

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

NAZNEEN'S QUEST FOR EMANCIPATION IN BRICK LANE

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Abstract

The inscribed disquisition emphasizes on Monica Ali's innermost intellectual vision of an Islamic woman trapped between two distinct cultures: the Islamic culture and the English one. The former is indeed oppressive and restrictive which has made the central character, Nazneen in *Brick Lane* believe in the fatalistic life. But the latter seems to have awakened her to come out from the world of old values and the maze of fatalistic instructions provided by Amma. As the matter of fact Nazneen's role pervades the whole novel. Her psychological evolution from the initial part of *Brick Lane* upto its end is the matter of remark. Due to being in the world of emotional deception, religious restrictions and male domination, Nazneen turns to a new Nazneen and commences seeking for liberated life which she eventually feels only through sheltering in the sexual companionship with Karim, accompanying with Razia, and psychologically, and physiologically distancing her from her husband, Chanu who has strictly carried up old values and has been imposing those on Nazneen and even his daughters: Bibi and Shahana. After all Nazneen, the innocent, unknown to English, flexible, alterable woman, finds life comfortable and prestigious as well as emancipated in the multicultural society while Chanu, the boastful, highly learned and capable of speaking English fluently becomes a failure in the English culture and goes back to Bangladesh with a great expectation of being a success over there.

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I. *Brick Lane*: An Exploration of Nazneen's Self

Brick Lane a debut novel by Monica Ali portrays the internal journey of a sweet-natured girl called Nazneen after she is transplanted from a Bangladeshi Village to a Tower Hamlets council estate by an arranged marriage. As Nazneen has grown in the Islamic culture and been trained to follow the Islamic codes of life, she serves her husband, Chanu in such a way she can prove her as an obedient, Islamic and Indian woman. A woman socialized in a traditional Islamic culture believes that marriage is a religious sacrament for her blessedness by religious rites. She holds that her future happiness and welfare depends entirely on her husband. She should sacrifice her interests and personality to fulfill her duties and obligation towards him, and she should never waver from her loyalty.

As the matter of fact revolution arises from the heart of extreme suppression and emotional deception. Human beings differ from the rest of creatures since they are thinking animals. They can differentiate between good and bad, day and night, love and exploitation, sweet and sour and so on. Therefore they have been in power and considered superior to other creatures right from the initiation of the human civilization. Nazneen, the central woman character is not an exception in the case of her psychological revolution which causes her to make a pursuit for emancipation from the oppressive world of males especially from the companionship of Chanu. She begins thinking a little when Chanu tries deceiving her emotionally stating she need not go to college for learning English. Rather her husband is so learned and educated that she could take him and novels he is reading as reliable sources of knowledge. Furthermore Nazneen exercises her mental faculty when she does navaz during

pregnancy. She thinks had imams been pregnant they would not have made navaz compulsory.

Thus the sense of psychological and religious exploitation she perceives and then she begins thinking of doing something. Nazneen is not deliberately committed to any sort of pursuit for emancipation but the gradual advancement of her personality creates a situation that she gets prepared to release her from the emotional and cultural maze formed by the oppressive male figure, Chanu. A person seeks for what s/he has not experienced before. Similarly Nazneen has never felt independence, selfhood, liberation etc. before she mentally and geographically distances her from Chanu. In course of time Nazneen frequently expresses her attitudes towards Chanu. One of her many expressions can be stated here as an evidence: "Nazneen wondered why her husband spoke of her as 'she'. If she has more energy, she decided, she would find this irritating. She marshalled her resources for getting up, and ignoring Chanu's continued admonishments" (329).

In fact new cultures are not obstacles that deprive one of developing her/his personality. Rather they are indispensable sources of knowledge. Acculturation enhances the lifestyle. One has many chances for learning new and good ways of life. The mind does broaden in the multicultural society as well. New lenses people can have to see critically and become able to compare and contrast their lingering cultural lifestyle with others'. As the matter of fact, acculturation brings about new visions for life. In the postmodern world, every thing is uncertain and incomplete. Culture as human made substitute to nature, can not be perfect. Despite one's high inclination to her/his culture, s/he must have open heart to welcome commendable and worthy things whatever culture they belong to.

Nazneen was taught manifold moral lessons by her mother. Her mind was set in such a way that she had strong faith in fate rather than in action while she was in Bangladesh. As she has entered the gate of a new culture, the previous morals turn into just memories for Nazneen. After coming across a number of ups and downs, she realizes that she lacks many essential things such as English language; own earning, love and right to make decisions. She raises questions indirectly when she is compelled to walk in the path of the Islamic code of life. Rationality emerged in her energizes her to welcome new styles of life through the release from the Islamic code of life which was imposed on her by parents until she got married and after the arranged marriage, Chanu oppresses her in the name of Islamic religion and Bangladeshi culture. Chanu, the conservative figure does not change anymore to cope with the new culture and society. This is why he finally returns to Bangladesh alone leaving Nazneen and two daughters in England.

On the contrary to Chanu, Nazneen copes with the new English culture so smartly that she becomes able to adjust her along with children despite the fact that she is not a college graduate like Chanu. She begins having faith in action rather than in fate and moreover, she takes her mother's moral lessons and the Islamic code of life critically which can strongly be supported with an evidence from the text:

There was special dispensation for pregnant women. If she chose to, Nazneen could namaz from her chair. She had tried it once and it made her feel lazy. But it was nice that the imams had thought of it. Such was the kindness and compassion of Islam towards women. Mind you, if any imam had ever been pregnant, would they not have made it compulsory to sit? (69)

Likewise Nazneen buys a tailoring machine and starts working on that in order to make money which adds fuel to strengthen her will power. Since Chanu is almost twice older than Nazneen, she is perhaps not satisfied mentally and physically with him. As the demand of her sexual desire and passionate love, she falls in love with a young guy, Karim in whom she gets solace of youth and sexual contentment. This step made by Nazneen is very radical for the traditionalists but for her it is an attempt to explore a new world outside the system.

Every culture has its perspective about male and female traits. Certain characteristics are generally identified as feminine or masculine and it is a common belief that women and men possess them in accordance with their gender. Gender ideology, an individual level construction that links individual male or female to their culture's construction of gender, has become a lens through which women view the world and their opposite sex. Women and men behave in certain typical ways in a society because their society demands them to behave in those ways. A woman is neither born female nor social, but she becomes so through both association and communication. In fact the family plays the role of the first agency in socializing her culturally by providing her traditional behaviour patterns and standard of conduct. Gender thus becomes a demarcation line between women and men, learned in course of socialization.

In *Brick Lane*, 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 take any interest in reciting poems by Tagore as well. Moreover, they don't 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 changing socio-economic pattern of modern era has brought about the cure of materialism and western feminism in the Islamic household. This in turn has helped to construct another ideal of a liberated woman who could enjoy free love, personal happiness, sex and wealth. And it ultimately gives birth to a duality in a female's perception of womanhood and marriage. Marriage becomes not only a validation of female identity but also a means as wealthy and fascinating life. She is thus subject to double pulls between tradition and modernity between Islamic and western way of living and values, between her dignity as a human being and her duty as a wife, between her desire for autonomy and her need for nurturance. Not having possessed the autonomous world wherein Nazneen can feel free to make decisions on her own, she gets committed to seeking for the very world which is no more in her grip at the moment.

Her quest refers to an attempt to achieve something difficult. It is psychological and spiritual rather than materialistic. Quest is a very dominating term in the Hindu philosophy. The spiritual pursuit is crucial enough for those who prefer to get salvation. In fact quest is a spiritual journey to a place which is too remote and inaccessible. When someone is in crisis of something, s/he desires to have the very thing. And to reach the goal, one makes possible efforts. There is no satisfaction to the mind unless the crucial quest is accomplished. In the novel, *Brick Lane*, Nazneen gradually evolves. The very gradual advancement of her will power clarifies the fact she remains in process of reaching the objective.

Truly speaking Nazneen's quest is for true knowledge about Chanu and his traditional culture which could emancipate her from the orthodox Islamic code of life.

Her quest is commendable and praiseworthy since her attempt is indeed for the exploration of a new world outside the conservative system which is lethargic and boring. Her pursuit is for modernity, invention, innovation, creation, independence, selfhood, dignity, esteem and humanity not for slavery. To attain all the mentioned essentials, Nazneen must first be emancipated.

Liberation means the free and secured socio-familial world that invites a reliable mobility and visibility on the part of women. In fact emancipation brings a more genuine world that permits women to actualize their aspirations by serving society and fulfilling duty towards them.

The ability of self awareness adds the power of self expression and enhancement in their personality. Human ideas and feelings possess an invisible truth and force. By knowing their inner feelings and ideas, and expressing them to others, they place them as important parts of society, which can mould the world in a new way. Foucault states: "Within a cultural setting there is no room for the quest of emancipation, elevating learning, resistance and transcendence. Normalizing education cannot be challenged when there is only room for change not for advancement of emancipation, for a different gaze or representation not for reflection and critical dialogue" (1995, 210). Foucault means to say here freedom can not be attained within system and cultural structure.

Similarly Meena Kelkar and Deepti Gangavane describe freedom: "Freedom is a state of mind wherein one can doubt and question every thing and therefore it is so intense, active and vigorous that it throws away every form of dependence and slavery" 925). They succeed in constructing a newer psychological framework that is aware of their position in the society. The newer psychosocial world welcomes their advent in public fields. They have a social support to take decision in the matter of

social debate. They have an extraordinary ingenuity to analyze subterfuges and tactics of worldly procedures. They become a part of academic intelligentsia ready to struggle to make a separate recognition. The society accepts their role as sagacious judges who take an initiative to settle a dispute, and the role asks a serious study and a devotion to work. Going out of house, and completing responsibilities need familial love.

Familial inspiration and help acts as a liberating force, which motivates women to work enthusiastically and successfully coming out of domestic ambience. Being off- springs of Indian collective feeling, they gain a determinate and unshakable foundation in life to move ahead. In fact, their real liberation lies in familial affection, egalitarian society, and in encouraging environment. Roy comments on Indian women: "Young women want both career success and family intimacy". (35) Familial closeness spooks them with proper guidance and security.

Emancipation is a fearless situation where women have familial love, social inspiration self-awareness, and freedom work in the public field, within the limit of social ethos. Liberation brings happiness and realization of selfhood. Quasim Amin defines liberty: "Freedom here means a person's independence of thought, will and action, as long as this does not exceed legal limits and maintains the moral standards of society" (16). Liberation consists of the unflinching confidence in their selves and actions along with the acceptance of socio-cultural values of the society where they live in. After all, the novel introduces women's passion for emancipation from cultural boundaries which are indeed as foes in the path of progress ,prosperity and innovation to the lives of the oppressed especially females in the male dominated and orthodox society via the Islamic culture.

