
Representation of Muslim Identity in Post 9/11: A Study of Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003)

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ABSTRACT

Monica Ali's Brick Lane elaborates how Bangladeshi Muslim immigrants live in Brick Lane, London—as a multicultural place/city. The novel Brick Lane is a discussion of knowing the meaning of 'representation', 'representation' and narrative styles, the impacts of host culture on immigrants and diaspora journey, and representation of how distinguishes a—self as a Bangladeshi Muslim Bengali identity and others as a Muslim diaspora identity. Ali's Muslim diaspora representation coping up with Nazneen's struggle demonstrates the question of representation, identity crisis, addiaspora journey as a Muslim protagonist.

Keywords: Bangladesh, Brick Lane, diaspora, immigration, Muslim, representation

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INTRODUCTION

Earlier, diaspora study has been seen as a place-to-place dispersion—had only studied as a dispersion in a group of people to find out the reasons behind it. But now, it has spread its branches, and today, we can see that diaspora is in literature, history, and political science and in many other streams. Now, it has been explored by academics, students, and practitioners widely. Today, in the 21st century, the themes of diaspora literature have been entailing to an identity crisis, the question of transnationalism, cultural clashes or conflict, diaspora identity negotiation, and memory. Recently, research scholars and writers are re-defining this short concept of diaspora and investigating the many aspects of diaspora that impact a broader level to immigrants.

In South Asian diaspora literature, Indian and Pakistani Anglophone literature exclusively contributed and narrated many diaspora stories. Readers come to know about Bangladesh or Bengalis through diaspora literature. The analysis of the representation of Bengali Muslims has always been in question, and it drives a doubt in the authority of writing. Also, in the presentation of the Muslim community in diaspora literature. The texts on and about presenting the Bangladeshi came out from the late twentieth. They have been raising diaspora issues from gender discrimination, and a high identity conflicted (Bengali hyphenated identity) characters and remembering their home and struggling to adjust to the host culture. Recent scholars focus on exploring the dynamic relation of the current theoretical connection of diaspora to gender and Muslim identity.

DIASPORA AND GENDER PERSPECTIVES

The theoretical framework of diaspora and gender packaged is significant to understanding how Monica Ali's protagonist—Nazneen and other characters' struggle— becomes a question of representation for the character and the writer's authenticity of writing/authorship as an ethnic Bangladeshi Bengali Muslim identity. Debates and discussions on representation and writing authority are always in question. They are a centre point of the contemporary scholar's view to search the line of fact and fiction with experimenting the novel/fiction and reality.

Muslim diaspora, identity crisis as a Muslim, and as a diasporic life in the host country—all these are strategically presented by ethnic Bangladeshi, UK-based writer Monica Ali. The focus on all these contemporary issues unmasks the focus of literature to reality. After 9/11 (11 September 2001), Muslim diaspora research reaches a significant role in literature to understand the resemblance of—conflict of identity, nationalism, and conflict of self and other. In addition, diaspora in literature, it has been seen that the expansion of today's diaspora literature is one of the reinventions of contemporary diaspora experience, including gender and Muslim identity. However, 9/11 brings a substantial conflict and negatively impacts Muslim immigrants' lives in the Western world, which can be seen by operating through binaries as a—west and non-west, even as self and other, Muslims and non-Muslims. Post-colonial diaspora literature must be stretched with Islamophobia and distrust among the natives and Muslim immigrants. From the gender context, the issues of women carrying or practising their religion and culture in the host country present their identity distinguish as a Muslim and gender identity from others.

Muslims have been represented in literature, film, and Television series as villains and enemies. This representation emerges through the discourse, dialogues, or discussions between society, west vs non-western countries, readers, scholars, theorists, and writers. Representation is to define contemporary defining and theorizing a new diaspora. For example, "Muslim" as an identity became a significant subject in post 9/11 literature. When native representation is mostly like vilifying Muslims, some Muslim writers turn the table by narrating the sufferings and predicament of diaspora persons as Muslims in America. Among those novels, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid and *Once in a Promised Land* by Laila Halaby are noticeable pieces to understand diaspora issues. Another significant change happened post 9/11 when "Muslim" was stigmatized. As a result, many Muslim women writers came out of the veil and started writing in defence of Islam and Muslims' difficult situation in the diaspora.

