



## The Muslim woman in Monica Ali s Brick Lane : A Cultural Study

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### Abstract

*This study focuses on the role of Muslim women in the United Kingdom, particularly in the aftermath of 9/11 in the West. When it was swept with anti-Muslim sentiment, the novelist Monica Ali experienced a rise in Islamophobia. The novel Brick Lane (2003), which she wrote based on her own experiences, can be considered an accurate portrayal of many people who were held accountable for crimes committed in the name of Islam. As a result of these events, many innocent Muslims are being targeted for crimes committed by others. What reveals the bitter experience of ordinary Bangladeshi Muslim immigrants who struggled with identity crises in a multicultural, highly educated society. It also reflects the writer's personal experiences as a Bangladeshi living in the West. The novel was evaluated by examining the Muslim immigrant characters and their various conditions in London. Moreover, the point is that Muslim people in South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan prefer to live and work in the West for a better standard of living, education, and job prospects .*

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## المخلص

تركز هذه الدراسة على دور المرأة المسلمة في المملكة المتحدة، خاصة في أعقاب أحداث 11 سبتمبر في الغرب، عندما اجتاحتها الكراهية ضد المسلمين، مما أدى إلى صعود ظاهرة الإسلاموفوبيا التي عاشتها الروائية مونيك علي نفسها. ويمكن اعتبار رواية "بريك لين" (2003) التي كتبتها بناءً على تجربتها الخاصة، حياة فعلية للعديد من الأشخاص الذين تم تحميلهم مسؤولية جرائم ارتكبوها باسم الإسلام. ونتيجة لهذه الأحداث يتعرض العديد من المسلمين الأبرياء للهجوم بسبب جريمة ارتكبوها آخرون. ما الذي يكشف التجربة المريرة للمهاجرين المسلمين البنغلاديشيين البسطاء الذين كافحوا مع أزمة الهوية في عالم متعدد الثقافات ومتعلم تعليماً عالياً. كما يعكس التجارب الشخصية للكاتبة نفسها، فهي بنجلاديشية تعيش في الغرب. وقد تم تقييم الرواية من خلال دراسة شخصيات المهاجرين المسلمين وأحوالهم المختلفة في لندن. فضلاً عن ذلك فإن النقطة المهمة هنا هي أن المسلمين في دول جنوب آسيا، مثل الهند، وباكستان، وبنجلاديش، ونيبال، وسريلانكا، وأفغانستان، يفضلون العيش والعمل في الغرب من أجل الحصول على مستوى معيشة وتعليم، وفرص عمل أفضل .

## Introduction

For the first time, Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane* (2003) shows the inner lives of Muslim immigrant women. It highlights their plight as a marginalized group by giving the novel's main character, Nazneen, a voice. The incidents are related to the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack and its impact on the lives of London's Bangladeshi and Muslim communities. The novel depicts Nazneen's journey from marginalized woman to self-sufficient woman. Ali placed women at the center of her novels to emphasize her feminist viewpoint. Actually, women characters like Nazneen in *Brick Lane* (2003), Teresa and her mother in *Alentejo Blue* (2006), Lena in *In the Kitchen* (2009), or even Princess Diana in *Untold Story* (2011) are examples of how women are struggling against socio-political powers, which force them to accommodate themselves to a life they are not satisfied with, but they sometimes reconstruct it if they have a suitable opportunity. , in an interview Ali states : “ There’s so much to worry about: poverty, climate change, pollution, the arms industry, the oppression of women, over-population... the list is long. I think one of the biggest worries is that the problems can seem so overwhelming that people disengage and switch off, as if there’s nothing that can be done. But no problem is totally intractable if the political will is there. So I think that’s the challenge – to keep engaging people to make their personal contribution, and not see it as too small to count”. ( Davis, 2014: An Interview")

Monica Ali was born in October 1967 to an English mother and a Muslim father from Bangladesh. Ali attended Oxford University, where he studied politics, philosophy, and economics. Her main interest was feminism. She questioned women's standing after a century of struggle for justice. She uses feminist concepts such as gender equality and

individual freedom to condemn the commodity-based treatment of women.

