

Chapter 2

Brick Lane: A Novel

2.1. Introduction

2.2. Life and works Monika Ali

2.3. *Brick Lane: An Introduction*

2.4. Critical study of parameters

2.5. Conclusion

Works Cited

2.1. Introduction

This chapter analyses diaspora in the novel *Brick Lane* written by Monika Ali. Ali is a writer of Bangladeshi origin. Before 1947, Bangladesh was a part of Hindustan and with the partition of India in 1947; it became the part of Pakistan known as East Pakistan. Bangladesh came into existence as an independent nation in 1971. Many of its writers who write in English language were born before that year. Razia Khan Amin is a well known novelist. Farida Majid and Kaiser Haq are poets. Kaiser Haq has written five volumes of poems. K. Anis Ahmed, Farah Ghuznavi, and Rashid Askari are famous short story writers. K. Anis Ahmed's debut collection, *Goodnight, Mr. Kissinger*, tells the story of Dhaka. Ghuznavi's work has been published in the UK, US, Canada, Singapore, France, India, Nepal as well as in Bangladesh. Some of the Bangladeshis living abroad who have emerged in the international stage with strong voices include Monica Ali and Tahmima Anam residing in England, Neamat Imam from Canada, Mahmud Rahman from USA and Adib Khan residing in Australia. (Bangladeshi English Literature)

2.2. Life and works of Monica Ali

Monica Ali was born on October 20, 1967 in Dhaka, then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. Her father is from Bangladesh and mother is from England. Her father is

originally from the district of Mymensingh. When she was three, her family moved to England. She went to Bolton School and then studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Wadham College, Oxford. She lives in South London with her husband, Simon Torrance, a management consultant and her two children. Monika Ali is a writer of Bangladeshi diaspora in Britain. She gives voice to various issues of Bangladesh in her novels. Apart from that she writes about the Bangladeshi immigrants in Britain. She has written four novels viz., *Brick Lane*, *Alentejo Blue*, *In the Kitchen* and *Untold Story*.

I. *Brick Lane: A Novel*

Brick Lane projected Ali on to the Granta best young British novelists list before it was even published. It narrates the story of Nazneen, who comes to England from Bangladesh at the age of 18, after an arranged marriage to Chanu. Chanu seems pompous and ineffectual in career and family life. When Nazneen arrives, she can speak only two words in English, but falls into the role of dutiful wife and mother. She is always an outsider, an immigrant to a foreign land, and her Bangladeshi roots keep her in a subservient role in her married life and family. Nazneen struggles to make a life for herself within her traditional marriage and the East End immigrant community. Through the letters of Hasina, her sister in Bangladesh, Nazneen knows about the life in home country. Later on, Nazneen comes in contact with Karim, who comes to Nazneen's house to deliver cloths for her sewing job. She gets attracted towards him. He is a fierce young Muslim who wants to radicalize the local community. As a good Bengali wife, Nazneen does not enter lightly into her sexual adventure with Karim. Karim has deeply held beliefs against promiscuity. But the physical attraction that explodes between them destroys their moral expectations. The novel delves into the landscape of love, family, and the yearning for a sense of belonging. It was adapted as a 2007 film of the same name. The novel was well received by critics in the United Kingdom and the United States and shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize.

II. *Alentejo Blue*

Alentejo Blue, published in 2006, is a novel set in Portuguese village. It is a story of displacement and modernization told through the lives of the locals and of people who are just passing through. The residents of Mamarrosa, whose ancestors occupy the graveyards, are restless and struggle to make a living. They watch as tourists and expats

move in. The characters are sympathetic. The geographical unity of the novel holds it together. All the vignettes take place in Mamarrosa, a picturesque village in Portugal. It's the kind of peaceful place that makes the kids who live there long to get out and become au pairs in London, while it draws Londoners in pursuit of what looks like an easier life. An old peasant, a fat café-owner, a young Portuguese girl, a dissatisfied English tourist, a dissatisfied English writer - all these stock characters trot through the pretty village with its gorgeous colours.