MONICA ALI AND DIASPORA CONNECTION IN WRITING

Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* is the first fiction written by a Muslim female diaspora writer after 9/11, which dealt with the Bangladeshi community in London. Especially with the subject of the

Muslim Bangladeshi immigrants, their lifestyles, cultural conflict, and how 9/11 affected Muslim immigrants in the United Kingdom. She has written extensively on Bangladeshi immigrants. Their journey is somewhere related to her own experiences. The novel is also different because its protagonist is a typical, uneducated Bangladeshi bride, wife, and mother. She tries to keep bonding with her memory of Bangladesh and her current reality and never forgets patriarchal culture, even though she lives in a privileged developed society.

In the discussion of the cultural impact on the characters like Mrs. Azad, Shahana, and Nazneen's oldest daughter, who do not wear Bangladeshi clothes, i.e. sari, hijab is represented thoroughly. This representation or acceptance of west culture shows how Ali represents a cross-cultural conflict for Nazneen. The choice of Western clothes—jeans, not wearing hijab, not wearing a sari is a revolutionary act—against gender/patriarchy and acceptability of host/western culture by denying the Bengali. It also focuses on the representation of the Muslim immigrant identity in duality form, which occurred for home and hosted cultural and religious conflict from Islamic to a multicultural world. The full view from the representation theory and religious discourses after 9/11 through the connection through to writer and diaspora fictions pay attention of the world's Muslim and others.

MONICA ALI'S *BRICK LANE* (2003)

London has always been the hub of multicultural and immigrant people. Brick Lane is an area in London that is the heart of 'Bangladeshi people.' Also, it is known as 'Banglatown.' Monica Ali is a British author and Bangladeshi origin born in 1967, in Dhaka of East Pakistan (now in Bangladesh). She got the attention of the readers and critics immediately after her first published fiction named after the famous *Bangla Town in London (Brick Lane)*. This story sets in London, which is similar to London place and the diaspora community represented in Salman Rushdie's writing. Myles Chilton (2012) reminds that Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* represents London, how it plays with social and cultural identities—allowing marginalized subjects to reimagine themselves and the city—only to foreclose any possibilities for agency, social revolution, and economic equality.

After observing the anthropological perspective—through culture and livings—everyday stories of ordinary Bangladeshi Muslim immigrants can be seen through the dual identity of transformation, which exists in multiple layers. Its impact is highlighted in *Brick Lane* through—Nazneen, a protagonist of the novel. Ali narrates Nazneen's experiences in London as a Muslim Bangladeshi woman. After Nazneen's marriage, Chanu (Nazneen's husband) brings her to London. This diaspora family (Bangladeshi family in London: Chanu and Nazneen) is portrayed remarkably in the novel, which represents all diaspora (immigrant) communities (highly Muslims).

Diaspora people's identity is considered belonging to their nationality, culture, and homeland (Gilroy, 1997, p.307). The family's journey from Bangladesh to Brick Lane is full of a re-location, negotiation of identity, and adjustment for livelihood with their sensation and memory of being Bangladeshi. Their re-location leads to a dislocation in search of a home and identity. The nostalgia of food, childhood memories, distance from friends and family constitute loss of self-consciousness and insecurity of destabilization due to dual or hyphenated identity. From the diasporic sense, Ali brings out the picture of Nazneen's romanticizing dream of her childhood, of her homeland, about her Bengali food, and transformation from a girl to a woman from Bangladesh to Britain.

QUESTION TO MONICA ALI'S AUTHORSHIP AND REPRESENTATION

Brick Lane comes in the eyes of the researchers due to its debate. The point of the researcher attracts many reader Bangladeshi diaspora community readers of *Brick Lane* in London. However, they criticized the novel after claiming that it does not accurately represent the Bangladeshi diaspora community. From here, the question of Monica Ali's authority, writing, and presenting diaspora community comes into question.