Ali is widely regarded as the first author to write about Muslim women immigrants. As a result, *Brick Lane* is an analysis of the exploitation and displacement of immigrants in general, and particularly immigrant women, who migrated to Britain for economic reasons during the postwar period. It tracks the social lives of immigrant women in the United Kingdom, showing the political context of the mores and communities that shape a woman's destiny no matter where she lives.

As mentioned before, *Brick Lane* depicts the effects of political activities on the lives of Bangladeshi Muslims in *Brick Lane*, east of London, with a focus on the main female character, Nazneen. The novel is notable because it has "dual significance, based on whether it is read from a Bangladeshi or British viewpoint" (Haq, 2006, pp. 21-22). Though it was described by literary circles in London as the first novel that tackled the Muslim community in the United Kingdom, Ali's *Brick Lane* started a sociopolitical argument among a large people of Bangladeshis both inside and outside the country. Many members of Britain's Bangladeshi community felt insulted by the novel. They believed it "portrayed Bangladeshis...as backward, and ignorant people" (Lea and Lewis, 2015, p. 1).

Anyway, Monica Ali prevails in overcoming the prejudice of race to deal with socio-political themes faced by the excluded, or what Gayatri Spivak refers to as "the subaltern" in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) Spivak uses this term to describe anyone who is inferior in rank, status, or importance, and who try to be a member of a group that has little access or no representation and power within any given society due to their class, gender, race, or cultural background (Bently, 2008, p. 84). The text discusses important issues such as immigration, racism, and, most importantly, the role of patriarchy which control the lives of women. In her review of Ali's *Brick Lane*, Alistair Cormack emphasizes this point: "*Brick Lane* is particularly of interest as an examination of the double oppression that female migrants face, treated as aliens by their host nation and as commodities by the men in their own communities" (700). This type of double binds makes immigrant women in general, and Ali's women doubly marginalized in the foreign societies of her works.

The book, *Brick Lane* brings insight both into immigrant life in England and into life in Bangladesh. The novel is written from the point of view of Nazneen a Muslim Bangladeshi girl who is naïve at the age of 18 beginning a new life in England as she has been married off to twenty years older man living in London. Her husband Chanu is described as a man of plans without the ability to achieve anything, with a face like a frog and great knowledge of Bangladesh history. Nazneen has a belief since her birth that her life is completely in the hands of fate wholly accepts the arrangements her father for marriage. In her new life, she becomes entirely dependent on her husband because of her limited contact with the English-speaking world. Ali shows the importance of capturing life from the eyes of the marginalized Nazneen. Ali emphasized the political significance of choosing Nazneen to tell her story: It is only political in one very specific way: the story is told from the perspective of a marginalized voice. ("The Economy of Outrage") Nazneen lives in Bangladesh and witnesses the tragic suffering of herself and other Bangladeshis women as a result of neocolonialism's especially economic corruption and the that is deeply rooted in religious and social traditions.

The setting of *Brick Lane* is London, Tower Hamlets which is home to the majority of Bangladeshi immigrants. Muslims, however, are not the only people who live there. There are both white and black people who live there or nearby. Nazneen says "In the flats immediately next door, there were white people," (BL, 4). Moreover, when doing daily chores, Bangladeshis come into contact with people of various races. "A group of African

girls tried on shoes... a white girl stood in front of a mirror turning this way and that. " In such oppressing society, racial challenge cannot be defeated in terms of the follow political and social discontent with which Nazneen becomes adapted