The young Portuguese girl decides to leave for London and wants to lose her virginity before she goes. Stanton, the English writer, who has come to the village looking for inspiration, has the potential for independent life, as he sits at his computer longing to lose himself in his subject. The situation looks promising when he hooks up with some of the livelier characters in the book, an eccentric English family who live in conditions of unimaginable squalor - the drunken father, the disappointed mother with her flea bitten arms, the lonely son, the promiscuous, pregnant daughter. The novel shows deeper understanding of the characters, their dreams, desires and disappointments. (Walter)

III. *In the Kitchen*

In the Kitchen is published in 2009. Hotels are fruitful settings for fiction. They can act as reminders that none of us is a permanent resident on this earth. Ali ties her story to two self-contained social structures that allow her to trace Britain's fault lines: the busy kitchen of a hotel restaurant in central London, where Gabriel Lightfoot, her main character, is executive chef, and an old mill town in the north of England, where Gabriel's dying father has worked all his life. Gabriel's kitchen is immigrant Britain on display. Every corner of the earth is represented here, Hispanic, Asian, African, Baltic and most places in between. As the novel begins, a Ukrainian kitchen worker turns up dead in one of the hotel's subterranean passageways. His former lover, a sullen, waiflike pot-scrubber named Lena, becomes Gabriel's personal reclamation project and his entryway to the underground economy, a shadowy world of illegal immigration schemes, slave labor and forced prostitution. This is the new Britain.

Gabriel Lightfoot, who is known as Gabe, the Imperial's executive chef, presides over "a United Nations task force all bent to their work". At 42, his life is on the cusp of

change: he has backers ready to finance his dream of opening his own restaurant and he has proposed to his girlfriend, Charlie. But with the discovery of the dead porter, Gabe's certainties begin to unravel. The shadowy figure of Lena, a young eastern European girl enigmatically connected with the death, begins to haunt him; she claims to have been trafficked and Gabe offers her refuge. He learns that his father has terminal cancer, and returns home to the dying Lancashire mill town of his childhood to hear some uncomfortable family secrets; the financiers begin to get cold feet; Charlie learns of his affair with Lena and walks out.

Ali has chosen a workplace that, though familiar through television shows, remains fascinating, and the kitchen scenes are superb. The characters exist as mouthpieces for opposing views of modern Britain. The old Britain doesn't look much better. The fiery furnaces and satanic mills that terrorized Carlyle and Dickens barely exist. They consider that they have lost the 'Great' Britain. Gabriel is a small man on a big stage. Her characters argue back and forth about the tangled issues of race, culture and progress. By the end of the novel, he looks minuscule, a pipsqueak tyrant screaming for the reader's attention. (William)

IV. *Untold Story*

Untold Story is a novel by Monica Ali. It asks what would have happened if Princess Diana had not died in a car accident in Paris in 1997 but had arranged for her own disappearance and tried to live an undiscovered life in a small American town. In the novel, Princess Diana is narrated to be an English expat named Lydia. The events are given through diary entries of Lydia. Set in a small-town in America, the main character, Lydia, lives an almost determinedly quiet life, working in an animal shelter, dating a dull but pleasant man called Carson and occasionally sharing a drink with a group of friends. As the wife of a member of the British royal family, she faked her own death and left her two young sons behind forever, in order to flee a life she found increasingly intolerable. Though Diana is never actually named, in all other respects it's very clear about whom Ali is writing.

Through diary entries of Lydia's devoted private secretary, Lawrence, Ali informs that the former princess had come to feel hunted and haunted and desperate, so much so that Lawrence, fearing for her sanity, agreed to help her pull off her vanishing act. And so,

when the former princess leaps off her boyfriend's yacht off the coast of Brazil, Lawrence meets her in a rowboat. He supplies her with fake papers and a passport, and helps her get a little plastic surgery and relocate in America. After a series of moves from one American town to another, Lydia finally settles in a generic hamlet called Kensington, where she becomes friends with three middle-aged women. Having conveniently killed off Lawrence with a brain tumor, Lydia spends all her free time hanging out with her new friends. She gets a job at the local dog sanctuary and finds a cute, attentive boy friend named Carson, who works as a claims adjuster for an insurance company. Unlike Lydia's previous romantic picks, Carson is the perfect man — except that he keeps asking her annoying questions about her past. Ali explores the idea of exile and starting one's life anew, placing her princess in an identikit American suburbia where she is finally able to find peace. (Tripney)

2.3. *Brick Lane: An Introduction*

Brick Lane is a debut novel by Monica Ali. For the majority part of the novel, the setting of the plot is in London and through the memory of the protagonist-Nazneen and letters of her sister Hasina, Ali gives idea of Bangladesh. As Hussain, Yasmin points out,

Brick Lane has sparked controversy from within the British Bangladeshi community of East London. When the novel was published it upset some in the Bangladeshi community who referred to it as an insult to the community. The Greater Sylhet Development and Welfare Council, representing many Bangladeshis in Britain, wrote to the book's publishers Randon House arguing that the book was 'shameful'. They complained that the book treated Bangladeshis as 'economic migrants' and portrayed them as ignorant. e.g. Chanu's comments about the Bangladeshis of *Brick Lane* as 'uneducated; illiterate; close-minded, without ambition' is considered as offensive (92).