Monica Ali's portrayal of Nazneen's mind in East London, according to Ali Ahmad (2004), is compelling and engaging, with an attentive narration of the protagonist's entire journey. Her imprisonment and monotony, the invisibility of her labour, and her husband's covert appropriation have all revealed Nazneen's psyche. Ali's representation of the Bengali inhabitants in East London and Nazneen's transformation can be seen from its context of society, and this can be compared with Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861). On the other hand, Sukhdev Sandhu (2009) figured out

what was missing in *Brick Lane*; Ali self-consciously built up Nazneen's independence as a human being and evaluation of her womanhood rather than narrating the place Hamilton Tower. Here, he praised Zadie Smith for perfectly portraying Willesden in *White Teeth* (2000).

MONICA ALI'S REPLY TO CRITICS

Monica Ali wrote an article about her reactions in "The Guardian (British daily leading newspaper)." She denied all criticism and protests against her book, claiming her authenticity to represent the community in the book. She says that a writer can write anything that she has in her mind. Her answer to written more about Nazneen in an article has also been explained in the "The Outrage Economy" (2007). She says,

"Why did I write about Nazneen? I think, but I cannot be sure, that the source was my mother, who is white and grew up in England. She made the opposite journey to Nazneen's, moving to Bangladesh (East Pakistan as it was then) to marry, knowing little of the culture and religion, speaking not a word of the language. When I was a child, she often told me about that experience of utter social and cultural dislocation. I thought about it a lot" (Ali, 2007).

Ali's mother's ignorance about Bangladeshi culture and society is equivalent to Nazneen's unknowing and feelings of alienation in East London. Ali discards the idea of authenticity, saying that there is nothing authentic this day. *Brick Lane* is represented from two different directions of form stressed linear development to self-awareness and content of hybrid culture and psychological dilemma (Cormack, 2006, p.696).

AFTER 9/11: THE EMERGENCE OF MUSLIM DIASPORA WRITING

Post-colonial South Asian diaspora literature narrates the identity crisis of Muslims after 9/11. Due to the Muslim religion and Islamophobia, the natives' perspective to see Muslims have changed across the globe. The issues of Muslims after 9/11 have been depicted widely in the literature, where young writers also talk about the representation of Muslims and the 9/11 impact on their lives. Questions to a clash between cultural (Bangladeshi Bengali/Muslim and U.K./Western) and religious (Islamic and western/secular) identities are expanding in the context of Bangladeshi Muslim representation in London post 9/11 world. Ali's narrator depicts diaspora with identity, culture, religion, and gender.

Ilhan Omar writes,

"Many Americans found themselves now having their civil rights stripped from them, so what I was speaking to was, as a Muslim, not only was I suffering as an American who was attacked on that day, but the next day I woke up as my fellow Americans were now treating me as a suspect" (Haring, 2019).

Ilhan Omar, a young American politician, said this on CBS's "Face the Nation" program. She points out the severe fact even after passing 18 years of 9/11. She extends by saying Muslims face untrust every day in America; even though, they are American, they are treated as second-class citizens due to their religion. This statement is not an individual speech of a congressperson but a reality of Muslims in the diaspora after 9/11. The voices are also raised in politics, which demonstrates that the mirror of society in literature too.

Most of the writings by Muslims focus on/ an identity crisis. They experience exclusion based not only on their nationalities but also on their religion, being a Muslim. Thus, this is still important to talk about diasporic Muslim communities in writing because of the aftermath of 9/11 disguised as hatred. Pervez (2015) supported the perception that Islam is overshadowed by 9/11 in the United States of America (USA). The Muslim community faces obstacles, which is not the case in the USA but other western countries. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu (2011: vii) writes, Islamophobia causes Islam to be regarded as "a source of intolerance, extremism, and terrorism, one whose adherents are out to destroy Western values" (Raihanah et al. 2015, p. 109). Islamophobia occurs in many ways in Muslim diaspora writing, in their protagonists, and presented through other and Muslim characters. To extend,

they struggle to establish themselves (Muslim writers and characters) as peace-lover and not as a terrorist. After 9/11, Muslim Asian voices have been raised to quest for identity. Many Muslims in Asia start writing on Muslim identity and struggle to adjust to the host culture. By writing, they reply to 'Islamophobia' and tell their stories to the world after 9/11 about what is going on with the Muslim diaspora.