In the following chapter, I will mention distinct sorts of feminism as well as the details of women's position in different civilizations throughout the history. Furthermore my attempt will centralize on the position of Islamic women which seems to have been fragile enough in course of history and even in many countries at the moment. The reflection on numerous hindrances in the path of women's progress, prosperity, fame and dignity will be vitalized as well.

Similarly, the third chapter will focus on the analytical approach to the text. Besides this, the hypothetical statement will be elaborated with textual evidences in order to strengthen and enhance the thesis promulgation itself. In this way the fourth and fifth chapter will be conclusion and works cited respectively. In fact the deducing chapter will have a glance at all previous chapter.

II. Historical and Socio-cultural Perspectives

The status of women in society is neither a new issue nor is it a fully settled one. There is a diverse collection of social theories, political movements, and moral philosophies, largely motivated by or concerning the experiences of women. Advocates of equality of the sexes and the rights and duties of women can be found throughout history. As the matter of fact women's issues have had a great effect on many aspects of religion and civilization throughout the history. Despite the fact that life is a gift of nature, human culture and religion do not seem to have agreed with this truth right from the initiation of the human civilization. It would be an evidently proven fact if a keen glance at women's position in major civilizations and religions was given.

Let's see how and why women were considered inferior to men in the ancient Greece. The great thinkers and philosophers have depicted women as inferior and immature in their intellectual potentialities. Plato went to the extreme extent of disallowing women and servants to take part in politics and philosophy. He labeled women as grade three citizens entirely incompetent in any crucial and grave matters that needed deep contemplation and keen brain. Thus his successor, Aristotle declared that the female was female by virtue of certain lack of qualities. The very pronouncement stood as a dehumanizing and demoralizing tendency of such a great philosopher like Aristotle. Once he also made a hasty proposition regarding the women's physical status. He said that women had fewer teeth than men which was indeed groundless. Further he said the rational soul is not present at all in a slave, in a female, and in an underdeveloped child. This generalization has demonstrated the fact that he blundered in reasoning owing to his prejudices towards male-

centralism .E.A. Allen avers: "Athenian women were always minors, subject to some male - to their father, to their brother, or to some of their male kin" (444). Her consent in marriage was not generally thought to be necessary and she was obliged to submit to the wishes of her parents, and receive from them her husband and her lord, even though he were stranger to her.

In this way a Roman wife was described as a babe, a minor, a ward, a person incapable of doing or acting anything according to her own individual taste, a person continually under the tutelage and guardianship of her husband. In the Encyclopedia Britannica, we find a summary of the legal status of women in the Roman civilization:

In Roman law a woman was even in historic times completely dependent. If married she and her property passed into the power of her husband [...] the wife was the purchased property of her husband, and like a slave acquired only for his benefit. A woman could not exercise any civil or public office [...] could not be a witness, surety, tutor, or curator; she could not adopt or be adopted or make will or contact. (782)

Among the Scandinavian races women were under perpetual tutelage, whether married or unmarried. As late the code of Christian V, at the end of the 17th century, it was enacted that if a woman married without the consent of her tutor he might have, if he wished, administration and usufruct of her goods during her life.

Similarly, the ancient mythologies of the west have attributed some peculiar characteristics to women in the form of goddesses. Apollo represented wisdom, knowledge and supremacy while Venus and Eros represented beauty, sensuality and jealousy respectively. There was not God depicting man's handsomeness nor was there a Goddess acting on behalf of Apollo's qualities. Goddesses were portrayed to

have got inferior position. Christianity, the major religion that shaped western thought, presents women as subordinate to men. Men according to the Bible are the owners of women, just like an animal is owned. Exodus 20: 17 which states the famous tenth commandment, lumps a wife together with his servants, animals and house. A man could sell his daughter as a slave (Exodus 21:7-11) or give her in marriage to whomsoever he chose. After the birth of a male child, a woman is ritually impure for seven days; however after the birth of a female child she is ritually impure for fourteen days according to the law of the Bible. Helen Ellerbe, in her book, *The Dark Side of Christian History* (1995) elaborates on the Church's treatment of women: The second century St. Clement of Alexandria wrote: "Every woman should be filled with shame by the thought that she is a woman." The church Father Tertullian explained why women deserve their status as despised and inferior human beings: You are the devil's gateway: you are the unsealer of the tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert - that is, death - even the son of God had to die. Moreover the thirteenth century Christian theologian suggested that God had made a mistake in creating woman: "Nothing deficient should have been produced in the first establishment of things; so women ought not to have been produced then." In fact orthodox Christians held women responsible for all sin.

In this way keeping a woman silent was widely practiced in Europe and in the Christian world. In 1833 when the first coeducational college in the U. S., Oberlin College was established, women were not allowed to speak in many classes. In 1623 in England, a woman sentenced by a court to be "too frank" was publicly displayed in a "Scold bridle", i.e. a metal cage around her head with a spiked plate which cut her tongue if she dared speak. According to the English common law:

... all real property which a wife held at the time of a marriage became a possession of her husband. He was entitled to the rent from the land and to any profit which might be made from operating the estate during the joint life of the spouses. As time passed, the English courts devised means to forbid a husband's transferring real property without the consent of his wife, but he still retained the right to manage it and to receive the money which it produced. As to a wife's personal property, the husband's power was complete. He had the right to spend it as he saw fit. (108)

Only by the late 19th century did the situation start to improve. "By a series of acts starting with the Married Women's Property Act in 1870, amended in 1882 and 1887, married women achieved the right to own property and to enter contracts on a par with spinsters, widows, and divorcees" (624). As late as the 19th century an authority in ancient law, Sir Henry Maine, wrote: "No society which preserves any tincture of Christian institutions is likely to restore to married women the personal liberty conferred on them by the middle Roman Law" (81).

Explaining the commercial concept, the Encyclopedia Biblica states: "to betroth a wife to oneself meant simply to acquire possession of her by payment of the purchase money; the betrothed is a girl for whom the purchase money has been paid" (2942). Hereby, it has become pretty clear that the women's position in Christianity has been very fragile and parasitical throughout the history.

In Hindu religious literature by far, the most effective weapon used by the Gods to corrupt virtuous mortals is a woman. Usually a seductive celestial nymph but sometimes, just woman is the root of all evil in the ascetic oriented view of the Orthodox Hindu. The Mahabharata states:

I will tell you my son, how Brahma created wanton women and for what purpose, for there is nothing more evil than [...] the Lord Grand Father, learning what was in the hearts of the Gods, created wanton women by a magic ritual in order to delude mankind. (13. 40. 3-10)

The complete subservience of wives to their husbands in Hindu custom shows up in the practice of Sati, where the wife burns herself alive on her dead husband's pyre. In 1780 when the Raja of Marwar died in India, his 64 wives burned themselves alive on his funeral pyre. Even though the secular government of India made this practice illegal, it still continues to be practiced because of religion. As the matter of fact the so-called lower caste women are much more oppressed than the upper caste ones in the Hindu society. Due to the practice of caste system, even the upper caste women are found to dominate the so-called lower caste women. On this ground it can obviously be stated that Hindu civilization is much more tormenting, dehumanizing, oppressive and intolerable than others for women belonging to the lower caste. The political scientist Gopal Guru argues that dalit women (lower caste women) experience two distinct forms of patriarchal control: a dominant form of brahminical patriarchy that rests on conceptions of caste purity, as well as patriarchal control within the dalit community by men who see "their" women as sexual property.

The Chinese civilization is not an exception regarding the oppressive treatment of the female. The Yin and the Yang is a concept quite familiar even in the west especially in merchandise. In their mythical theory of how the universe operates, Chinese philosophers invented the concept of the Yin and Yang. The universe they concluded is understood to be a balance of the Yin (evil or negative) and the Yang (good or positive). In order to make the concept clear, the explanation is needed: "The Yin is the negative force in nature. It is seen in darkness, coolness, FEMALENESS,

dampness, the earth, the moon and the shadows. The Yang is the positive force in nature. It is seen in lightness, warmth, MALENESS, dryness and the Sun" (Hopfe: 207). Max Weber, the German sociologist, recognized as the leading person in the entire field of sociology and known for his work on the Sociology of Religion, writes in his work on Confucianism and Taoism: "The doctrine held in common by All Schools of [in Chinese Religion] summarized the "good" spirits as the [heavenly and masculine] Yang principle, the "evil" ones as the [earthly and feminine] Yin principle, explaining the origin of the world from their fusion" [Ed. Gerth 1951:29]. The Chinese practices "foot binding" for girls which deformed girl's feet until 1901. It had been practiced for around a thousand years, based on tradition, till it was banned in 1901. Even after being banned, it was widely practiced until 1949. Marie Vento (1998), in her Paper, *One Thousand Years of Chinese Footbinding: Its Origins Popularity and Demise*, writes: In its most extreme form, footbinding was the act of wrapping a three – to five year old girl's feet with binding so as to bend the toes under, break the bones and force the back of the foot together. Its purpose was to produce a tiny foot, the "golden lotus", which was three inches long and thought to be both lovely and alluring. In fact for men footbinding is troubling because it suggests not only that men are capable of perceiving a gruesomely crippled foot as an object of seductive pleasure, but that they are further capable of using their superior social position to compel women to conform to a standard of beauty that is both deformed and grotesque. For women, foot binding is unsettling because it reveals a willingness to cripple their own daughters to meet an aesthetic criterion of social behaviour defined by men.

Eventually the Islamic civilization based on the most authoritative holy book, the Koran, needs to be presented in such a way that the interrelationship between the

female and male can somewhat be pretty clear. The verse in the Koran which causes trouble to most liberals is that men have been given the duty to protect and support women. God has given preference to one gender over another in certain duties. Men have been given preference in being the providers of women and women are given preference in caring for a child. Even if divorce separates a man from his wife, he has to seek her help in caring for the child or another female if the mother agrees. Men are told to spend of their property on women and not ask the women for anything even if she happens to be rich. It is for this reason primarily that the Koran asks that out of a parent's property the son get twice that out of the daughter. It is expected that the daughter would marry and get a man's property as a marriage gift (Mahar) and not have to worry about providing for herself since it is the man's duty to provide for her. The son on the other hand would Islamically be expected not only to provide for his potential wife but also give a major part of his property to her as marriage gift.

In recent years, largely due to the pressure of anti-women laws in some parts of the Muslim world, women with some degree of education and awareness are beginning to realize that religion is being used as an instrument of oppression rather than as a means of liberation. To understand the powerful impetus to Islamize "Muslim societies", especially with regard to women- related norms and values, it is necessary to know that of all the challenges confronting the Muslim world perhaps the greatest is that of modernity. Muslims, in general, tend to think of "Modernity" in two ways; (a) as modernization which is associated with science, technology and material progress, and (b) as westernization which is associated with promiscuity and all kinds of social problems ranging from latch-key kids to drug and alcohol abuse. While "modernization" is considered highly desirable, "westernization" is considered equally undesirable. What is of importance to note, here, is that an emancipated Muslim

woman is seen by many Muslims as a symbol not of "modernization" but of "westernization". This is so because she appears to be in violation of what traditional societies consider to be a necessary barrier between "private space" where women belong and "public space" which belongs to men. The presence of women in men's space is considered to be highly dangerous for. But in today's Muslim world, due to the pressure of political and socio-economic realities, a significant number of women may be seen in "public space". Caretakers of Muslim traditionalism feel gravely threatened by this phenomenon which they consider to be an onslaught of "westernization" under the guise of "modernization." They believe that it is necessary to put women back in their "space" if the integrity of the Islamic way of life is to be preserved.