As mentioned before , Nazneen is simply portrayed as a fatalist woman who believes: "What cannot be changed must be accepted. And because nothing could be changed, everything had to be accepted " (BL,p. 11). She only knows three words in English while living in London: "sorry and thank you" (BL,p 11). Her husband chooses her primarily because "She does a good job. Cleaning and cooking and all that...an unspoiled village girl " (BL,p 17). Brick Lane represents a feminized space for Nazneen and the other females who live in Tower Hamlets. Their dissatisfaction is linked to their race. She believes that "She was trapped in this body, inside this room, inside this flat, inside this concrete slab of entombed humanity," (BL,p 61).Nazneen was unable to go out for long months after her arrival in London because Chanu fears that people will form negative opinions of her: "Why would you go out... If you go out, ten people will say, "I saw her walking down the street," and I will look foolish. I don't mind if you go out, but these people are so stupid. What a shame ? " (BL,p 35). Though he claims to be intellectually muslim, Chanu's inner conflict is showed by his attached to his native cultural conventions, reflected during his fifteen years in *Brick Lane* According to Chanu, British society is corrupted, defined by his weaknesses and suffering . "England was the country of expectation, but the immigrants quickly experienced disillusionment" as Fred D'Aguiar described it, a sense of "unbelonging" as they were chained between a community left behind and a new environment that didn't welcomed them ( Sandapen,2009,p 19). Ali exposed Chanu's predicament in the tongue of Dr. Azad, Chanu's friend, who, while hearing Chanu's complaints, describes his problem as "Going Home Syndrome" (BL 24). Chanu, on the other hand, regards Nazneen as inferior in his social life because he is suffering from marginalized and a lack of acceptance , and he wishes to control his position at home. He does not encourage her to speak or act in any way. Instead, he encourages and values her silence (she has never rejected for many years; he proudly compliments her muteness). To compensate for her silence, Nazneen is shown to have internal monologues. She is also reflect as passive in communication with Chanu and society, particularly those in which he expresses his desire to return to Bangladesh to Dr. Azad. Her only remark is ironically rejected by her man, who says, "my wife is just settling in here" (BL 24). In her new environment, these interactions increase Nanzeen's self-doubt . "He puffed his cheeks and fuffed the air out," Chanu says when she expresses a desire to learn English. 'It will happen. It's nothing to be concerned about. "Where, first and foremost, is the need?" (BL 28). To expose Chanu's patriarchal behavior in the same scene, Ali presents Chanu reading his English book while Nazneen silently watches the TV , unable to understand what is being said.

Nazneen begins secretly watching ice skating on television to compensate for her silence. "[she became] whole and pure... The old Nazneen was sublimated, and the new Nazneen was filled with white light, glory" (BL, p. 41). It is possible to argue that ice skating reflects a dreamy world in which Nazneen can find outlet of her life. Ice skating does not need verbal exchange , which Nazneen at the moment lacks, but it introduces her to the concept of controlling not only one's reality but also one's destiny for the first time. This experience becomes liberating for Nazneen, leaving a profound impact on her personality. Despite her isolated existence,

As matter of fact ,find other Muslim women struggle with poverty, violence, and uncontrollable and sometimes lost children (as in the case of her friend Razia's son), Nazneen



accepts her life because, at the very least, her husband has job who does not hurt her (BL,p. 83). According to Hussain, "what is unusual in the characterization of Nazneen is the lack of excitement, expectation, and new desires as an immigrant... As if she were in Bangladesh, she fulfills her role as a wife and mother" (95). It is possible to argue that Nazneen's actions connect with her mind that "what cannot be changed must be borne" (BL 11). Actually, Nazneen tries to find the tactics of "making do," states by Michel De Ceteau which describes the powerless female create "a space in which [s/]he can find ways of using the constraining order of the place or of language. Without leaving the place where [s/]he has no choice but to live and which establishes its own rules for [her], [s/]he establishes a degree of... creativity within it" ( Al- Azawi,2013,p. 158). Though she is reject her life, Nazneen tries adapt to it.