Literature is a mirror of life; post 9/11 literature presents Muslim identity conflict with religious, cultural, and diasporic perspectives. Even Muslim women diaspora writers (like Kamila Shamsie, Jamilah Kolocotronis, Randa Abdel-Fattah, and others) also narrate their stories by presenting how women deal with the frustration from Islamophobia, is a naked truth for Muslims in the western world experience. So that this study is vital to show that the current situation for Muslims for Islamophobia remains the same as before the novel *Brick Lane* published in 2003, and Ali's representation of the Muslim community after 9/11 in Britain is no longer changed. In his review (*Brick Lane: A Note on the Politics of 'Good' Literary Production*, 2004), Ahmed Ali writes Nazneen's journey as a teleology because it contradicts its previous statement about the Muslim youth's alienation and racism because of Islamism,

"There were no white people here at all. These boys were fighting themselves."

In the Light of What We Know (2014), Zia Haider Rahman states how the narrator's Muslim identity was "invisibly unsexed" before 9/11; the notion about Muslims has been changed with a suspicious gaze that was never noticed before. Nonetheless, the 9/11 incident is a production of affecting many Muslims, even Muslim women. The journey of *Brick Lane*, the story of ethnic Muslim minorities in Britain, starts from Bangladesh and ends in the host city, London. Ali's writing questions representation as many scholars think that Ali is representing Bangladeshi immigrant Muslim identity.

WHAT IS REPRESENTATION?

The Oxford English Dictionary suggests two relevant meanings for the word,

1. To represent something is to describe or depict it, to call up in mind by description or portray or imagination; to place a likeness of it before us in our mind or the senses; for example, in the sentence, this picture represents the murder of Abel by Cain, and
2. To represent also means to symbolize, stand for, to be a specimen of, or to substitute for" (2003, p.16).

The definition of "representation" by Mitchell in *Critical Terms for Literary Study* connects it with people, "Representation is always of something or someone, by something or someone, to someone." This definition is influenced by Aristotle's definition of representation in *Poetics*, "From childhood men have an instinct for representation, and in this respect, man differs from the other animals that he is far more imitative and learns his first lessons by representing things" (1932).

Human beings are always imitative to represent their surroundings, including things or people, but representation must connect people with literature. According to W. Mitchell (1995), "Representation is an extremely elastic notion which extends from a stone representing a man to a novel representing the day in the life of several Dubliners." Mitchell expanded the definition of "*Representation*" with the use of signs, icons, symbols, and indexes to form semantic constructions and relations through people who understand the world and reality. Therefore, representation is relevant in the literature. It gives a glimpse of reality with imagination to the readers and people, then gets an idea about culture, society, religion, traditions, and the symbolic manners through the texts.

REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIM IN POST 9/11

In *Unmeasured Strength* (2011), Lauren Manning writes her story of surviving the 9/11 attack. It was like another day at her workplace. First, she heard a piercing sound while waiting for the elevator to go to her office. Then, she felt the twin tower shook and fall, which is an authentic experience of a survivor in the memoir, but what was the reaction of the audience who was watching the news of that attack on T.V.? What happened to the ordinary Muslims in the western world? 9/11 is described in *Brick Lane* like follows,

"As Nazneen starts to understand what is happening, the scene shifts.

'The Pentagon,' says Chanu. 'Do you know what it is? It's the Pentagon'" (Ali, 2003, p.270).

From *Brick Lane*, the family gets to know about the terrorist attack on that day from watching T.V., but Chanu could not believe his own eyes that they dared to attack the pentagon, a highly secured place in the world. The whole scenario is represented in a neutral mode that the readers can imagine what happened to many people's psyche—when they got to know about the attack on 9/11. After the day of 9/11, it was a day like every day. Representation of an actual incident linking with the characters to show the condition of the Muslim diaspora in *Brick Lane* shows the relation between representation and context is not a new thing because Amitabh Ghosh in *Shadow Lines* brings real incident of a riot between Hindu and Muslims in Bengal happened because of losing relic of Prophet's hair from Hazratbal shrine. We can say this representation of actual incidents in diaspora literature is a legacy that Ali carries from her previous diaspora authors.