The novel begins in the pre-birth period of Nazneen i.e. in 1967 in Gauripur in Mymensingh district, then in East Pakistan and now in Bangladesh. Nazneen's mother's name is Rupban and father's name is Hamid. Nazneen is delivered by an old woman Banesa. Nazneen's neo-natal condition requires treatment but as it is very costly, child

Nazneen is left to her fate. After the death of her mother, her father remarried. Nazneen has a younger sister named Hasina, who elopes and marries Malek at a very young age in Bangladesh.

Nazneen's father decides her to marry to a person of his choice to which Nazneen replied, "Abba, it is good that you have chosen my husband. I hope I can be a good wife, like Amma" (7). Nazneen marries Chanu, who is forty years of age, almost double her age. She migrates to London after marriage with Chanu and lives in Bangladeshi ghettos at Tower Hamlets in Brick Lane area of London. For Chanu, Nazneen is "Not beautiful, but not so ugly either. The face is broad, big forehead. Eyes are a bit too close together" (14). Initially, Nazneen struggles a lot to get settled in London. She feels alien in a foreign land. She could say two things in English: 'sorry' and 'thank you'. Nazneen remembers farms and life in Bangladesh and misses them in London. She is impressed by luxurious standard of living in London which is very high in comparison to Bangladesh.

Mrs. Islam and Razia, who are from Sylhetis district of Bangladesh, living in Brick Lane, are good company for Nazneen. Chanu criticizes the people of his own community living there and doing hard work like donkey. Mrs. Islam considers herself progressive and does not wear burkha. She says, "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" (21).

Chanu is the mouth piece of an immigrant who feels that he is discriminated there. He believes that to get promotion in a job one needs to flatter the boss in this foreign country. Dr. Azad knows Chanu's boss Mr. Dalloway and so Chanu invites Dr. Azad for dinner with an intention that Dr. Azad may recommend his promotion. They discuss about their community in London that now children are copying what they see here, going to the pub, to night clubs, or drinking at home in their bedrooms, where their parents think they are perfectly safe. When Dr. Azad and Chanu discuss about the lack of education in their community, Chanu says, "I don't plan to risk things happening to my children. We will go back before they get spoiled" (24). But to this remark of Chanu, Dr. Azad says that it is another disease that afflicts the immigrant viz., Going Home Syndrome. Dr. Azad says these migrants will never save enough to go back. "Every year

they think, just one more year. But whatever they save, it's never enough" (24). Dr. Azad says,

Every year I thought, 'Maybe this year.' And I'd go for a visit, buy some more land, see relatives and friends, and make up my mind to return for good. But something would always happen. A flood, a tornado that just missed the building, a power cut, some mind-numbing piece of petty bureaucracy, bribes to be paid out to get anything done. And I'd think, 'Well, maybe not this year.' And now, I don't know. I just don't know.
(25)

Chanu has been staying in London for the last sixteen years. He is punctual in his job and rarely takes sick leave though he has ulcer. It seems that in England, people have to work hard for sustaining job and promotion. Chanu, little bit frustrated, says that he wants to keep two promises, the first that he will be a success come what may and the second that he will go back home when he is a success. At home, Chanu quotes in English and then translates it for Nazneen which irritates her. Nazneen feels that though her husband is not handsome, is not cruel. She longs for love and dreams her sister, Hasina. Chanu is an orthodox and conservative. He does not allow Nazneen to go out. But he says: "I don't stop you from doing anything. I am westernized now. It is lucky for you that you married an educated man. That was a stroke of luck" (39). She has to cut corns of Chanu.