Actually ,Nazneen can describe the sufferings of Bangladeshi women in London to her own home. Suicides, arranged marriages, violence, polygamy, and prostitution are all used to portray these women. The Muslim Women in the novel's Bangladeshi closed society in London are not allowed to work and are judged based on their clothing and behavior. They must deal with sexism brought over from Bangladesh. . Despite the fact that Bangladeshis who have settled in this part of London live in a small enclave within the English community, Bangladeshi rules continue to apply. Any attempt these women make to improve their economic or personal situation is met with social abuse. Like Razia, Nazneen's friend, who is faced with death by her husband because she admits to wanting to work (BL,p. 114), regardless of the fact that they are unable to live a decent life because the husband sends the majority of his money home. Mrs. Islam, a neighbor, accuses another woman of bringing shame to her family by choosing to work (BL 78). Another example is Amina, who is abused by her husband. "He has another wife which he forgot to mention for the past eleven years," (BL 57).

Nazneen chooses to explore Brick Lane solely and outside of Tower Hamlets after receiving disappointing information about her sister's circumstances in Bangladesh (BL 42-48). According to Margaret Wallace Nilsson, this is a necessary construction device used by the author to guide the character and the story in the right direction. Despite Chanu's dominant attitude toward her, Nazneen expresses a strong desire to experience life outside of the flat (BL, p. 11). It could be argued that Nazneen's isolation is necessary for her to begin her path to development and independence. She must first break free from the monotonous and limiting aspects of her life. Nothing in the novel indicates that Nazneen will take another significant step forward after her first private adventure in Brick. She appears to be content with her situation, particularly after the birth of her first son and his subsequent death at a young age. Nazneen's life is revealed through the letters of her sister, Hasina, which span the fifteen years between the first and second parts of the novel. These letters reveal that Nazneen has two daughters and is still dealing with Chanu's failure to settle down, as well as his growing anger with the British establishment and its views toward immigrants.

Hasina is a supporting character in the novel; she only appears in her letters. Ali created the character Hasina to shed light on the situation and lifestyle of poor Muslim women back home, as well as to contrast their conditions as natives and immigrants. Hasina marries to escape her restrictive and impoverished home life; however, she quickly finds out that her husband is an abuser who beats her. At the same time, he treats her as a commodity, a beautiful model to fulfill his own sense of beauty; however, when Hasina does not satisfy his pleasure, he becomes enraged with her: "You know what my husband told me. The first time he saw me, it was the perfect moment. He like to live it again and he planning to make it come again as an actual fact". (BL,p. 14.).Hasina fails to represent the ideal that her husband

imagines her to be, and because he is unable to recreate the "perfect moment" in his life, he continues to abuse her. Poor Hasina exemplifies Bangladeshi men's patriarchy. She believes that it is always a woman's fault when she says something she is not allowed to say, and that this is why a woman is beaten by a man (BL,p. 19). Hasina represents the victim woman who justifies her victimizer's abuse as a right, denying herself the ability to fight back. She later writes to Nazneen, "I do my best, but I am only a woman" (BL 163). To escape abuse, Hasina abandons her husband and goes to work in a garment factory in Dhaka, only to be fired and end up working as a prostitute for a time. She eventually finds work as a maid for a respectable family.

Actually, Hasina an eyewitness to the atrocities committed against other women in Bangladesh. She tells Nazneen concerning her friend Monju, who is in the hospital after her husband and brother poured acid on her and her son for reject to sell the baby. The novelist seeks to expose this heinous attack on human rights in a poor country where such violations are often unspoken. When Nazneen starts working in piecework, she hopes to help her sister Hasina in her searching situation. She also seeks opportunities to improve their financial conditin, while Nazneen works to compensate Chanu s failure to settle into a any job . Chanu brings her a sewing machine for use at home. Later, she discovers that Chanu lend money with desire from Mrs Islam to buy a sewing machine and a computer for himself. He has also neglected his debts, as she discovers. As a result, Nazneen must work hard to repay her debts and save money to send to Hasina.