It would be noteworthy enough to clarify the significance of the term, female before entering the widely extensive discussion of feminism. The term 'female' since the inauguration of human civilization has reserved its validity and conception as a biological contrast to male 'sex'. Indeed the natural biological contrast pervades each individual sex with distinctive features, physical qualities and assertions that are assumed to be essential and vital to sustain the true nature of human evolution and civilization. In fact the sex is the natural creation. Some social and cultural variations lie in terms of their behaviour, manners, food habit, education and the attitude of society towards them. However, these discrepancies are apparently based on society. This is how some biased definitions, along with physical assertions are attached to each sex and they are bound to get identified with asymmetrical, hierarchical socio-cultural notions called 'gender'. "Time and tide wait for none". Nature based female and male relation turns into society based women and men's feminine and masculine relation. The very relation exists as a hierarchical power relation where men dominate

women in every social, economic, cultural and religious milieu of human life. The prejudice sustains itself in the form of male domination against female subordination through ideological practices. The patriarchy nurtures the gender based inequalities that present men superior and women inferior, men powerful and women powerless.

As the matter of fact feminism is a divergent collection of social theories, political movements and moral philosophies, extensively motivated by or pertaining the bitter and sweet experiences of women. Most feminists are especially concerned with social, political, religious, racial and economic inequality between women and men; some have argued that gendered and sexed identifies, such as "woman" and "man", are socially constructed. Feminists differ over the sources of inequality, how to attain equality and the extent to which gender and sexual identities should be questioned and critiqued. Variations in the issues of feminists are because of their distinct belonging and upbringing to and in diverse cultures and societies. Time does play a vital role to distinguish the type of feminists. In fact feminists born and up brought in the Hindu civilization are concerned with double domination one by uppercaste women and secondly by the male figures within the so-called lower caste communities. . Similarly feminists from African are found to have been concerned with double suppression: one because of being black and the next due to having female qualities.

Feminist political activists commonly campaign on issues such as reproductive rights (including the right to safe, legal abortion, access to contraception, and the availability of quality prenatal care), violence within a domestic partnership, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, street harassment, discrimination and rape. Many feminists today argue that feminism is a grass-root movement that seeks to cross boundaries based on social class, race, culture and religion; is culturally

specific and addresses issues relevant to the women of that society; and debate the extent to which certain issues, such as rape, incest, and mothering are universal. Themes explored in feminism include patriarchy, stereotyping, objectification, sexual objectification, and oppression.

Feminism as a philosophy and movement in the modern sense is often dated to the Enlightenment with such thinkers as Lady Mary Worthley Montagu and the Marquis de Condorcet championing women's education. The first scientific society for women was founded in Middleburg, a city in the south of the Dutch Republic, in 1785. Journals for women which focused on issues like science became popular during this period as well. Mary Wolstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) is one of the first works that can unambiguously be called feminist.

Thus feminism became an organized movement in the 19th century as people increasingly came to believe that women were being treated unfairly. The feminist movement commenced especially in the reformation movement of the 19 century. The utopian socialist Charles Fourier coined the word *feminisme* in 1837; as early as 1808, he had argued that the extension of women's rights was the general principle of all social progress. The organized movement was dated from the first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848.

The origin of women's voice against male- domination is a kind of political consciousness of the inferiority of women in comparison to men. Women in the west are economically and academically advanced. They have realized the undervalued position of women imprisoned within the narrow domestic world of mothering and house managing and the biasness in the domain of education and employment. Consequently, they are demanding for proper place of women in society. Nancy F. Cott surveys the origin of women's movement: "Such consciousness of [...] inferiority

was the first group consciousness likely to produce a feminist movement, because it acknowledged cultural and social determinants of women's capabilities as well as divine and natural ones, and thus allowed for the possibility of change" (The Bonds 22). The revolutionary origin has given impetus to the development of historical feminist figures.

Historical feminist personalities have raised strong voice for women's liberation from the biased male- tyranny on women. Mary Wellstonecraft in the 18th century attempted to emancipate women from male dominating motives hidden in the emphasis of feminine features like meekness, docility, humility, passivity, emotion, shyness, and childishness. Unraveling the bases of women's socialization whereby they are taught to be feminine, Wollstonecraft pointed out the drawback in process of socialization. She deplored the false education system that inspired women to read the sentimental novels of her time for their pernicious influences on women's intellectual development. Rosemarie Tong examines Wollstonecraft's views about women's education that they should "be provided with a real education, one that sharpens and focuses her mind and gives her a chance to develop her rational and moral capacities, her full human potential" (15).

In the same way, Virginia Woolf, advocated for the radical change in the conception of family and social life. She refuted the traditional view about women that they are submissive, and cried for a separate space for women in literature and society since they are independent human beings like men as well. Hazard Adams has presented Woolf's attitude about women:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally, but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brother do; they suffer from too rigid a

restraint, too absolute a stagnation [- -]; it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow- creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting, stocking, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. (822)

In course of time another historical women figure, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, emerged and directed women towards useful tasks related to modern industries and factories. She focused on economically beneficial occupation for women by highlighting their capability to work in the public world. She refuted the childcare and housework that deprive them of opportunities and the advancement of their genuine potentiality. Nancy F. Cott speaks of Gilman: "She proposed [- -] the socialization of remaining home employments such as cooking and laundry and argued that house cleaning and childcare would be better performed by specialized paid employees than by housewives and mothers not necessarily suited and not paid for the tasks" (*The Grounding 41*).

Similarly Simone de Beauvoir has brought a widespread consciousness on the part of women, pointing to the socio-historical construction of women. She contended against the socialization that persuaded women to be sexy and to be flesh for the mere entertainment of male ego. Rather she created a mentality for women to be self-assertive and determinate to tackle impediments, and to release them from the social construction of femininity. Jane Freedman says that her "distinction between biological sex and the social creation of the 'eternal feminine' is a precursor of the distinction between sex and gender that is common in much feminist theory" (14).

In this way Shulamith Firestone proposed a world dichotomized by biology: male and female, where women are the unpaid means to social production of off-springs. And males are the owners of the labour market; females are no more than the

workers to the reproductive system. Oppression on women due to the productive functions a historical act, and the emancipation of women depends on the escape from the biological destiny. Firestone denied the emotional attachment of parents with their children, and spoke for undoing family unit. Freedman further demonstrates her: "Firestone maintains, to the dissolution of the family unit, with children over a period of time. Children would develop no special bonds with their 'parents' but would instead from love ties with people to their own choosing, whatever their age and sex" (70). Her revolutionary modification of familial structure throws doubt on the traditional belief in familial unity and solidarity.

In 1970 and 80s, numerous black women writers rose to the literary and critical forum and started voicing out their agonies as marginalized, doubly oppressed in their works. Black feminists have indeed challenged white women's ability and Eurocentric and essentialist nature of some feminists. bell hooks' *Ain't la Woman* (1981) relates the history of black women in the United States and their relationship to feminism. hooks has argued that the rape and brutal assaults on black women during the period of slavery in the United States led to a devaluation of black womanhood that permeated the psyches of all Americans. Even now the US society perceives and represents black women as "fallen women, whores and prostitutes that racism has taken precedence over sexism which is evident in the behaviour of white women who turn their deaf ear to severe assaults upon black women.

Majority of black feminists yearn to be counted as men and share the bounties of the dominant society such as equal wages, child care and other accepted social rights while black women have been marginalized within a paradigm in which "they are ignored, romanticized or ghettoized" (Beasley 108). Although the black feminists were as conscious of the problems of women as white feminists, their situation

remained the same. Being black and women they were doubly suppressed. They were victimized by blacks as well as the white society. The black female experience is characterized by the interlocking oppressors of race, class and gender. These oppressors are interwoven into social structures and work together to define the history of the lives of black women of colour.

Various authors argue that historically black women have been stereotyped as sex objects and breeders. Black women's personal growth has been impeded by the continuing myths of the black matriarchy, a myth occurring black women of emasculating both black and white men. Black women have been stereotyped by both black and white as the 'bad' women as well. The white women did oppress as sexual temptresses of white man and prostitutes. These stereotypes and myth have helped control black women's characters in the society. Right from the initiation of the slavery system, black women have always been exploited as the object of white male sexual assault. White men took pride in seducing black women. They often became the victim of rape, for sexism of white male was socially legitimized. bell hooks says: "Rape was a method used to terrorize, dehumanize and [...] to trip the female slave of dignity" (*Ain't la Women* 36). Black men could no longer protect them since they themselves were in dehumanized situation.

Thus under white domination a black man finds that his male ego is wounded. So he starts his ceaseless cruelty on his woman finding no other role model than that of white man. Indeed both white women and black men act as oppressors. White women may be victimized by sexism but racism enables them to act as exploiters and oppressors of black people. Black men may be victimized by racism, but sexism energizes them to act as exploiters and oppressors of black women. But black women have no such "others" upon whom they could act as oppressors (hooks, *Black Women*

Shaping Black, Feminist Thought 15). It was the long term silence of the oppressed and the continual revolution of black womanhood that paved a way towards Black Feminism. Besides, the sexual violence and cultural stereotyping black women faced, several writers made it clear that women of colour have been excluded from the women's movement.

Unlike the western women's movement, the Indian women's movement emerged from the social evils like child marriage, dowry system, purdah system and caste system, practiced by male-oriented and brahminical society in the name of Hinduism. For Indian women in general, emancipation lies in the absence of the social injustices. While fighting for women liberation, the Indian women prioritized the developmental activities like women education, health, and property, inter caste-marriage to produce a self-dependent and self-esteemed woman. Freedman quotes Uma Narayan: "Issues that feminist groups in India have politically engaged which include problems of dowry-murder and dowry-related harassment of women, police rape of women in custody; issues relating to women's poverty, health and reproduction; and issues of ecology and communication that affect women's lives [...]. Indian feminism is clearly a response to issues specially confronting many Indian women" (82-83).

In fact Indian mythological exemplars have powerfully influenced the mode of thought and costume, feelings, expectation, and dreams of Indian women. Indian people worship the mythological figures. Kathryn Hansen accepts the unavoidability of the myths: "The patterns of women's lives, their expectations and ideal, their orientation to social reality, are significantly shaped by the models of womanly conducts set out in stories, legends and songs preserved from the past" (257). Sita, a wife to Rama in *Ramayana*, is regarded as a chaste, diligent and self-sacrificing

spouse. She is the symbol of wifely duty and perfect familial responsibility.