Ali depicts the atmosphere of Brick Lane- offices, busy people, eating sandwiches while walking during lunch time to save time. Nazneen puts forward the suggestion to find her sister Hasina in Dhaka who left her husband, but Chanu rejects it. Hasina's letter informs that she lives in Dhaka. Mr. Chowdhury is her landlord, who provide job in a garment factory. Hasina's whereabouts makes Nazneen comfortable but Chanu believes that Hasina should be left to her fate. Nazneen indulges in gossip with Razia, Hanufa, Jorina and Mrs. Islam about the people of her community.

Nazneen gives birth to a boy named Raqib but he dies in an illness. Chanu dreams of getting Open University degree, promotion, job, furniture, buy a house in Dhaka, run jute business and setting up a mobile library in Dhaka. Chanu and Nazneen go to Dr.

Azad's home where they find that Mrs. Azad is following western culture. She smokes, drinks beer and her clothes do not suit a Bangla Muslim lady. Chanu imitates western culture and drinks beer with Mrs. Azad to which Nazneen considers a bad habit. When Dr. Azad says that it may be harmful to health, Chanu replies in such a way as if he has adopted the culture of London and defends thus:

It's a part of the culture here. It's so ingrained in the fabric of society. Back home, if you drink you risk being an outcast. In London, if you don't drink, you risk the same thing. That's when it becomes dangerous, and when they start so young they can easily end up alcoholic. For myself, and for your wife, there's no harm done. (112)

Chanu plans to make a big house in Dhaka and leave London before his daughters are grown up and influenced by western culture. When Dr. Azad's daughter comes in very awkward clothes and short skirt; Chanu and Nazneen are shocked. Dr. Azad's daughter demands money to go to pub and collects money though her parents are disgraced. Chanu comments on this, "This is the tragedy of our lives. To be an immigrant is to live out a tragedy" (114). He talks about the clashes of cultures and of generation. Mrs. Azad argues favouring western culture.

Listen, when I'm in Bangladesh I put on a sari and cover my head and all that. But here I go out to work. I work with white girls and I'm just one of them. If I want to come home and eat curry, that's my business. Some women spend ten, twenty years here and they sit in the kitchen grinding species all day and learn only two words of English. They go around covered from head to toe, in their little walking prisons, and when someone calls to them in the street they are upset. The society is racist. The society is all wrong. Everything should change for them. They don't have to change one thing. That is the tragedy. (116-17)

In the novel, the woman protagonist attempts for adjustment whereas her male counterpart longs for home. Nazneen tries to empty her mind and accept each new thing with grace or indifference whereas Chanu is obsessed with degrees, promotion, the Dhaka house, the library, the chair-restoring business, the import-export plans, the

interminable reading. Chanu seems negative. He does not wish to stay in a foreign land if it is not going to make him rich.

Ali describes the life in homeland, here Dhaka, through Hasina's letters. There is news of opening of factories but there is also bad news of strikes of trade unions, bribe to government civil servants, ministers and even president and close down of university. Hasina talks about her garment factory of three rooms, her friends Shahnaz, Aleya and Renu. Working woman is considered below dignity for a man in the male dominated society especially of Muslims. The Mullahs insist that woman should not work with man. They pressure to wear burkha inside of factory. Hasina works in a factory and she is molested and raped by Mr. Chowdhury, her employer. Hasina informs how her father married after her first mother's death and then the second wife also left. Hasina remarries Ahmed and thinks about child but she regrets she cannot have child now. Hasina mentions about poor condition of Bangladesh at BATEXPO i.e. Bangladesh Apparel and Textile Show.

In London, Nazneen has two daughters Shahana and Bibi. Ali points out that the second generation immigrants are imitating the hostland culture. Bibi is reluctant to speak in Bangla. Shahana, whom Chanu calls memsahib, does not want to listen to Bengali classical music. Her written Bengali is shocking. She wants to wear jeans. Chanu informs about the glorious past of Bangladesh and undivided India before the colonial rule.

Nazneen starts sewing cloths to help Chanu. Chanu brings a sewing machine for Nazneen and a computer for kids. Nazneen regrets that her husband does not allow her to learn English. When Mrs. Islam talks about the madrasah, the new school, Chanu discards the education pattern in London and says: "Don't forget, Bengal was Hindu long before it was Muslim, and before that Buddhist, and that was after the first Hindu period. We are only Muslims because of the Moguls. Don't forget" (208). Mrs. Islam comes to collect the money that Chanu has taken as a loan, but Nazneen could not manage it.