Furthermore, another important character in the novel, Karim, who was born in England and grew up in the city as a Muslim boy, represents the novel's national and religious sides: "Every day when I was in school, we were chased home by Christian boys." Karim meets Nazneen while delivering her sewing work for his uncle's clothing company as a middleman. He prefers English to Bengali because he stammers in Bengali. Karim is politically active and organizes the first gatherings of similarly radical people. The first meeting is held after the distribution of leaflets to Bangladeshi homes by the Christian Lion Hearts a radical group. The words of the leaflets irritates the Muslim inhabitants that says: "For a history lesson your sons will be studying Africa or India or some other dark and distant land. English people, he will learn, are Wicked Colonialists. ... Christianity is being gently slaughtered. ... When, in fact, Islam is a religion of hatred and intolerance" (p.268). To respond, Karim begins writing like sharp leaflets. As the chairman of the Muslim organization "Bengali Tigers", he openly declares his support for fighting Muslims in Chechnya, Egypt, Iraq and other countries where race and religious rebels continue.

According to Alfred J. Lopez, *Brick Lane* is a turn point, which means any novel created and affected by 9/11. Lopez relates the novel's political rebel to globalization's inability to satisfy the needs of those at the bottom of the pyramid (Lopes, 2008,p.510). As according Sassen Saskia, these "disadvantaged workers" are "women, immigrants, and people of color, whose political sense of self and identities are not necessarily embedded in the "nation" or the "national community" (Saskia,1998,p xxi). Because the novel includes the years from 1985 to 2002, it almost entirely covers the heyday of globalization and its stated goals of bringing prosperity to all. Despite the fact that previous mentioned, the groups lived in large capital cities, they did not truly belong to them. They remained marginalized, struggling with their poverty; not only were they poor, but they were threatened by the aftermath of globalization the 9/11 events. Lopez insists that the novel's depiction of how remote political and economic events affect the lives of its immigrant characters, resulting in its protagonists' reactions to life after 9/11, is arguably the best fictional representation until now of how that

catastrophic event, and the emergence of the post-global generally, are affecting the lives of those on the ground (p.515).

Ali exposes the aftermath of the 2001 race riots by introducing Nazneen to some Bangladeshi who were influenced by them. Nazneen attends meetings held by these young men who are inflamed and frustrated by racist gangs in the neighborhood and racist discrimination in British society, aided by Karim. They come across a group called "The Bengal Tigers." They are depicted in these meetings as attempting to negotiate their situation in response to a racist group of whites known as "the Lion Hearts." These gatherings expose Nazneen to political activism, which begins as a democratic negotiation of prejudice and racism and progresses to radical Islamism. The Bengal Tigers and Lion Hearts' increasingly provocative leaflets with angry titles like "Multicultural Murder" and "March Against the Mullahs" appear on a regular basis in Tower Hamlets. The Bengal Tigers respond with their own pamphlet (BL,p. 212, 224-). The textual conflict escalates into mutual announcements of concurrently scheduled protests (BL 235). One key leaflet sheds more light on the growing extremism among Bangladeshi activists:

A reminder to give to Allah for our brothers who gave up their lives shaheed to defend their brothers... We give thanks for Farook Zaman who died in the Duba Yurt operations in Chechnya, February 2000. He lived most of his life as unbeliever until he repented and devoted himself to jihad. (BL,p 225)

Nazneen reflects the gradual shift in tone and type of clothing of meeting participants. Panjabi-Pyjama for men and hijab for women replace English dress. Karim, for example, ditches his jeans and sneakers in favor of traditional Panjabi garb. Also, some of these young men eventually become radicals, unable to accept the presence of women in their meetings. Though Nazneen observes the members of this group's debates, her encounter with them opens her eyes to the atrocities committed against Muslims all over the world. As a result, Nazneen's consciousness expands beyond her immediate existence for the first time. She sheds a tear as she realizes of the suffering of other poor people in Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine as a result of the effects of politics (BL,p. 216-288). Though she does not become an activist, this experience expands her horizons, initiates her self-confidence, and empowers her to make the final decision to control her fate: "I'll make the final decision. I'll explain what happens to me. I'll be the one " (BL,p. 337)