Simultaneously, she is a resilient mother who produced adventurous sons -Lava and Kush – who could challenge their own father, Rama. Similarly, Draupadi, a wife to five Pandavs in *Mahabharata*, possesses a firm, self-respecting will and a devotion to her husbands' progress, victory and security. Despite being the wife to five men, she did not bear the loss of her honor and prestige. Shakambari Jayal writes about the bloom and strong self of Draupadi: "With her delicate beauty she combined an iron will, and thus could pronounce her choice firmly" (255). The mythological figures have been the inspiring forces throughout the history.

As the matter of fact, Mirabai, an impressive historical figure in the Indian history has set the example for self-effacement and self-sacrifice. Challenging the contemporary social customs, she abandoned the luxurious but passive familial life, and came on the road to devote herself to Krishna, the Almighty in Hinduism. In spite of her rejection of the social norms and values, she was unknowingly practicing the feminine qualities like a concern for family and a nature of self-denial. Radhika Sheshan observes her: "Mirabai's bhajans are full of references to both her natal and her marital families" (186). She didn't renounce the inborn inclination to family.

Likewise, Phulandevi, a woman from oppressed social group, became a stupendous social and historical figure in taking revenge against male-tyranny. As a woman, she came out of socially prescribed womanly values, and took armaments and put on male attire with virility. She killed all males who had exploited her sexually. Furthermore, she proved her to be an impressive model for women's consciousness to fight against the injustices done to women. Hansen admires Phulandevi as [s] he has come to inspire determined commitment to the struggle for equality and justice for women" (282).

In this way a great sympathetic figure, Laxmibai, Rani of Jhansi, appeared in the Indian history whose adventurous, courageous and ardent spirit protected Jhansi and her people from the British oppression. Hansen analyzes her contribution for the nation: "she is unequivocally identified as a great freedom fighter in the first stage of Indian's war of independence against the British" (267). Her strong, intelligent, and dignified individuality understood the human misery, pain and suffering, and helped the poor. She had love for helpless people, and reverence for nation and national culture.

Thus divergent movements regarded the social injustices to be bad and pernicious and helped women's liberation from the evils. Social Reform in the 19th century advocated for the ideals of Vedic period that let women exercise their inner potentialities. Indian great figures like Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore favoured for women's upliftment, betterment, progress, prosperity and participation in literary career, teaching, medicine, business etc. Anjani Kant writes:

In the 19th century, Indian began to discover her long cherished ideals and cultural self-consciousness [...]. The reformers, who advocated the emancipation of women, aspired the restoration of such healthy and congenial conditions which once prevailed in the early Vedic period.

(61)

Indeed Indian women's emancipation movement cannot remain isolated from the male's ideology in the formation of women's liberation just, as male's values are predominant in society. Forbes indicates the vitality of the male reformers: "There would have been no women's movement in India if Indian men in the nineteenth century had not been concerned with modernizing women's roles" (252).

As the demand of time, the National Movement for the freedom of India from the unnecessary regime of British people came as additional fuel of consciousness for women to realize their mental and physical capacity. Their participation in the very movement energized them to tolerate atrocities and filled them with national feelings. It was the Gandhian ideology which enhanced the movement. Ronald J. Terchek and Nitidas Gupta have evaluated the movement and the vital role of Gandhian ideology: "The Gandhi-led freedom struggle in India ushered in a new era of consciousness on the part of Indian women and thus is an important step towards the emancipation of Indian women" (36). Gandhi viewed that women should be self-assertive, yet they have to comprehend duty and responsibility towards nation and family.

The contribution of British women in helping Indian women get aware of their human rights cannot be neglected. As the matter of fact British women missionaries in India energized Indian women to be individuals. Kant avers: "Under the western impact, Indian women experienced an air of freedom and the stir of the new era [...]. It brought to women a total new concept of themselves as persons individually important and nationally needed" (61).

It is the matter of great marvel that most of the Indian women still undergo the double oppression and exploitation. In fact the so-called lower caste women are first suppressed by the male and then by the so-called upper caste women. This case is applicable exclusively to those who have been practicing norms and values of Hinduism. But due to the emergence of some conscious and revolting women from the oppressed group, some efforts have indeed been made by both the nation and the exploited class in order to eradicate the lingering inhuman practice of caste. The formation of the all India Dalit Women's Forum in 1994, the National Federation of Dalit Women and Dalit Solidarity in 1995, the emergence of various regional dalit

women's groups, and the All India Democratic Women's Association's Convention Against Untouchability and Dalit Women's Oppression held in December 1998, all illustrate critiques of Indian Feminism by seeking to link caste relations to gender exploitation. More recently the dalit carried a special issue on 'Dalit Feminisms' (March-April 2002) where the contributors explored caste-specific patriarchal arrangements in order to test standard assumptions about gender and sexuality. Dalit feminists too have focused on sexual violence as important to the reproduction of the brahminical order. Rape, the stripping and parading of women and other gendered forms of humiliation by upper-caste men are significant because they are gendered practices of violence through which untouchability is perpetuated. In fact sexual violence and the hyper-exploitation of dalit women's labour are two of the most important issues around which feminists' awareness of caste has been mobilized. There have been some debates about caste and gender addressed to two audience. One is a global public where issues of caste and gender discrimination have allowed a comparison of pernicious cultural practices. Within the nation state, the demand has been to expand the presence of previously marginalized or unrecognized groups in existing forms of political participation. In both spheres, dalit-bahujan feminists have struggled to connect the intimate experience of sexual violation and vulnerability with more public forms of caste exploitation and domination.

After all Indian feminism's history can be traced through a movement-centric analysis of struggles against sexual violence within and without the home, legal rights and protection for women as a particularly vulnerable political community and a broader struggle to redefine matters of intimacy as public issues of political import, i.e., the personal as political. This history has been the target of critique, especially by dalit feminists who have criticized the narrow connection of sexual violence and of

rights, since they do not address forms of caste privilege that allow upper caste men to claim sexual access to dalit women or the conditions of labouring women who are not restricted to the domestic sphere

By virtue of being human, every individual certainly longs for liberation from oppressive rules and regulations set up by the selfish exploiters. No doubt women as thinking beings do dream of having lives according to their choice and taste. It is factual that women seem to have been passive and less reactive throughout history of every civilization. But in fact it must not have been their deliberate act. Rather they must have been culturally made so. The very case does not apply to only women but also to all the marginalized. As the matter of fact there have been many sorts of people such as the working class, racially black people, culturally and religiously untouchables, and sexually women who remained mute and passive for a long journey of the human history. As every individual has got innate power by birth which needs education to get enlightened, slowly and gradually all levels of humanity are in the process of becoming conscious and aware. There are rarely any cultures which have carried up bright and pleasant history of women's position. Therefore the fragile and oppressed place of women in the Islamic culture could not be an exception. To demonstrate their lives in Islam, it would be commendable enough to have a glance at the marriage system in the Islamic culture as prescribed in the *hadiths*.

It is strongly recommended in Islam that a person who has made up his mind to propose to a family to get married to its daughter should see the girl. Jabir ibn Abdullah quotes the prophet as saying: "If anyone of you intends to propose to a woman and he can see of her what encourages him to marry her, he should do so" (30). This promulgation by the prophet has made it clear that women do not have any chance to propose to a family to get married to its son. A Muslim girl may go

unwedded provided that no Muslim boy proposes to her family for marriage. There has long been practiced custom of singing and playing to the tambourine by girls on the auspicious occasion of marriage. Some reports of the Hadith quote the prophet as saying: "why have you not sent with her a girl to play to the tambourine, and sing"(30). A girl is considered as a means for pleasure and entertainment. Even the prophet asked for a girl to sing and play to the tambourine. He did not prefer any boy for such act. Women were thus made instrumental.

In fact marriage is a Sunnah, which means that it is recommended, not obligatory. Therefore if a Muslim does not marry throughout her/his life, s/he commits no sin. Though s/he has chosen a course for her/his life different from that recommended by the prophet, peace be upon her/him. The prophet says: "Marriage is my way, (i.e. Sunnah) and a person who disdains to follow my way does not belong to me" (30). Hereby the emphasis put on the recommendation is only to heighten her/his desirability. The most essential aspect of marriage contract is the commitment and acceptance. One party, normally the guardian of the bride, makes the commitment by stating that he marries away the woman on whose behalf he is acting to the prospective husband according to the terms specified. That constitutes the marriage contract. Both commitment and acceptance must be done in the same session, and should not be separated by other matters. As the matter of fact marriage requires commitment and acceptance but these should be from the bride and bridegroom who are on the verge of initiating a new lifestyle. But the Islamic marriage system seeks for essentials from the male guardian of the bride. Prejudice is obvious that the bridegroom's guardian does not have to make commitment and acceptance and at the same time female parent is not welcome in the matter of handing over the daughter. Moreover, the male guardian of the bride should be present. The bride's guardian is

normally her father. If he is dead or absent, then her closest relatives will act as her guardian such as her brother, grandfather or uncle. The prophet says: "No marriage can be made without the presence of a guardian and two proper witnesses"(31). Here it has become pretty clear that women guardians are not considered to be decisive and responsible for completion of their daughters' marriage. In this way marriage of a Muslim woman is not possible with a non-Muslim man. A person can marry to a Muslim girl providing that he converts him to a Muslim .After all it can be said that love marriage is not permissible in the Islamic culture. Along with this the arranged marriage based on the decision and commitment by the male guardians is preferred and considerable.

There have been numerous practices in Islam which contradict to the Koranic statements. Despite the social acceptance of female infanticide among some Arabian tribes, the Quaran has strictly forbidden this custom and considered it a crime like any other murder.

In fact the Bible recommends that women veil themselves or have off their hair. Contrary to what Muslim practice has been for many centuries, the Koran does not ask women to cover themselves from head to toe. The Koran states: "Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their chastity; that is purer for them. And tell believing women to lower their gaze and guard their chastity, not to make a display of their beauty except what is apparent, and let them cast a cover over their bosoms [- - -] and turn to Allah altogether, o believers, in order that you might succeed (Koran 24: 30-31)." The Koran suggests that both men and women dress modestly and guard their chastity. Other than this the Koran suggests that women put a covering on their bosom over the regular clothing they wear and not make a wanton display of their beauty. This does not fit in any way the picture of a woman wearing a

chador or burka (veil) covered from head to toe. It would more closely resemble a picture of a woman wearing a shirt and pants, which do not deliberately reveal her body, with a scarf over her bosom.

Tradition and not the Koran made "tradition based" Muslims bring the veil into Islam from Christian custom. The Koran did not sanction it. The statement in the Koran that talks about both men and women dressing modestly, guarding their chastity and lowering their gaze does not discriminate between the sexes except in the case of women it asks them to take an extra covering over their bosoms only.