Chanu feels frustrated that in spite of having degrees and certificates he could not get a good job. One day he receives an interview for a job of washing in a restaurant. Nazneen feels sandwich between the torture of her daughters and husband. Chanu helps Nazneen in her sewing business and occupies herself in an honourable craft of tailoring. He collects order, money etc. as a middle man. Later on Chanu says that he decides to

return. Chanu gets a driving license and has become an employee at Kempton Kars. He thinks that now his Home Fund will prosper. One day a new middle man, Karim, appeared in Nazneen's life. Karim is a Bengali. Nazneen engages herself in knitting and sewing vests and Karim comes to collect to deliver dress material for knitting to her. Gradually sympathy towards Nazneen gets converted into emotions and physical love.

Karim is engaged in Bangladeshi Muslim youngster group 'The Bengal Tigers' for their rights. They are going to oppose 'Lion Hearts'. Karim gives her some new letters called 'The Light' and 'ummah'. Chanu and Dr. Azad talk about an important issue of increase of heroin abuse in their community and no elders are talking leadership or funding for counseling. The colonial mind set and revenge is narrated in Chanu's words. "You see, I myself have struggled for a long time. But now I am simply taking money out. 'Every rupee of profit made by an Englishman is lost forever to India.' That is how I am playing them at their own game now" (264).

Dr. Azad insists for education to get rid of drug addiction in their community. He further criticizes the Britishers who think they would have brought the railway. He says that our need was more for irrigation than for trains. Ali talks about the issues of religion, race and colonizers and colonized and contemporary issues of Egypt and Iraq. Muslim extremists are planning to turn Britain into an Islamic Republic, using a combination of immigration, high birth rates, and conversion. Chanu thinks to go at Dhaka University teaching sociology or philosophy or English literature. Hasina mentions about political unrest and unstable government in Bangladesh.

Karim delivers a brief speech on the issue of violence on Muslims in various parts. There is a continuous agitation by the Bengal tigers. In the Brick lane, most of the kids are addicts of heroin. Karim says that before ten years they were addicts of *ganja*. Chanu mentions the houses of Bangladeshi are overcrowding. There is a mention of attack on world trade centre. Karim and Chanu talk about the danger to Muslims because of terrorists attack to New York. Karim thinks that a devout Muslim never goes to bars and watch naked girls, drinks alcohol.

Nazneen develops relationship with Karim. She likes him because he is young, whereas Karim likes her because she is unspoilt girl from village. Nazneen informs Karim about her husband's plan to leave for Dhaka. Karim informs Nazneen that he has

left a girl from Bradford for Nazneen. He advises her to allow her husband to go and get a divorce. There is a march against the Mullahs in Brick Lane to be taken place. Karim is against this and says Islam never permit to kill anyone. Chanu and Nazneen decide to go at the meeting of Bengal tigers before the march. They listen the speech by Karim emphasizing Islam is a peace. Chanu borrows money from Dr. Azad to buy tickets for Dhaka.

At the end Nazneen is in a confused state. She goes to meet Karim by train. She reaches at Covent Garden. She meets Karim and informs him that her husband has already bought tickets for Dhaka and she decides to live in London with her daughters. Chanu goes back to Dhaka alone. Nazneen gets information about Bangladesh through Chanu's letters. At the end, Nazneen, as an immigrant struggles for assimilation, goes for ice-skating with daughters.

2.4. Critical study of parameters

The researcher has carried out extensive narrative analysis to study various parameters to understand the elements of diaspora in the novel. The same are discussed as under.

I. Time and type of Migration

In the novel various characters migrate from homeland at different age under different circumstances. Chanu goes to London before marriage and settles there for better standard of living, job and earn money so that he may buy big house and property in Bangladesh and get prosperous. He makes continuous efforts to attain it. He thinks that he may not require going for ordinary job like the other illiterate immigrants from his country. So, his is a voluntary migration to become prosperous. Chanu comes to Bangladesh and marries Nazneen who is almost half of his age. After marriage, Nazneen goes with him and gets settled in Brick Lane area of London. Nazneen's migration may not be called voluntary as she has to come at her husband's place after marriage, a tradition in patriarchy. She leaves her father's home, her homeland and comes to an alien land.