To stand of substitute can be seen in *Brick Lane*. Here, Monica Ali stands as a voice of the Bangladeshi Muslim community. She is telling the story of a Bangladeshi immigrant family—immigrates to London. Her presentation is questionable somewhere, as some critics think that her representation is not an honest presentation of the life of Bangladeshi Bengalis. Representation is a political presentation of the individual and a group where it can be associated with race, identity, religion, gender, or any context. There are many representations as a political, individuals, groups, or as national identity.

In the essay "The Work of Representation," the sociologist Stuart Hall discusses the relationship between politics and representation and the systems representing both in his essay "The Work of Representation", published in 1997. To him, representation is a medium or a process through which people give meaning to culture and politics, which helps to understand how systems and language work together. The politics of representation discusses the issues of power and control over oneself and its representations and reproduction by others. So, the representation of all is interrelated through sociocultural representation. This type of representation can be used to understand the post-colonial literature written on and about immigrants. Ali's representation of politics, culture, groups, and individuals in *Brick Lane* highlights the systems and lives of Bangladeshi immigrants. Ali brilliantly connects the representations of different types from home to the international sphere, e.g. Chanu's domination over Nazneen and then white cultural hybridity to immigrants.

Monica Ali represents the social, cultural, and individual life of Bangladeshi immigrants in London. Her presentation of Bangladeshi Muslim immigrants is appreciated as a realistic representation of the community. As Miller (2003) says, "Ali captures the cultural and political textures of Muslims in Britain." Though non-Bangladeshi critics highly praised Ali, the Bangladeshi community in London criticized them negatively. Ali's representation of Muslim Bangladeshi after the book was published. They argued that Ali's mixed race and upbringing under British mother's care could not let her see Bangladeshi Muslims from a neutral point of view reflected through the protagonist Nazneen.

Nazneen comes to London as a wife of Chanu. She knows only two/three English words "Nazneen could say two things in English: Sorry and Thank You" (Ali, 2003, p.19), is portrayed as weak and dependant primarily. Still, gradually her adjustment to the new multicultural environment of London makes her strong and independent. Whatever happens in the book relates from the perspective of Nazneen, which is critically claimed biased. Bangladeshi immigrants are carrying the legacy of Bangladeshi patriarchal culture in London. It is pretty common to see women are expected to do house chores, take care of children, not raise voices against husbands, and most are not empowered (e.g. decision making).

We can find all these traits in Ali's representation through the life of Nazneen, as just an observer, housewife, and mother. Nazneen depends on her husband Chanu, and she is described as "not beautiful but not so ugly either. The face is broad, big forehead. Eyes are a bit too close together" (Ali, 2003, pp.22-23). However, she always obeys Chanu's demand saying, "If you say so." Again, we see how Sari plays a vital role to describe the sociocultural representation when Nazneen wears a sari on her date with Karim. Sari is a cloth that gives her a feeling of home, and she wants to feel at

home. Amrit Wilson says, "One of these roles, given to Asian women by their families and communities, is to be the upholders and preservers of 'our culture'" (1978, p.39), and it is reflected in Nazneen's character traits as a true representative of Bengali Muslim women.

Chanu is an economic immigrant; migrated to London for a job when he got married to Nazneen that time he did not speak English. Nazneen lives at home only, does not go out for work. This description is objectionable from the Bangladeshi Greater Sylhet Development and Welfare council members. In addition, according to them, this represents the Bangladeshi community in the United Kingdom (U.K.), and here they object and call it a false representation. In literature, the presentation is about the writer and decides to talk about whom, what, and how? Then, readers think about why and what is the intention and observation by the particular writers who are not a part of their religion or society.

Vieira tells about the difference between representation and the politics of representation. He gave the best examples and talked about representation: "The lawyers represent their clients, but it is not a form of representation; representation is something of a distraction when thinking about politics." Furthermore, Vieira and Runciman write, "Representation even considered purely as a word, seems inherently ambiguous. It implies, simultaneously, a presence and an absence: that comes from needing to be represented" (2013, p.4). Here, the representation can be distinguished between—"me" and "us" and can be self and other. Similarly, many readers do not connect their stories with Nazneen and feel that this writing represents.