By depicting Karim and his group as individuals with real problems to solve, Ali in *Brick Lane* tries to challenge western myths that relate Islam with irrational violence. As Islam becomes associated with terrorism, and widespread ignorance gives rise to popular images of a fixed set of beliefs promoting oppression and violence over those of freedom and equality, Ali sets out to challenge these misguided stereotyped pictures by presenting young people who are angry not because they are mythically fanatical and unthinkably hateful of the West, but because they are desperately reacting to their unequal social position (Hiddleston,2005,p. 66). By reflecting the socio-political tensions in *Brick Lane*, Ali prepares the reader to the 9/11 attacks. As Nazneen and Chanu watch the event through a TV screen, Ali documents the event through fiction and at the same time shows the impact of media and how the event affects the perceptions of the people :

The television shows a tall building against a blue sky...A thick bundle of black smoke is hanging outside the tower. It looks too heavy to hang there. An airplane comes in slow motion from the corner of the screen. It appears to be flying at the level of the buildings....( BL,p. 303)

Ali also depicts the horror of Muslims in the novel, as represented by Nazneen and Chanu, while witnessing the disastrous event: "Now they see smoke: a pillar of smoke, collapsing. Nazneen and Chanu rise. They stay on their feet as they watch it a second, a third time". (BL,p,304) Chanu's comments that "the world has gone mad" and "this is the beginning of madness" (BL,p. 303) demonstrate the historical impact of such an event on a global level, indicating that nothing will ever be the same. Even though the event takes place far away, it has resonances in Brick Lane. After the event, there are racial attacks ,this is how the event affects the lives of ordinary people:

A pinch of New York dust blew across the ocean and settled on the Dogwood Estate. Sorupa's daughter was the first, but not the only one. Walking in the street, on her way to college, she had her hijab pulled off. Razia wore her Union Jack sweatshirt and it was spat on. (BL,p. 305)

As matter of fact ,these political events have changed the fates of the main characters in Brick Lane. As a result of these events, Chanu gets worried and decides to return to Bangladesh, despite the apparent objections of his family members (BL 179-181). Though Nazneen is hesitant at first to inform Chanu of her desire to remain in London, she makes a last-minute decision to remain in the company of her two daughters. Karim, also unable to unite his political organization and achieve his goal ,so he disappeared only to be seen by Nazneen "in a mountain cave, surrounded by men in turbans holding machine guns" (BL,p. 407).

For a moment, Nazneen fears she will lose her daughter Shahana in the riots that full the street due to her rejection to travel to Bangladesh. Shahana escaped in rebellion of her father's decision to send them to Bangladesh. As result , Nazneen desperately searches for her in the midst of riots caused by the Bangladeshi protest march against the Islamophobic "Lion Hearts" demonstration immediately after 9/11. The attempt exposes Nazneen to violence, extremism, and total chaos: " Empty bottles, full cans, a brick, a chair, a winged stick. Bottle smashed at Nazneen's feet. She decided to run again. But which way. Towards the Shalimar and the source of the missiles? Or back up the road to take shelter? She turned round and back and round and suddenly she was not sure which way the café was. She recognized nothing" ... (BL 395)

Actually ,Shahana's revolt against her father's surrender, reflects the revolt of young Bangladeshi people against racism and marginalization in their birth land. Nanzeen is even more determined to protect her children from prejudice and discrimination, as well as Chanu's attempt to expose them to an unknown environment where nothing is certain in their home Bangladeshi . Instead of escaping her situation, Nazneen decides to stay and adapt to her new life.