Besides Nazneen and Chanu, there are many immigrants from Bangladesh in Brick Lane. They live in ghettos. They try to adjust in hostland by adapting the life style,

customs and dressing style, leaving aside their religious code. Mrs. Azad, Razia, Hanufa etc. work there and struggle for existence in London. Apart from first generation immigrants, there are children of these migrants who are second generation immigrants. Most of them are born and brought up there and they feel more comfortable with the culture and life style of London rather than imitating the Bangladeshi life style, copying language and customs. Bibi and Shahana- the daughters of Nazneen, do not like Bangla language and even on insistence of Chanu, they do not like literature of homeland. Dr. Azad's daughter follows western culture up to a great extent. Karim is a second generation immigrant engaged in delivering vests. But he feels racial discrimination of his people and starts agitation for the same.

II. Glimpses of homeland in the novels under study -its geography, polity, economy and locale

In the novel, Ali narrates the geographical locations, agriculture, industry, population, economy and polity of Bangladesh. Jute is a major industry in Bangladesh and jute sack is used as a bed roll. When the novel begins in 1967, in East Pakistan, Banesa, an old woman delivers the child Nazneen. It is also mentioned that people of Bangladesh are fatalist. Nazneen recollects paddy field, mango trees and compare that with her present in London, where in Brick Lane it is just a pile of bricks. Ali says about feminine in Dhaka in 1942-43 painted by Abedin –an Artist, the painting is in a museum in Dhaka.

One of the positive aspects that the homeland gains from the immigrants is remittances. Here, the immigrants from Bangladesh send money to their relatives. They used to send money earned in foreign currency to their home land. Razia's brother-in-law takes care of money that she sends to him in Bangladesh. In the society of Bangladesh it is mentioned that polygamy and adultery is permissible to males in patriarchy.

Monika Ali uses a novel technique of depiction of homeland through letters that Nazneen receives from her sister Hasina from Bangladesh. Through letters from 1988 onwards, Hasina informs about a new factory, strike of trade unions, her living place and corruption in Bangladesh. She mentions that bureaucrats are corrupt in Bangladesh; bribe is paid to government civil servants, ministers and even president. University is closed down and all students hold protest.

The novelist mentions about various issues in the postcolonial world regarding attitude of colonized towards colonizers. The colonized talk about their glorious past and here, Chanu conveys the same from the book of Shahana.

You, see, all these people here who look down on us as peasants know nothing of history. In the sixteenth century, Bengal was called the Paradise of Nations. These are our roots. Do they teach these things in the school here? Does Shahana know about the Paradise of Nations? All she knows about is flood and famine. Whole bloody country is just a bloody basket case to her. (194)

It is also mentioned that under the British rule, the colonized were exploited even during famine. “The people of Bangladesh died and the crows and the vultures lived... While the crows and vultures stripped our bones, the British, our rulers, exported grain from the country” (402).

Glorious past of Bangladesh is mentioned. During the sixteenth century and seventeenth century Dhaka was the home of textiles, who invented all this muslin and damask and it was exported to the Dutch, the Portuguese, the French and the British. During the 18th century this part of the country was stable, wealthy, educated and providing one third of the revenue of British’s Indian empire. The economy of London is affected by Bangladeshi immigration. British citizenship is needed for job safety.

There is a mention of ban on the plastic bags to save environment and about the political parties in Bangladesh viz., BNP or AL or Jammata-e-Islami. The general opinion is about criticism of government to stop use of plastic bag, Awami League also favours ban on plastic bags. James is the person who speaks against the Europeans. James gets red in face and speaks with very control voice. “That is what so wrong with this country. Nobody want progress. In New York and Paris and London you think they carry shopping in Jute bag? No! Is all polythene” (364).

The citizens of the Third World countries are eager to migrate. Here, Hasina informs that one needs 150000 taka to go to a foreign country. To Singapore it is much more. Hasina’s letters dispel the myth that Bangladesh is still rural, a paradise; it is urban and violent. Hasina describes to her sister how garment girls have become branded as sexually immoral due to their working in close proximity to men. The patriarchal world

of Bangladesh mirrors the patriarchy practiced with in Britain, but is stronger. e.g., Hasina, left without the protection of a husband, is raped, then forced to become a prostitute to survive and her friend, named Monju, is murdered by her husband drenching her in acid. Whilst Hasina works within a factory as a mechanist, her sister, in the liberated environment of the West, also resorts to working as a mechanist, but in purdah within the home.

Thus the novelist gives detailed picture of the society of homeland, but not through any incidents with the protagonist in the present. It is through the memories of different characters and through the letters of Hasina.