The dawn of the 19th century marked the initiation of an era of world wide social change that has continued to challenge the religious and social basis of all societies to this day. European colonial powers formed the political and economic ideological framework that was to encroach upon the Islamic world. The gradual emergence of the global economy and the political ascendancy of the west dictated a global trend that was not easy for non-western nations to avoid. These changes have distinctively been multidimensional in nature; from the emergence of territorial states in their current format to educational reforms. One of the areas to go under a radical transformation is the relation between the sexes, as women searched for their identity and place in the new world. As a feminist Fatima Mernissi argues that throughout the history of Islam, small numbers of women have seized power in both political and military spheres where their western sisters were unable. Throughout the Islamic world, there has been a growing awareness of feminism as a movement of feminist issues.

As the matter of fact the most authoritative book of Muslims, the Koran forms the basis of family law, and is regarded as the literal and unmitigated word of God untainted by any human interpretation, including the prophet himself. Being beyond

reproach, the Koranic regulations regarding women are followed with great strictness. Despite the positive reforms, the Koran states that men are superior to women on account of the qualities with which God has gifted one above the other. However, women were equal before God. Both sexes had an equal responsibility to submit to God and the opportunity to receive salvation.

Hussain finds that the issues raised by Islamic feminists are not directed at God's word as revealed in the Koran, but with the religious scholar's interpretation of the Koran, and the 'Contrived or inauthentic traditions of later provenance which either do not reflect what the prophet said or represent fallible variations of his *Hadith*'.

Mernissi finds that the religious basis for the political seclusion of women can be traced back to the philosophical basis of the *Caliphate*. A *Caliph* was part of an apostolic succession; he succeeded the prophet in time and ruled with the authority of God, as a deputy of the prophet. The first caliph, Abu Bakr replaced the prophet after his death and thus inherited both spiritual and material leadership that Muhammad had been given by Allah. The two major terms that denote power in the Arabic language, *imam* and *caliph* do not possess a feminine form. With Islam being a complete way of life, power becomes essentially religious in nature. It was the caliph's duty to coordinate political administration via the use of religion so that society could be in harmony with the cosmic order. The *caliph* becomes the executor of the will of Allah on the earth. If God is both one and male, then the Caliph, as Allah's representative on the earth cannot be female. Women are automatically excluded from exercising power.

Other feminist writers like Elizabeth Schemla suggest that it is the mixing of civil and religious spheres within many Muslim states that is at the base of feminist

concerns. Leila Ahmed describes that Islamic social system as having combined the most negative way is possible. Any women who challenge this blending of the civil and religious spheres that constitute the basis of Muslim society risk the death penalty. One such woman, Bangladeshi writer, Taslima Nasreen has proposed that secularism is a necessary step in the promotion of women's rights. Nasreen further argues that morality standards should not be dependent on either social or religious rules. A society's moral standards should be relative to the sum of the social, cultural and structural factors. To choose one element, such as religion will invariably lead to an unjust society.

Nawal El Saddawi finds that the oppression faced by women is not essentially due to religious ideologies [- - -] but derives its roots from the class and patriarchal system! Islamic history paints a picture of per-Islamic society where women's sexuality is 'chaotic, all-embracing, rampant promiscuity whose essence is woman's self determination. The male is left with a lack of initiative, and is unable to control relationships through a position of privilege. Such fears are behind the construction of Muslim sex roles, which find their basis in the assumption that proper social order relies on the curtailment of female sexuality.

The worst example of this sexual paranoia can be found in the act of female circumcision in the Islamic culture. For Egyptian feminist, Nawal El Suddawi, her circumcision was the driving force behind her feminist journey. Her operation had led to feelings of insecurity, anger and rebellion. She went through life unable to understand how her well educated parents had participated in such a barbaric act, and were unable to provide answers with any more substance than 'that is the way it is. Overall variations in Islamic feminists' attitudes can be seen.

III. *Brick Lane*: Psychological Evolution through Experience

Ali's *Brick Lane*, a tough and tender novel traces the life of Nazneen, a simple Bangladeshi village girl, whose family marries her off to an emigrant, living in the dispiriting tower flats outside of London. Seen through Nazneen's eyes, England is at first utterly baffling. Ali is tender and interested in the slow emergence into consciousness of a single humble woman. The heart of *Brick Lane* is Nazneen who lives as a wife and mother and has not, for many years, thought of herself as an individual except in stolen moments. Nazneen, 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 off to Chanu, a roly poly blowhard more than twice her age, it quickly 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.

Despite the fact that Nazneen has entered the gate of multicultural society, where people believe in action more than in fate, she has strong faith in the fatalistic life due to her Islamic bringing up. During her childhood she frequently heard the story of fate. She got accustomed to having faith in fate:

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 fate can weaken the blood. Sometimes, or perhaps most times, 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 for mother's quiet courage, her tearful stoicism that was almost daily in evidence. (Emphasis added in the original text 15)

Indeed culture 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, must have been because of her belief in fate.

Contrary to Nazneen, 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 to own. 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, how could you be sure that Hasina was not simply following her fate? If fate cannot be changed, no matter how you struggle (----), may be she struggled against that , and that was what she could not alter. (Emphasis added in the original 22)

Nazneen is very logical regarding to the matter of Hasina's elopement When everything is determined by fate and no one 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. On this ground Nazneen speaks in the favour 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 avers: "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). Nazneen seems to be critical enough to evaluate Chanu's personality and his dealing with incidences. Fairly speaking she finds him as self-assertive and boastful. He does not see anyone superior to him. However he believes in fate.

Nazneen as a married woman has got a son Raqib due to the merciful blessing of the Almighty. Though she provides him good mothering, Raqib has happened to be the victim of sickness. 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 back to the past days, remembers that her mother used to deal with her similarly. 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.

Similarly Nazneen does have the belief in the supernatural power. God does not come in his real shape. Rather he sends some angels to test human beings. Nazneen's mother was like a teacher of the fatalistic world who used to tell numerous stories about the supernatural elements. She remembers how Amma defined the earthly life:

Nazneen turned and looked at her and Amma smiled, showing her curved yellow teeth. God tests 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 judged. Others he tests with illness or poverty, or with jinn who come in the shape of men –or of husbands. She took hold of the hem of Nazneen's nightdress and being to tug at it. Come down here to me and I will tell you how to pass the test.

(Emphasis added in the original 322)

The Islamic culture based on the fatalistic life enforces Nazneen to walk in the path drawn by the imam in the hadith inspite of the fact that she is in the accultured society where everything seems to be possible through human incessant efforts. Nazneen is herself an 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 an 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 a huge number of immigrants who undergo many ups and downs in England in course of their stay and professions .Brick Lane is perhaps the most popular place of Britain inhabited by the Bangladeshi immigrants. Their lifestyles are diverse. It is the profession that determines the type of life one is living. Because of being uneducated and close minded, immigrants can't have occupied the prestigious jobs. But it is only the common reason. In fact the immigrants are no longer given opportunities in accordance with their qualifications and capacities as well. Rather they are deprived of being successful in the respective careers. They are looked down upon as no more than animals:

And you see, to a white person we are all the same dirty little monkeys all in the same monkey clan. But these people are peasants.

Uneducated. Illiterate. Close- minded Without ambition. He sat back and stroked his belly. I don't look down on them, but what can you do?

If a man has only ever driven a rickshaw and never in his life held a book in his hand, then what can you expect from him?' (Emphasis

added in the original 28)

The above remark as stated by Chanu clarifies that the immigrants are not only oppressed and hated by the white people but by the non whites as well. No doubt life is just a journey which must be completed at any cost. As the social being one has to perform her/ his role according to her/his capacity and skill. If someone hates another human fellow on the basis of her/ his job, the very person can not be good at dealing with. Chanu, a boastful guy expresses his disgusting attitude towards the working immigrants and tries to prove him superior to other immigrants before Nazneen. He is a misfit who seems neither to have mixed up with the whites nor to the Bangladeshi immigrants. He only dreams of being promoted:

Chanu filled the silence with his laugh. My wife is just settling in here.

He coughed and 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. (Emphasis added in the original 32)

In fact the diasporic life of immigrants is full of hopes in the initial phase of their transplantation. They see possibilities a lot. Chanu, a Bangladeshi immigrant thinks of getting promoted so soon that many things can get possible. Although his wife, Nazneen has been a village girl, she is slowly settling in the new commercial

world where reason rules over emotion. But before Chanu's arrival in England, he had uncountable numbers 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 an immigrant from the east as well which stops him from being successful. For the white people from the east are not whites whether they are university graduates or peasants:

When I came I was a young man. I had ambitions. Big dreams. When I got the aeroplane 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 off the boat possessing only the lice on their heads. (Emphasis added in the original 34)

As the matter of fact the family members and other related people do expect money and other sorts of cooperation from those who as immigrants working in the developed countries like England. How complicated and challenging life immigrants are living in the foreign land can hardly be thought by the relatives since they have never undergone such diasporic experience. Through the view point of Chanu, the difficulties people face in Brick Lane can be seen and realized. Nazneen is in her melting stage for the new world, she is instructed how the Bangladeshis do live in tower Hamlets. Chanu explains:

Three point five people to one room. That is a council statistic,' Chanu told Nazneen. All crammed together. 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 statistic: three point five Bangladeshis to one room. (Emphasis added in the original 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 it can 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 a degree holder in the foreign lap. Chanu is in dilemma and not sure whether he gets promoted or not. Somewhat he is hopeful. He thinks he would be promoted sooner if he were a white. He suspects the whites and sees the racial discrimination swarming throughout 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 *Brick Lane* regarding suffering, misery, struggle, domination, suppression of the Bangladeshis can clearly be seen. No doubt Ali has maintained her standpoint by balancing the drawbacks 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 notion and inclination towards psychological mutability. Chanu seems to have been a racist himself. He can't stand the English society as he sees many discriminating factors

extant over there. As the matter of fact his bringing-up in the strict Islamic culture has overpowered him in such a 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 this racist society. I don't want him to talk back to his mother. I want him to respect his father. (Emphasis added in the original 111)

In order to reflect on the clash of cultures existing in England, Ali has taken 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 preserve one's identity and heritage. I am talking about children who don't know what their identity is. I am talking about the feelings of alienation engendered by a society where racism is prevalent .I 'm talking about the terrific struggle to preserve one's sanity while striving to achieve the best for one's family. I 'm talking - ;(emphasis added in the original 113)

Obviously the culture 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 surrounding. No doubt parents make ceaseless efforts to preserve their identity and heritage due to which an immense rift gets created between the old generation and the newer one. Chanu advocates against the loss of heritage and identity on the part of the new generation. He wants them to know their real identity and become serious

about that. People certainly feel alienated in the world of commerce, business, and industry and precisely of money. Furthermore, the world of reason and mathematics is too challenging to the immigrants. They are bound to 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 a 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.