Stuart Hall quotes, "Representation requires the analysis of the actual signs, symbols, figures, images, narratives, words and counts—the material forms—in which symbolic meaning is circulated" (Hall, 1997, p.9). In this novel, the actual symbolic meaning is circulated by migrant and gender experience. For example, in the first chapter of the book, we can see how Bangladeshi immigrant women are afraid that other women will lose their cultural values for mingling with white people. Thus, Nazneen wants to carry her culture and Bengali identity, which is how the Bangladeshi immigrant housewives see the world.

Bangladesh is famous for garment factories, which greatly influence the country's economic growth, and 80% of workers are women. So, when Razia satirically asks by the "garment factory," if the woman goes back to Bangladesh and joins the garment factory. Ali excellently represents Bangladesh's economic feature in the comment. Again, another example shows how Bangladeshi immigrants always live-in memories and in the meantime in their harsh realities.

"The husband is working but still she cannot fill her stomach. In Bangladesh, one salary can feed twelve but Jorina cannot fill her stomach.

'Where is she going? To the garment factory?'

'Mixing with all sorts: Turkish, English, Jewish. All sorts. I am not old-fashioned,' said Mrs. Islam. 'I do not wear burkha/vail. I keep purdah in my mind, which is the most important thing. Plus, I have cardigans and anoraks and a scarf for my head. But if you mix with all these people, even if they are good people, you have to give up your culture to accept theirs. That's how it is'" (Ali, 2003, p.29).

In the below-given incidence, we can see how Mrs. Islam's understanding of Muslim identity is quite different from Nazneen. The discussion on purdah (veil) is quite different from Nazneen's idea of Muslims. From *Brick Lane*,

"You can spread your soul over a paddy field, you can whisper to a mango tree, you can feel the earth beneath your toes and know that this is the place, the place where it begins and ends. But what can you tell a pile of bricks? The bricks will not be moved" (Ali, 2003, p.87).

Here, the "paddy field" and "mango tree" symbolically represent the purity and freshness of rural Bangladesh, where natives can feel at home. Nevertheless, as immigrants, they do not find out any fresh air except "bricks". Bricks have a different meaning. We can symbolize it with caginess of mind or place where a person is closed and limited to move in. Again "Bricks" can be analyzed as the harshness of the culture in London. The characters in the novel always seek for own place or home.

Chanu correctly implied the pain, "As long as we are below them, then they are above something. If they see us rise then they are resentful because we have left our proper place" (Ali, 2003, p.31).

Here, Chanu's obsession with "proper place" or homeland is always told with the history of the British colony. The legacy of colonization and migration are explained to show his struggles over an unsuccessful career as an immigrant Chanu's inferiority as an immigrant turns into insecurity due to the Islamophobia of native people. He wants to go back to his homeland. Going back home can be seen from a different point of view that he does not feel secure in host place, people suspect Muslim's movement and want to have a strong Muslim community feel. He can get it only if he goes back to his place, the Muslim majority place. These religion-based security feelings result from partition in India, described in many novels and films in India and Pakistan.

CULTURAL IMPACT: DIASPORA JOURNEY

For studying cultural impact, the best example can be seen by Chanu. Chanu starts drinking beer and feeling that he has become a Britisher. However, after some days, he feels to go back home. He sometimes becomes frustrated due to not getting a good job. Chanu has two daughters named, Shahana and Bibi. In their character, host cultural imitation can be seen by unlinking Bengali outfits and adopting preferring to wear jeans. Here, Ali describes how the second generation likes the host culture that is not their parents' culture. Even they are not so fluent in Bengali. Ali has beautifully pictured the gap between the first and second generations to show the relationship between Chanu and their eldest daughter Shahana. When Chanu is so excited to go back to Bangladesh, she rejects the idea and affection for British culture.

In chapter 14, Chanu takes his family sightseeing; he talks over British history with his daughters. He wants to take a family picture; the photographer asks where they are coming from. Chanu says "Bangladesh", and Shahana says "London". Chanu plans to return to Bangladesh with their family. However, before the night they were supposed to leave for Bangladesh, Shahana escapes. It simply shows the gap between two generations' choices over their home. We can see the same generation gap in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Namesake*; first-generation immigrants still want to carry out Bengali culture. Still, the next generation wants to continue their lives in their way, which is a never-ending conflict in the novel. Ali also depicts the same feeling in the last chapter through the women folks of her novel. Jorina said,

"But that is our problem—making lives for our children. They want to make them for themselves."