III. Glimpses of hostland in the novels under study -its geography, polity, economy and locale

As David Garbin mentions from the 2001 census “the ‘heartland’ of the London Bangladeshi community is to be found in Tower Hamlets, which contained 65,553 Bangladeshi residents or 22.8 per cent of the UK Bangladeshi population”(718). Monika Ali describes the hostland very vividly, but here the geographical location of hostland is limited up to London and especially, Tower hamlets, London, 1985, and the Brick Lane area. The Tower Hamlets are described as, “Most of the flats, which enclosed three sides of a square, had net curtains, and the life behind was all shapes and shadows. But the tattoo lady had no curtains at all” (8). Activities at various streets of London viz., Commonwealth Street, Bethnal green road, Wentworth Street etc. have been narrated. Life of people with cosmopolitan population which includes people of different religions is narrated in the diaspora novel. Nazneen finds that furniture and wealth in London cannot be compared with even wealthy man in Gauripur, Bangladesh. The wooden tables, a rack of newspaper, a book case, armchairs, walls etc. amazed Nazneen. She thinks that nobody in Gauripur had anything like it. Though her father was the second wealthiest man in the village and he never had anything like it.

In the novel, Nazneen is shown as a working woman of 34, with two daughters. The harsh reality of the Bangladeshi immigrants living in London is that in small houses at Tower hamlets, on an average 3.5 Bangladeshis are living in a single room. In Brick Lane, there are offices on the street and people are busy, they eat sandwiches while walking, during lunch time to save time. The poor immigrants in London become addicts

of heroin and other drugs at a very young age. Kids imitate the foreign culture and they smoke cigarette in street and when they see an elder coming, they do not bother to hide it. They walk with their girl friends. They even kiss in the street, in front of an elder. Migration may not always lead to a positive thing. Here, Ali mentions an incident that on the hostland, there are incidents of stabbing boys for quarrels between two groups on issues of girl, drugs and money. In the novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Desai narrates such incidents and clashes between different ethnic groups.

There is an absence of the indigenous population, except for passing references, and contact between Nazneen and White Londoners is limited. No contact with the host country is sought. The English are observed, by the characters in the novel. For example, the 'tattoo lady' who lives opposite Nazneen and Chanu, but no contact develops between them.

Ali describes the politics of hostland so vividly that one may find rare in other such novels. The behaviour of characters seems to spring from their own hopes and disappointments. They react to September 11 and the Oldham riots. Ali precisely observed descriptions of the meetings of Karim's group of local Muslims, the "Bengal Tigers", where girls in headscarves and boys in Nike fleeces argue about whether they should engage with global jihad or local injustices. Thus, Ali has given detailed description of the society of hostland. In the novel, the hostland is portrayed through various characters but there is a little mention about any white person interacting. The outer world of the hostland is restricted up to the visit and narration by the characters from homeland Bangladesh.

IV. Attitude of the diaspora group towards other migrants and the homeland

The novel narrates incidents of Bangladeshi immigrants in Brick Lane and their life. Mrs. Islam is from Bangladesh in London for 30 years. Through Chanu, Ali narrates the relationship among the immigrants from the same homeland. Most of the people are Sylhetis. They all stick together because they come from the same district. They know each other from the villages, and they come to Tower Hamlets and they think they are back in the village. Most of them have jumped ships. That's how they come. Chanu says, "They have menial jobs on the ship, doing donkey work, or they stow away like little rats

in the hold... And when they jump ship and scuttle over here, then in a sense they are home again. And you see, to a white person, we are all the same: dirty little monkeys all in the same monkey clan” (20-21).

When a person goes from a family to abroad, the family begs for items and money. “They think there is gold lying about in the streets here and I am just hoarding it all in my palace” (27). The attitude of the settled immigrants towards the new immigrants is both supportive as well as non-supportive. For Nazneen, language is always a barrier to communication. Her husband boasts about his knowledge of language and makes sarcastic remarks for Nazneen considering her illiterate. Nazneen could not pronounce the word ‘Ice-es-kating’ to which Chanu remarks “It’s a common problem for Bengalis. Two consonants together causes a difficulty...I have conquered this issue after a long time. But you are unlikely to need these words in any case” (29).