It would be remarkable enough to be noted down how Nazneen is living in the world of diverse clashes: class, culture, race and gender. As the matter of fact Nazneen does not 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 lacked the decisive power. Her state is indeed fragile enough 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, her husband does not seem to have freed Nazneen in order to quench her thirst of education:

I would like to learn some English, said Nazneen. Chanu puffed his cheeks and spat the air out in a fuff. It will come. Don't worry about it. Where's the need anyway? He looked at his book and Nazneen watched the screen. (Emphasis added in the original 37)

Every human being is a thinking animal. Caste, gender, race, culture and so on can not stop one from the thinking act. No doubt Nazneen a village woman has not got university degrees like Chanu. What is needed when can easily be realized by her. Indeed every individual is always in the process of becoming. Nazneen is in the very

process as well. The desire for learning English is self-evident that she wants to make her adjustable in the English culture. Frankly speaking she dares cope with the multi-cultural society despite the fact that she has the scarcity of many things such as English language, self-earning, academic certificates and freedom. She is very inquisitive and interested. Moreover she brings about the reference of her intimate friend Razia who is going to college to learn English. But Chanu makes efforts to deprive her of going to the 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're going to be a mother.' (Emphasis added in the original 76-7)

Thus Nazneen is emotionally controlled. Chanu is only engaged in complaining against the English culture and in boasting of his degrees. He is pompous, oppressive and vainglorious who divests Nazneen of her fundamental rights. Right to educate 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 his 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 favourable response. As the matter of fact Chanu is a great criminal. He is the criminal not on the ground that he has killed someone but on the basis of his treacherous nature, behaviour, 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 demeanours .

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 are English. They are more inclined towards Nazneen than Chanu. Since the time of her marriage, Nazneen has indeed been in the fake and deceptive cage created by Chanu. As her daughters have grown up, she once remembers her past days especially about college education. She reflects the reality how she is incapable of expressing college experience before her daughters: "Nazneen went back to Bengali. 'When I was first married, I wanted to go to college to learn English. But your father said there was no need' (194). Thus Nazneen makes daughters aware of the cruel and monopolizing nature of Chanu.

Nazneen's expectation for good responses from Chanu withers. She cannot revolt against Chanu directly since she is culturally made not to do so. Chanu does not see any match between him and Nazneen simply because she is not educated and learned whereas he himself is a graduate from the University of Bangladesh. In his opinion she is a good worker who does cleaning and cooking. He frequently complains that Nazneen can not put his files in order since she has no English. His

expressions justify that he is very sympathetic to her. He speaks all these dominating words before Nazneen and she goes on hearing patiently. He even brings about a proverb: "A blind uncle is better than no uncle. Her husband had a proverb for everything. Any wife is better than no wife something is better than nothing" (23). It thus becomes clear that there is a clash in the conjugal life of Nazneen. She can't have got a chance to breathe of emancipation throughout her marital life. Marriage seems to have been a vulgar enemy which compels her not to vocalize her innermost suppressed longings. Nazneen's sister Hasina who suffers male chauvinism in Bangladesh, does relieve her by bringing about the reference of Nazneen's marital life. Hasina frankly evokes her feelings and attitudes towards marriage in her letter: "I saying to him this is bad patch for the marriage. Every marriage has bad patch. Even my sister sometime having bad patch and she respectable like hell living in London and everything "(76).

Hasina as a second woman character in *Brick Lane* who has become the victim of male- dominated society which is culturally controlled by the Islamic way of life as well. Hasina is somewhat out of track in the Islamic society. In the Islamic culture, the marriage ceremony is conducted on the basis of commitment and acceptance by the male guardian. But Hasina elopes away with a man of her own choice without the consent of parents. She stands in contrast to Nazneen regarding marriage. But unfortunately both Nazneen and Hasina happen to undergo similar ordeals in the male dominated society. Hasina's suffering is economic and physical whereas Nazneen's is psychological and emotional in two distinct nations. These two sisters have very commendable relationship since both of them equally think of each other's betterment and prosperity in life. They remain in touch with each other through letters.

Nazneen has remained passive for a long time due to the cultural impetus that has overpowered her. In the Islamic culture, God is everything. Nothing happens against his will and plan. The Islamic people or Muslims fear the God a lot. They can't question. Moreover the reasoning faculty is blocked due to the trepidation of the blind power. The God is considered omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. He is self sufficient and worthy of praise. Nazneen is one of the Islam followers as well. Therefore she recites the suras from the Holy Koran. She does not know what the words mean. This random recitation of the suras clarifies that faith demands no meaning and bases. Furthermore Nazneen has been culturally made shy and mute before male members. It is Chanu who interferes with each moment of Nazneen's life. She is no more so shy and unsociable as Chanu speaks: " My wife is very shy'. Chanu smiled and motioned with his head for her to be seated" (31). Thus Chanu is controlling and dominating Nazneen everywhere. Ali's mouthpiece, Nazneen is indeed the victim of the Islamic code of life. Norms, values, mores and other compulsory and obligatory rules prescribed in the hadith have been in order to inferiorize the female. As a typical Islamic woman Nazneen undergoes those prescribed ordinances. While she is pregnant she does navaz from her chair. But she feels lazy to do so during this critical time. Then she starts exercising her mind going beyond the present state. She critically questions to herself stating had the imams been pregnant, they would not have made navaz compulsory and obligatory. However she is afraid of the fact she has committed some sort of mistake that she has thought of the pregnant imams. Despite the fact that she is growing intellectually, her culturally set up mind triggers her to be suspicious of her own personality and thought process:

There was a special dispensation for pregnant women. If she chose to, Nazneen could do nazaz from her chair. She had tried it once and it

made her feel lazy. But it was nice that the imams had thought of it.

Such was the kindness and compassion of Islam towards women. Mind you, if any imam had ever been pregnant, would they not have made it compulsory to sit? (. . .) What is wrong with my mind that it goes around talking of pregnant imams? (Emphasis added in the original 69)

Chanu, the oppressive male is very hypocritical and imposing. Rules of Islam are not for him but for Nazneen and children. He brings about reference of the Islamic countries in order to prove he is not doing something bad. He drinks alcohol without any hesitation and does not say his prayers. As Nazneen is very much conscious of the cultural heritage and sees a rift between the Islamic way of life and Chanu's drinking habit, she suspects of him eating pigs as well in the forthcoming days: "My husband does not say his prayers, thought Nazneen, and now he is drinking alcohol. Tomorrow he may be eating pigs" (110). Despite the fact that Chanu is himself out of the Islamic system, he is very strict in imposing the Islamic manners and norms and values on his children along with Nazneen.

Ali has nicely presented the hypocritical nature of the Islamic people who go on fasting for a month. She opines that the harsh system of Islam compels people over ten to go on fasting .The orthodox and inflexible accomplish the norm but the showy drink water secretly:

Sinking, sinking drinking water. When every one in the village was fasting a long month, when not a grain, not a drop of water passed between the parched lips of any able-bodied man, woman or child over ten, when the sun was hotter than the cooking pot and dusk was just a febrile wish, the hypocrite went down to the pond to duck his

head, to dive and sink, to drink and sink a little lower. (Emphasis added in the original 133)

As the matter of fact Ali's *Brick Lane* gives a transparent reflection of the Islamic complicated practice that is to say fasting. Along with this other intolerable and impractical as well as groundless practices are obviously presented through the acts of characters as well. 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 sparkle 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. Don't forget. (Emphasis added in the original 197).

Chanu, the vain guy is very boastful of his heritage and nationality. In fact he has nothing but shows as though he has got every thing and is very worthy in lineage. As the 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. But 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. (emphasis added in the original 240)

There is a common rumour that women in Islam do not long for the free and open lifestyle. They enjoy communicating in hijab and burkhas. But in fact they are culturally and socially compelled to present them so. Due to being human beings they certainly desire for the emancipated and released lifestyle in which can give them opportunity for being intellectual and knowledgeable about the world outside their house boundary which is similar to the cage of parrots. By virtue every individual has the right to mobilize one in her/his own way. To follow the path of her/his own choice is an unavoidable right of every human being. But distinct fake ideologies in the name of religion and pure culture are considered as role models for thinking beings. In fact culture is against nature. When people become civilized and cultured, they start being away from the emotional world which passes human beings solace of life and progress. Sex is the most reliable source of pleasure. There is not any group of people who can naturally keep them away from the sexual world. On this ground the sexual education is just and indispensable. There would be a great injustice on the part of humanity if any religion or culture stood against it.

When Karim commences his opinion about women belonging to two different religions and culture, Nazneen is very attentive to his assertion. He shows a dichotomy between the westernized girl who prefers the western lifestyle to the Islamic one on the other hand the religious girl wears the scarf or even the burkha.

Though they 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. Hereby 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, right, they'd be good wife material. But they aren't. Because all they want to do is argue. And they always think they know best because they've been off to all these summer camps for Muslim sisters. (Emphasis added in the original 385).

As the matter of fact Karim seems to be another male figure ,who 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. Due to being Islamic, women should not put on clothes of their choice and rationalize. 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 woman 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 behaviour:

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 at the Jamme Masjid had preached against that very thing. Honufa protested that it was a women-only course and that she was praising for the sake of her husband who suffered with a bad back (Emphasis added in the original 391)

Hasina is already out of the 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 choice despite the fact that it is challenging and miserable. In the letter she writes:

Amma always say 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. (Emphasis added in the original 434)

Because of cultural obligations women in Islam do think they are inferior to men and can't do 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.

Thus Nazneen is evolving psychologically through rationalizing and suspicion on the words 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 experience diversity of the materialistic world.

Nazneen has indeed spent her maximum time for others. She has never been selfish and thought of her own individual identity. By nature she is virtuous, kind, merciful, sacrificing, innocent, emotional, cooperative, 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 and starts rearing the son. Here her 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 could supply.

What was her own life, by contrast, but a series of gnawings, ill defined and impossible to satisfy? (Emphasis added in the original 83)

Nazneen remains fully dedicated to the baby's life. Though males always claim 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 got 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. 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 time comes 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 would 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. Nazneen is thus in dilemma what to do:

Her first thought was that she would go to Dhaka with her husband and her children. It would be the right thing to do, and she would be with Hasina again. Doubts assailed her on all sides. The children would be miserable. Shahana would never adjust. What would happen to Chanu in Dhaka? [...] It would be difficult for the girls. And it would be impossible simply to spurn him. Perhaps it would be best to go to Dhaka. (Emphasis added in the original 405)

Nazneen's ambivalent position is due to her compassion and dutiful individuality. She thinks of each one's life and apparent problems because of her

departure for Dhaka. Hasina, Chanu, Bibi and Shahana are equally important in her eyes despite the fact that Chanu has psychologically dominated her and has been deceiving her emotionally throughout the conjugal life. Nazneen as a mother much responsible for the melting stage of girls, is morally obliged to decide in the favour of Bibi and Shahana in order to prove good maternity. No doubt these two girls are beloved by both parents and are brought up with both cultures. It can be said the girls trying to break free from the "Old world" and move into their real life. Their parents can see this also, and try to turn them around.