Apart from men like Chanu and Razia's husband, who have wished to return to the "Golden Bengal" of Tagore's songs, believing it to be a safer place for their children to grow up, young people like Karim and Shahana cannot silently complain about or leave their society; on the contrary, they rebel against the widespread racist and discriminatory practices against them as Muslims, in addition to cultural, traditional, familial pressures, and economic problems in their path. Karim and his friends, for example, are enraged by Islamophobic represented by "Lion Hearts," who are worried about the increasing influence of immigrant Muslims. While this may be a necessary step toward political and social recognition and justice, Ali appears to warn that ignoring these issues may lead these young



men and women to terrorism, which may have led to the bombings that shook London on July 7, 2005, and after that terrorist attacks.

Accordingly , Nazneen's relationship with Karim is not only makes her aware of injustice done to other Muslims in England, but it also allows her to see oppression done to herself. As Karim discusses marriage from her after she has a divorce from Chanu, she realizes he is not much different from Chanu himself. When she asked why he chose her as his wife despite the fact that she is older, he responds that she is not like other Bangladeshi girls living in Britain who are either westernized like her daughter, Shaheena, or "religious girls...[who] think they know best because they've been off to all these summer camps for Muslim sisters" (BL,p. 320). Both types are strong-willed and capable of arguing. Karim appears to like her simply because she does not "argue." At this point, Nazneen remembers Chanu's words from the early days of her marriage, when she asked him why he chose her as a wife, and his response was "An unspoiled girl from the village." "All things considered, I am content" (BL 17). Accepting Karim means replacing one type of oppression with another, which means doing injustice to herself. Despite their apparent differences, the two men are still patriarchal, preferring a traditionally submissive woman over a strong woman. Nazneen's reaction to Chanu's self-determination as a second-class citizen is to be an independent mother with two daughters. Ali decides to face Chanu and Karim in order to assert Nazneen's self- efficiency

Finally, *Brick Lane* as a novel rejects the politics of fight (as associated with Karim) or flight (as associated with Chanu) and supports Nazneen's ability to "negotiate her identity from the perspective of British-Bangladeshi nationalism" (Akhter 105). Another important feature is the shift of traditional roles within immigrant families from Bangladesh. Particularly the family setting based on patriarchy is shattered: as the economic situation of the families grows worse women are forced to seek work and improve the financial situation of their families. Thus women become more equal to men by contributing to family budget and they also gain new responsibilities. Ali also concentrates on female and male characters and their reception and understanding of their religious traditions and rules of life in modern and secular city. After all, Nazneen has a choice, which she discovers in the feminized space of the garment factory, where she begins to work and earn a living to support her family after Chanu's return to Bangladesh. She rejects the low-wage in the sweetshop work that had previously appeared to be her only local employment choices. She and other Bangladeshi women form a clothing work that supplies the Brick Lane boutique "Fusion Fashion," which sells new versions of hijab (a Muslim dress) (BL 402-404).

Concludindly, the novel can be described as fantasy novel of many immigrants Muslim women who explore their limited personal space in order to achieve a certain degree of self-empowerment. The novel's final scene depicts Nazneen skating with her daughters and her friend Razia, emphasizing her independence. Meanwhile, she refuses to change her Muslim cloths while skating in the last scene to prove her compromising of her own personality against social conditions. Ali wishes to depict Nazneen's transformation from a passive wife to an active lady in her own life and the life of her family in general. Her exposure to public life opens her eyes to the challenges she may face, but also to the choices she can make. Actually, Monica Ali analyzes her protagonist in the second half of the novel in order to recreate her as Muslim migrants and dependent woman, by giving her choices and possibility for change . It could be argued that there is nothing in the novel to indicate that Nazneen has become westernized or fully assimilated into western culture; Ali, emphasizes on wearing her Muslim garments while skating in the novel's final scene

demonstrates Nazneen's choice of keeping what she believes is best for her in both cultures , also her religion and her independence as woman.

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