"Yes," said Razia. "They will do that. Even if it kills them" (Ali, 2003, p.482-483).

Bangladeshi immigrants even try to impose their idea on their children. Ali brings in a common phenomenon of Bangladeshis sending their children forcefully to Bangladesh, even though they do not like it. This practice of dominance comes from the Bangladeshi cultural pattern of being parents; they have rights whatever they want to do with the children, and they can even decide on behalf of an adult child. However, Ali has been harshly criticized for showing such a thing in the novel. Karim says to Nazneen that drug addiction spread over London in the young Bangladeshi generation, and the government is still afraid of Islam than a drug. Ali relates the Islamophobia in the western world after 9/11 here; this phobia has affected the life of Muslim immigrants over the decades.

However, the nostalgia of Nazneen is a part of her homesickness. Here, sitting in London, she always thinks about her home and reminds her of her home memory. She thinks about the homemade Bangladeshi food from her mother. She misses unique yoghurt, which she likes very much. Here, she compares the Bangladeshi Yogurt with ready-made yoghurt, which she does not like. Often when she closes her eyes, she imagines the "paddy field", "mango trees" where her childhood was spent freely. Her mother says about fate and God's will haunt her. She loves to tell her daughters how she has won over fate after her birth. Reading the letters of Hasina, she feels Gauripur and Dhaka.

Chanu rejects earlier sending his children to a madrasa, later becomes furious about Islam at stake. Chanu's cultural adoption shows his inappropriate or uncomfortable behaviour because, at last, he returns home. It is prevalent to see women have to accept the decision made by men in the family in Bangladesh, which is a common scenario. However, this is not common in western culture. When

Chanu forcefully tries his family to go back to Bangladesh with him, Nazneen initially accepts but later rejects and stays in London. The way she rejects the decision of Chanu and Chanu has to accept her are fine examples of cultural impact. Western culture generally does not allow individual decisions to be put on others forcefully. Nazneen finds that going back home is more insecure than living in London. She starts sewing and empowers herself. The dependent Nazneen, in the beginning, changes into independence which happened because of culture.

Shahana argues with Chanu, which is also a western cultural impact, which Chanu cannot deny as a Bangladeshi father. Cultural impact changes their life from many dimensions.

NAZNEEN: AN EXCEPTIONAL TYPICAL BENGALI MUSLIM WOMAN IN DIASPORA

Das writes, "Ali's protagonist Nazeen is crushed under the weight of a male-dominated and tradition-bound society. Monica Ali's honest portrayal of the disappointments and frustrations of her protagonist makes the novel more susceptible to treatment from the feminist angle" (2015, p.1). This novel is mainly based on a woman's story: Nazneen. The story is woven around her childhood experience and tells the story of her adulthood experience of the girl-to-woman transition. She always remembers Gauripur, the place she was born. She remembers the fields, trees, and goats. From Brick Lane,

"She looked out across jade green rice fields and swam in the cool dark lake. She walked arm-in-arm to school with Hasina and skipped part of the way and fell, and they dusted their knees with their hands. And the mynah birds called from the trees, and the goats fretted by, and the big, sad water buffaloes passed like a funeral. And heaven, which was above, was wide and empty and the land stretched out ahead, and she could see to the very end of it, where the earth smudged the sky in a dark blue line" (p.9).

When Nazneen married Chanu, she never asked and was not even permitted to know her husband's appearance. Her mother's death was a shock to her. Later, she knows the cause of her mother was her father's affair/relation with another woman. She was born in a patriarchal society. Her father married twice immediately after the death of her mother. Now, she just has a dream to be like her mother. She has no dream of a job, education, or anything else. She just sits at home and takes care of the family. All her thinking shows patriarchal views where many wives do not work out, sit idle at home, and obey their husbands.

'I am making a sketch.' 'Let me see. What is it?'
'A plan for the house I will build in Dhaka. What do you think of it?'
'What shall I say? I am only a girl from the village, and I know nothing of big houses' (Ali, 2003. p. 38).