Let's see how Nazneen serves Chanu but this self- arrogant guy never thinks of her individual identity and intellectual advancement:

Life made its pattern around and beneath and through her. Nazneen cleaned and cooked and washed. She made breakfast for Chanu and looked on as he ate, collected his pens and put them in his briefcase, watched him from the window as he stepped like a band leader across the courtyard to the bus stop on the far side of the estate. Then she ate standing up at the sink and washed the dishes. She made the bed and tidied the fat, washed socks and pants in the sink and larger items in the bath. (Emphasis added in the original 40-1)

Naturally Nazneen is very loving, empathetic, labourious, industrious, 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. In fact hadiths instruct women to be entirely devoted and dedicated to the service of their husbands. The hadiths which 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 obligations 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 behaviour 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 tend 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 for you that you married an education man. That was a stroke of luck. (Emphasis added in the original 45)

Chanu's severe oppression goes to be intolerable and indigestible. When atrocities reach to the climax, Nazneen commences revolting against this barbarian and nefarious figure. Every thing has a certain limitation. He always talks about his education and avers that Nazneen is very lucky that she has got married to him but this nonsensical brute never thinks that he himself has been fortunate enough to marry a tender and polite girl who is twice younger than him. An odd body and old age could never be accepted by such a beautiful and loving girl like Nazneen. But due to the cultural biasness and prejudice Nazneen without exercising out her mind accepted the proposal of marriage with such an arrogant and vain figure in order to walk

obediently on the road built by her parents which concrete, sand and cement have been of the Islamic compassionate instructions nicely written in the hadiths inscribed by the male imams and caliphs. Now Nazneen is getting stronger and more revolutionary. Her anger and hatred towards Chanu are expressed very sharply and keenly:

Nazneen dropped the promotion from her prayers. The next day she chopped two fiery red chillies and placed them, like hand grenades, in Chanu's sandwich. Unwashed socks were paired and put back in his drawer. The razor slipped when she cut his corns. His files got mixed up when she tidied. All her chores, peasants in his princely kingdom, rebelled in turn. Small insurrections, designed to destroy the state from within. (Emphasis added in the original 63)

In course of time collective awareness comes among women who have realized the fact they have been exploited by men in many ways. Shenaz, a revolting woman who has undergone different ups and downs, speaks on behalf of all oppressed women:

There is another kind of labour we perform, and if we withdraw it that will be a discomfort only for the men". "A man cannot live without water. He cannot live without it, but he can bear the thought of no water. A man can live without sex. He can live without it, but he can not bear the thought of no sex. This is my suggestion. (Emphasis added in the original 65)

Ali's this woman character has exposed the bitter truth through her logical expression. Men as the selfish social products seek for opportunities to dominate the human fellows who are indeed sources of their origins. Such a revolting and

revolutionary suggestion certainly adds energy to the intellectual faculty of the women. All in her group get powerful and conscious of the selfish nature of men. This has indeed been an enormous step against male chauvinism. Similarly Nazneen silently protests against Chanu which he can hardly feel:

Nazneen handed him pyjamas. She slung his trousers on a hanger, without folding them properly, and put them in the wardrobe. He did not notice the dirty socks, the crumpled trousers. Her rebellions passed undetected. She was irritated by his lack of interest; she was pleased by her subtlety. (Emphasis added in the original 75)

Nazneen has got altered psychologically. She feels irritated by Chanu's activities. She has begun fighting in the battlefield of conjugal life in order to emancipate her from the atrocities and exploitation of the male domain especially of Chanu's who is the real villain in her life of liberation.

Chanu does not only oppress Nazneen but Bibi and Shahana as well. He often calls Bibi, the little memsahib. Once he threatens her that he is going to break every bone in her body. In order to address his threats he prefers Nazneen as a medium. Shahana feels uneasy and bored when she has to listen to Bengali classical music. As the matter of fact she prefers jeans to kameez. She does express her protest against the Islamic dress by spoiling her entire wardrobe by pouring paint on them. Shahana, Bibi and Nazneen are of the similar opinion that Chanu is the representative of male figures. Shahana grown in the English environment feels comfortable to speak English but she along with Bibi and Nazneen is not allowed to speak English in the house. There is a family conflict and tension due to the imposition of unwanted rules which no female members enjoy. Rather they feel disappointed. Chanu is no more responded well by his daughters due to his imposing and heinous nature. His opinions

are considered vain and his rules to be stupid. The collective revolt arises out of the tension and gender discrimination.

We are not allowed to speak English in this house, said Shahana, transgressing at top volume. There was always this tension between them. They could never get over their disappointments. If Shahana had been a boy, would it be different? [...] 'And we are always keeping to the rule?' Said Nazneen. 'But it is his stupid rule in the first place!' [.....] When Chanu went out the girls frequently switched languages. Nazneen let it pass. Perhaps even encouraged it (emphasis added in the original 193-4)

Nazneen proves philanthropic in the matter of maternity who always longs for emancipation on the part of children. The girls, who frequently switch languages, indirectly oppose Chanu. But Nazneen, the gracious figure encourages and inspires girls to enjoy the life of their own choice. Nazneen thus balances her position as a mother, as a sister as well as a wife. She frequently remembers Hasina who is in Dhaka alone. As Nazneen, has nicely understood women's fragility in the male-dominated world, she worries how Hasina would be passing her days in Dhaka. A woman needs protection in the so-called civilized place like Dhaka where male brutes can not tolerate women's presence in the public. Hasina has been left behind alone in the world of brutality and suppression. Nazneen feels troubled due to the fact that Hasina is there without family, protection and husband. The society especially over religious, male-dominated and the rule-governed can not guarantee the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness of the women due to the fact that biasness, inequality, inhumanity have pervaded heavily. Ali asserts the feeling of Nazneen regarding her compassion for Hasina:

She had got herself lost because Hasina was lost. And only now did she realize how stupid she was in Dhaka. A woman on her own in the city, without a husband, without family, without friends, without protection. (Emphasis added in the original 58)

Indeed the life of women is very troublesome in the city. They do not get economic support in case they are without husband and family. But the fundamental cause for their dependence on the family and husband is the system which is biased. In the society governed by Islam, women are not allowed to go to the college openly for further education. The married women are strictly prohibited to go out. All outer businesses are dealt with by male figures. Women's domain is confined to the house. In case any one of women in the Islamic society revolts and goes outside to live on her own, she is not provided with chances to be self dependent economically. The males do not favour her. Even the cultured women make negative and insulting remarks. The life becomes very challenging. The very woman gets bound to involve in prostitution like acts in order to survive her. She further sees existential problem in the inhuman world dominated by men. Hasina's situation is similar who is undergoing uncountable miserable situations. She is tortured a lot over there. Chanu who is proud of Dhaka which has failed to guarantee the comfortable and secure life of Hasina, never triggers this prevailing drawback of this Islamic rule-governed society. Nazneen sometimes goes back to her past days which were very romantic and pleasant regarding the relationship between Hasina and her. She compares Hasina with a princess who was born in a wrong place where beauty, love, freedom, enjoyment, pleasure are looked down upon. Nazneen thus recalls those days:

Hasina plaited Nazneen's hair and Nazneen made two thick braids of Hasina's hair and wound them on top of her head. Hasina looked like a

princess. Her face was flawless, symmetrical, mythical. She hardly belonged to this world. A lotus on a dung heap. She was not made to suffer. (Emphasis added in the original 103-4).

Similarly Hasina is too concerned with the life of Nazneen. Hasina often desires to know how Nazneen's life along with other family members is going on in London. She expresses her passionate concern through her letter: "No need to trouble for me sister. I celebrate you husband success in Bookkeeping certificate. You say one time he wanting to build house in Dhaka. My sister I wait for this day. How the plans coming?" (159-60). Speaking frankly Hasina's life in Dhaka is very tormenting. She is no more breathing peacefully. Her every moment is painful and miserable which can be known through her long letter written in the grammatically incorrect sentences. Ali's attempt seems to have expressed the fact how women in totality suffers in the male- dominated society. Ali has nicely portrayed a woman character Hasina undergoing a troublesome ordeal through her mouth piece, Nazneen:

Nazneen tried to conjure an image of her sister that did not belong to yesterday. She tried to see her as a woman with all the scars of her life. All she could see was a girl with pomegranate pink lips, a face that made your breath catch, and flick of her shoulders that said she would not wait. (Emphasis added in the original 424-5)

Since Chanu is the head of the family, he is responsible for dealing with the economic matter. He is mean and stingy on the ground that he does not spend money even on the essentials. The children need daily requirements which Chanu rarely provides them with. Nazneen is dependent on him and therefore she has to beg money from him. Where money goes indeed, is the matter of marvel for Nazneen. She does not get told any thing about the money Chanu earns. So Nazneen suspects and raises

questions to herself who looks after the money. Chanu as an odd figure never asks for any suggestions from Nazneen regarding the economic affair. This is why, Nazneen objects: "But we don't see a single extra penny. That's my objection. He sends it all back. He is the biggest miser. The biggest bastard miser. If the children need tooth brushes, I have to beg. I have to get every thing second hand" (95-6). Once Nazneen starts planning to call Hasina to London so that she can feel relieved and relaxed somewhat. Due to the gracious nature of Nazneen she can't turn stony. Rather she keeps on thinking of everyone's betterment. But she is not the economic determinant in the family. The biggest bastard miser, Chanu does not give the favourable consent to Nazneen's plan to call Hasina to England. Moreover he responds in such a way that Nazneen remains silent in the very affair:

My sister, I would like to bring her here. Chanu waved his thin arms.

