identities to new one. She uses her sexuality and establishes relationship with Karim and resists the strict Muslim patriarchal culture and family system. She plays role like independent woman. In her family, she behaves as faithful wife and cares the children and husband. Her husband tries to control her by using male dominated hegemonic culture that Nazneen does not like and silently resists by establishing relationship with Karim. Later Karim also behaves as like her husband. She breaks relationship with Karim and also divorce with her husband. At the end of life, she totally transforms from her previous identities and live independent life.

Nazneen was in a village of Bangladesh, and got married to Chanu, with whom she moves to London. She accepts the miserably lonely existence fate bestowed on her in a London council flat. Chanu believes that other immigrants to be uneducated, illiterate, and uncultured, and he discourages any reaching out Nazneen might do to the people who are below them.

Nazneen transforms from her previous identities through resisting male dominated Muslim culture. She regularly indulges housework, remembrance of Karim and frequent visit with Razia. As the author seems to have focused on the minute

details in Nazneen's everyday life, the readers observe equally minute changes taking place in the relationship of Nazneen and Chanu as it waxes and wanes in response to life's daily challenges. Hasina's life in Dhaka on another side is far more dramatic. Both Nazneen and Hasina accept Hasina's subsequent beatings as normal, and neither questions the circumstances surrounding the death of their mother when they were younger.

The feelings and acts of Nazneen are tender and meek. Since the women's position has been presented inferior and fragile in every civilization throughout history, Nazneen's place in the multicultural society which is heavily dominated and influenced by the Islamic way of life and that can not be much different from Bangladesh. Nazneen's opinions are no more valued and prioritized by Chanu since he does not consider her capable of making serious decisions. The very psychological exploitation gradually and slowly takes an immense form of reaction. When the reaction from Nazneen begins coming, the constant waves of revolution do not seem to take any break.

Other female characters do seem to have been in search for liberty. Hasina, the sister of Nazneen, has sought for freedom by denying the arranged marriage and eloping with a man she was in love with. Similarly the daughters of Nazneen and Chanu: Shahana and Bibi do seek for liberty in order to put on English dresses which Chanu entirely opposes against. They do not get ready to go to Bangladesh as they are preoccupied with the fact that they will have to put on Islamic female dresses. They are sure that they will not enjoy the Bangladeshi culture.

The world of Nazneen's romantic love affair with Karim is different from the world prescribed in the Islamic culture. She enjoys a beautiful life full of feelings and romance that cannot be digested in Islamic culture. Nazneen has thus sexually been

emancipated. Her liberation from the Islamic way of life is indeed a great point of transformation from traditional subaltern culture to new one .

## Works Cited

- Arnold, David and David Hardman, eds., *Subaltern Studies*. Vol. VIII. OUP, 1994.
- Ahamed, Leila. *Women in Brick Lane*. Yale University Press, 1992.
- Ali, Monica. *Brick Lane*. Scriber, 2003.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. "The Second Sex". *Critical Theory Today*. 1949.
- Chouder, Ismahane. *Feminist Collective for Equality*. Popular Books Enterprise, 2001.
- Cott, Nancy F. *The Bonds of Womanhood: Women's Sphere in New England*. Yale University Press, 1987.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "Invitation to a Dialogue." *Guha*, Vol. IV., 1998, 360-76.
- Ellerbe, Hellen. *The Dark Side of Christian History*. Browning Publication House, 1995.
- Encyclopedia Americana* (International Edition) American corp., N. 4., 1969, Vol.29.
- Encyclopedia Britannica*, (II ed.) Cambridge University Press, 1911. Vol.28.
- Guha, Ranjit, ed., *Subaltern Studies*, Vol. I. OUP, 1982.
- Hamidi, Malika. *Pluralism in Islamic Feminism*. East West Publication, 1992.
- Jabber, Abu. *Commentary on Brick Lane*. Junior Publication House, 2010.
- Kant, Anjani. *Women and the Law*. A. P. H. Publishing Corporation. 2003.
- Maitzen, Rohan. *Problems in Migration*. East West Publication, 2007.
- Nisha, Sameera. *The Koran*. Chaudhary Publication House, 2003.
- Shanaz, Khan. *A Reading to Bick Lane*. Sharia Publishing House, 2008.
- Spivak, Gyatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Colonmial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrismans. Columbia UP, 1994. 66-111.
- - -, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography." *Guha*. Vol. IV., 330-63.