Here, Chanu dreams of building a house in Dhaka, and he asks for Nazneen's view about the dream. Nazneen agrees with his decision, mentioning she has no opinion as she is a village girl, which clearly shows her obedient characteristic. Nazneen as a typical Bangladeshi bride, obeys her husband's command and admits her submissiveness to him. "If God wanted us to ask questions, he would have made us men" (Ali, 2003, p. 80) Nazneen is always the kind of person who has the answer to console herself by the name of religion or God. She justifies her idea with her belief. However, Ali's representation of Bangladeshi women's submissiveness is general. Feminist writer Germaine Greer criticized her in The Guardian, "It hurts to be misrepresented, but there is no representation without misrepresentation." Critics say that the protests against Ali were held because of her generalization of Bangladeshi men and women.

Nazneen brings culture, food taste, language, memory, and tradition to *Brick Lane*. She agrees on an arranged marriage, and even not seeing her would-be husband's picture, she surrenders herself to fate. Her religious belief is depicted herein that she believes in God's will as a Muslim woman. After coming to London, she accepts everything Chanu says to her. She becomes the patriarchal victim even in London. Nazneen follows Quranic values and instructions, such as obeying her

husband and covering her head with a scarf. Ali expresses that Nazneen's religious belief in a positive manner from the first chapter. Nazneen recites verses from the Quran, reminding her of keeping faith in God and fearing God's wrath. Ali portrays Nazneen differently than any other Bengali woman. For instance, Nazneen does not read the Quran blindly but also tries to understand the Bengali meaning, which is a fine example of her inner knowledge and wisdom to believe the religion in the right way and a proper understanding which can give her inner peace. At the same time, we find that many Muslims never try to understand the real meaning of the Quran.

Nazneen hears how other immigrant women criticize another woman for not covering heads. She is a typical Bengali Muslim woman. Her typicality comes out of guilt when she exchanges look with Dr Azad or have a love affair with Karim every time; she finds herself disloyal. Ali also points out that Muslim immigrant women wear burqa and maintain purdah. Nazneen always wants to please Chanu. Chanu says her not need to work outside, which implies the idea of Bangladeshi culture of keeping women at home. This culture is somehow connected to the religious view. In Islam, women are considered as private. So, when Chanu never lets Nazneen work outside, it shows the assimilation of Islam with Bangladeshi culture. Within the growing Islamic phenomenon in London, Nazneen is also afraid of her children's future. Through his anxiety, Ali shows how 'islamophobia' affects Muslim immigrant women.

Hasina is Nazneen's sister who lives in Bangladesh. The pathetic situation of Hasina and her tragic life story makes her case so worst. Hasina elopes home with Malek, which is her rebellious characteristic against Nazneen's submissive character. Again, she is not a strict follower of Islam, though she mentions the girl with burqa and hijab in her letters.

Understanding diaspora and gender theories throw light on the context of Muslims in London, presenting the west diaspora of Muslims. Also, it presents the global diaspora of Muslims and Islamophobia in some other countries. The diaspora does not impact only religion but gender too. Brick Lane shows the differences of a gender perspective in Muslims and how the cultural dimension of the home and host land can cause characters' religious and cultural identity crises. *Brick Lane* questions the representation of the diaspora community. It also shows the cultural identity shift through the characters and describes the cultural clashes between home and host.

CONCLUSION

The two generations gap and cultural values change when the place changes. The legal immigrant families come to the U.K. withholding many dreams. Here, they try to balance two societies, two generations, and two cultures. The representation depends on the view of readers how they consider it. The writer intends to present the reality of her writing freedom, but some readers consider it a representation.

This research can be extended by comparing Bangladeshi diaspora novels with other Asian novels or with many genres like drama and poetry. Indeed, diaspora genres (poems, dramas, or any diaspora memoirs) can be studied with studied anthropological or diaspora perspectives in detail. Like *Brick Lane*, there are many other novels, and Muslim representation is debated and portrayed the life of the Muslims. Although there is an argument about the gender perspective, female writers raise Muslim minority voices to bring the inclusivity of minority, peaceful environment, and harmony among Muslim minority and western groups. Also, it reflects time and space. It is a perfect manuscript to get an idea about the Muslim Bangladeshi women psyche, which was ignored for a long time in diaspora literature.

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