'Bring her. Bring them all. Make a little village here. He shook his delicate shoulders in a show of laughter. Get a box and sow rice. Make a paddy on the windowsill. Every one will feel at home. Nazneen felt the letter inside her Choli. 'There has been some difficulty for her. I only have one sister. (Emphasis added in the original 193)

Thus the economic dependence of Nazneen on Chanu has made her weak in the matter of decision making. And the every incidence enforces her to feel for being independent. Out of this severe psychological torture, Nazneen gets somewhat thoughtful. She commences thinking of having a job. If she had a job, she would make decisions on her own. Her thirst for bringing Hasina to London remains unquenched due to being economically dependent on Chanu. She has many desires to fulfill such as having a job, saving money, going to Dhaka, as well as sending money to Hasina to get her relieved from economic troubles. With the help of Karim, a

young Muslim, she has got a tailoring machine which is indeed as the source of income for her. Her longings for many things go on throughout her mind day and night:

Nazneen got up in the night and went to the Kitchen. She took a Tupperware container from the fridge and ate the curry cold, standing up against the sink. If she had a job she would be able to save. And if she saved then they would have enough money to go to Dhaka. [...] He would not know how much money there should be and she would be able to put some aside. (Emphasis added in the original 187)

The arrival of Karim in the tender, gracious, romantic, emotional and especially sexual world of Nazneen, points out the fact that she has not been sexually satisfied, romantically relaxed, and psychologically treated well by Chanu throughout their marital life. Karim is indeed a substitute to Chanu. Karim is young, emotional, considerate and faithful in love with Nazneen. Nazneen has been having fruitful solace of human life in Karim since they met each other. The image of Karim frequently comes into her mind. People may call their relationship naming illicit love affair who are influenced by some sort of the biased ideology. Ideologies are in fact created by the oppressor in order to make the oppressed follow. No ideology is indeed fair and impartial. Nazneen has never felt contented in the companionship of Chanu. She is inclined to Karim who understands her feelings and behaves with her humanly. It is only Karim with whom Nazneen has ever been romantically in love:

He kissed her on the mouth and he led her into the bedroom. Get undressed, he said, and get into bed. He left the room she got changed into her nightdress and lay beneath the sheets. Through the window she looked at a patch of blue sky and a scrap of white cloud. [...] She

turned her face into the pillow and moaned and when he kissed the back of her neck she moaned again. (Emphasis added in the original 288)

Thus Nazneen's romantic love affair goes on in the compatible companionship of Karim. Both of them have beautifully created their own world which is entirely different from the world prescribed in the Islamic culture. Such a wonderful life which is full of feelings and romance cannot be digested in the orthodox Islamic culture. Nazneen has thus sexually got emancipated. Her liberation from the Islamic way of life is in deed a great slap on the face of the imams themselves who have drawn a biased and partial map as the domain of women. Truly saying Karim is the first man to see Nazneen naked which makes her sick with Shame. It makes her sick with desire. This act is considered as a crime which gets them be punished in the orthodox society. Moreover such an illicit relationship is taken as a stigma on the moral ground. It would be commendable enough to see how and why Nazneen has selected a new power in life:

If ever her life was out of her hands, it was now. She has submitted to her father and married her husband; she had submitted to her husband. And now she gave herself upto a power greater than these two, and she felt herself helpless before it. When the thought crept into her mind that the power was inside her, that she was its creator, she dismissed it as conceited [...] she gave into fate and not to herself. (Emphasis added in the original 299-300)

Nazneen has totally entered the world of knowledge from the world of ignorance. Now she understands and realizes how she was used to being ruled by her father. She indeed believed in her father and accepted his decision blindly without

questioning simply because she had been trained so. Because of the oppressive father, she got married to Chanu who turned to be second oppressor in her life. To overpower these two oppressive figures she has chosen the next power which is greater than the earlier two. As the matter of fact she does not feel completely released from the grip of the power now as well. But Nazneen can not do any thing since she is helpless in this matter. She can not overcome her heart: "Nazneen could not concentrate on her sewing. She watched the back of Karim's head, the strong lines his neck made. If she were to describe him to Hasina, what would she say?" (377). When Karim puts marriage proposal to Nazneen, she gets puzzled and can't decide what to do . She has got two daughters who stand as the barrier in the construction of new decisions. Nazneen as being a considerate mother can't push the daughter into the hell. She thinks more about the life of Bibi and Shahana than her own life. Her life is less significant and crucial than daughters' for her. She is in dilemma and cannot move a step ahead without deep contemplation. A huge number of questions ceaselessly come to her mind:

A picture of him came into her mind. Karim in his jeans and trainers, sitting at her table, bouncing his leg Karim with a magazine, feeding her slices of the world. Karim in his white shirt rubbing his smooth jaw, telling her all the things that lay hidden just outside her window. He knew about the world and his place in the world. That was how she liked to remember him. (Emphasis added in the original 448).

Speaking frankly both Nazneen and Karim are equally crucial to each other. Nazneen can not stop seeing the image of Karim. Psychologically she is involved in the world of romance and love with Karim in such a way she is unable to keep her away from him. Though she is sometimes away physically, she always remains in his

touch due to bridging act of emotional and psychological waves which are constantly roaming in the their private love affair. Karim is so glad that he has got such a real companion. Nazneen is all in all for Karim: "How did Karim see her? The real thing, he said. She was his real thing. A Bengali wife. A Bengali mother. An idea of home an idea of himself that he found in her" (454).

Gradually Nazneen has been successful to explore her own self. She has long been in illusion that her father and Chanu were good to her. But now she sees differences within herself. The old Nazneen and the newer one are distinct not physiologically but psychologically and intellectually. At the present she is able to differentiate sugar from rice. In one sense she is disillusioned. Thus she states the outcome of her observation and long time experience:

Abba did not choose so badly. This was not a bad man. There were many bad men in the world, but this was not one of them. She could love him. Perhaps she did already. She thought she did. And if she didn't, she soon would because now she understood what he was, and why. Love would follow understanding (emphasis added in the original 120-1)

As soon as Nazneen has become disillusioned, she begins seeing everything keenly. She stops accepting anyone's proposal blindly. Out of a long journey she has squeezed nectar out of lemons which now leads her mental state. Now she is reasonable rather than emotional. Suddenly she is gripped by the idea that if she changes her clothes, her entire life will change as well. If she puts on a skirt and a jacket and a pair of high heels, then there will be a drastic change in her lifestyle. Another drastic transition in Nazneen is that she turns her deaf ear to the philosophical speech by Chanu. Even in the presence of Chanu she keeps on sitting in front of

Karim and feeling satisfied. Such a gradual psychological and intellectual evolution in Nazneen precedes her to decide on her own. She now feels changed and knowledgeable.

Because of being failure, Chanu has decided to go back to Dhaka. Indeed he wants all family members to go along with him but Nazneen diplomatically convinces him that Bibi and Shahana will feel difficult enough to adjust in the Bangladeshi culture. Bibi and Shahana do not show readiness to go with Chanu. With a common compromise that Nazneen along with Bibi and Shahana will leave London for Bangladesh later, Chanu goes back to his homeland of which he is proud enough. Nazneen along with Bibi and Shahana remains in England. Now she is totally free from the oppressor: "Nazneen went to the bedroom and lay down on the bare mattress. She slept a dreamless sleep. [...] A vision rose before her. Chanu sitting on an aeroplane, trying to peer out of the window [...] Nazneen lifted him up and put him on her knee"(464-5). Since Chanu has geographically been at a long distance, he can not impose his ideas on Nazneen along with Bibi and Shahana. Nazneen now feels as if she were in the heavenly world. She is in the state of ecstasy: "Just wait and – Nazneen interrupted herself. She took more rice. She took more dal. She offered more to her daughters. 'We'll talk about it tomorrow or later and we'll decide what to do. Staying or going, it's up to us three" (480).

To sum up, every individual needs treating humanly since all human beings are in the process of becoming. If one is oppressed and is not dealt with equally and tenderly, s\he will surely turn revolutionary one day. The very revolt destroys the oppressor and emancipates the oppressed. Similarly Nazneen who was initially ignorant about English language and culture turns capable of existing in the

multicultural society whereas the so-called taught university scholar, Chanu, returns home being a great failure.

IV. Conclusion

Monica Ali has illuminated a foreign world with great intensity wherein her well-developed characters pull readers along on a deeply psychological, almost spiritual journey. The story of *Brick Lane* revolves around the frequently, tragic comic and permanently resigned-to-her-fate Nazneen, born and apparent stillbirth in a village in Bangladesh, and married off 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 has bestowed on her in a London council flat. Though there are others from Bangladesh living there, Chanu believes the other immigrants to be uneducated, illiterate, and uncultured, and he discourages any reaching out Nazneen might do to these people who are below them.

Since Nazneen was 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, has been disowned. 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 that *Brick Lane* takes place. Through Hasina's Letters, Ali shows the similarities and contrasts in the lives of Nazneen and Hasina, both second class citizens, and, like other Bengali wives, powerless to control their own fate in the culture in which they live.

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 visits with Razia. As the author seems to have focused on the minute details in Nazneen's everyday life, the reader observes 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 the other hand, 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.

Indeed Ali has shown Nazneen's world in all its earthly details. The reader sees her increasingly cluttered apartment, hears the constant excuses and boasts from Chanu, and feels Nazneen's confusion and frustration with her life, as she continues to act the dutiful wife, cutting Chanu's corns and trimming his nose hair while planning mini rebellions. For a while, she puts hot chilies in his sandwiches, rolls up unwashed socks and hides them in his drawer, and cuts him when she tends his feet. Nazneen's revolt does not get confined to a family only since she is indeed a typical character who stands for women grown in the similar orthodox Islamic culture and long oppressed and badly treated by the male figures in the name of the so-called pure culture. As the matter of fact revolution commences when suppression reaches to the climatic situation. As being members from the marginalized, the culturally grown females do not revolt violently and directly. Rather they express their anger and frustration in the silent way. Concretely speaking Nazneen long oppressed and marginalized in the maze of the Islamic and Bangladeshi culture revolts against the selfish husband, Chanu throughout *Bricklane*. But her rebellions are deceptive and confusing.

Ali herself Bangladeshi born English writer might have come across the similar situation. 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 accultured society which is heavily dominated and influenced by the Islamic way of life can not be much different. Nazneen's opinions are no more valued and prioritized by Chanu since he doesn't

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.

Though Chanu is basically a good man, he holds to the old values and is unmotivated to help Hasina in her troubles. He forces his two daughters: Bibi and Shahana to memorize long passages of traditional poetry and beats them when they fail. Unable to fulfill his dreams for his own life in the alien culture of London, he is determined that his daughters will maintain the old culture, the one in which he feels comfortable. Because it is the Islamic culture which is different from what they experience with their friends and at school, rebellions are inevitable, both from the daughters and from Nazneen. Due to the demand of time, Karim enters the gate of Nazneen's life and makes it romantic, emotional, valuable, prestigious, worthy and even recognizable. He proves the catalyst that Nazneen uses to change her life. He awakens in Nazneen, a long dormant questioning. A questioning of her own identity, of her husband's, her two daughters and her community's. Thus Nazneen along with her daughters: Bibi and Shahana feels to be emancipated from the oppressive world of Chanu and even from the Islamic code of life. To fulfill her requirement, Nazneen begins to assert herself in her own little world. Picking up enough English from her daughters to communicate, she turns their tables on fate and instead moulds her own future. Ultimately, Nazneen finds herself making decisions of her own, achieving a kind of personal happiness which she does not have to share with Chanu when she has geographically and psychologically distanced her from him.

Frankly speaking, Ali has recreated Nazneen's life in all its mundane details, showing her acceptance of a new culture through tiny, seemingly insignificant

decisions. The gradual evolution of a new Nazneen is neither simple nor without conflict, and no member of the family escapes her transformation. After all Nazneen attains liberation from the old values, culture and system through the discovery of selfhood as well as long experience in the companionship of a male oppressive figure who represents the male dominated society in the accultured situation.

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