During pregnancy of Nazneen, her Bangladeshi neighbours help her. Later on, when Chanu needs financial help, Mrs. Islam lends money to him. Mrs. Islam even donates money to the mosque for the needy children. Karim, a young second generation immigrant from Bangladesh, helps Nazneen in her economic activity of earning through knitting vests. Karim delivers the raw materials to Nazneen and collects the finished knitted dresses back from her. Here, he is shown as an immigrant helping the other people. Karim even helps Nazneen in speaking English.

V. Attitude of the diaspora group towards the hostland and citizens of hostland

Through Dr. Azad, Ali informs about the alcohol drinking habits of the people from their community who came to London. This habit makes many immigrants suffering from liver problem because of too much drinking. The children of immigrants imitate this habit; even they go to the pub, to night clubs, or drinking at home in their bedrooms, where their parents think they are perfectly safe. According to Chanu, lack of proper education is the reason for this mere copying.

The migrated people in the developed countries have created their own homeland atmosphere in the host place and sometimes, this creates slums or untidy place, later on it creates problems of clash of culture. Chanu does not wish his kids to get spoiled in foreign culture. He says, “I don’t plan to risk things happening to my children. We will

go back before they get spoiled” (24). This concept is very much similar to diaspora texts in which immigrants of first generation think to get prosper and return to homeland without spoiling their kids, the second generation, from the culture of hostland. In Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*, Ashok and Ashima think same about their children.

Chanu used to go with his boss at the pub. He talks about the universal attitude of human being to flatter the boss for favour. Here, Wilkie flatters the boss for getting promotion. Chanu has over confidence in getting promotion. He says, “No, I don’t have anything to fear from Wilkie. I have a degree from Dhaka University in English Literature. Can Wilkie quote from Chaucer or Dickens or Hardy?”(30) Monica Ali makes Chanu as a mouthpiece of colonial set up. He has little bit hostile feelings with the people of London as he thinks that they exploited his country. He does a driver’s job and he says:

You see, all my life I have struggled. And for what? What good has it done? I have finished with all that. Now, I just take the money. I say thank you I count it... You see, when the English went to our country, they did not go to stay. They went to make money, and the money they made, they took it out of the country. They never left home. Mentally. Just taking money out. And that is what I am doing now. What else can you do? (227)

Thus, Ali says how the colonized people take revenge. Chanu criticizes the word ‘Dark Ages’ used by the Christians, instead it was the Golden Age of Islam, the height of civilization. Chanu used to teach Gandhian idea of western civilization, the Hindu and the Buddhist philosophy. The colonial mind set and revenge is narrated in Chanu’s words. “You see, I myself have struggled for a long time. But now I am simply taking money out. ‘Every rupee of profit made by an Englishman is lost forever to India.’ That is how I am playing them at their own game now” (264). Dr. Azad criticizes the Britishers who think they would have brought the railway. He says that the need was more for irrigation than for trains. Chanu adds that the Britishers think that they bequeathed them law and democracy. Chanu believes that Manchester blossomed at the cost of looms factories in Dhaka.

Apart from local issues, the novel depicts the global issues. The US-forced sanctions against the twenty million people. There are thousands of malnourished

children in Iraq and Chechnya after the sanctions have been imposed. They die in hundreds and no one cares. Monica Ali mentions the lifestyle of the whites who mind their own business and they do not indulge in any one else's matter.

VI. Search for identity and feelings of alienation

The immigrant community search themselves in an alien land and Ali mentions that, "They don't ever really leave home. Their bodies are here but their hearts are back there. And anyway, look how they leave: just re-creating the villages here" (24). Dr. Azad says these migrants will never save enough to go back "Every year they think, just one more year. But whatever they save, it's never enough" (24). Ali mentions that among the immigrants, there is a tendency of thinking to go back home to which she says "Going Home Syndrome" (24). This is typical characteristics of the immigrants narrated by the diaspora writers. Chanu reiterates his qualification and will be getting B.A. Honors from a British University. He faces harsh reality of his life as an immigrant.

When I came I was a young man. I had ambitions. Big dreams. When I got off 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...And then I found things were a bit different. These people here didn't know the difference between me, who stepped off an aeroplane with a degree certificate, and the peasants who jumped off the boat possessing only the lice on their heads. What can you do? (26-27)

Nazneen feels alien in the foreign land. She accepts her husband who is almost twice her age. In her 18 years, Nazneen could scarcely remember a moment that she had spent alone. And now in London she has to sit day after day in the large box with the furniture to dust, and the muffled sounds of private lives sealed away above, below, and around her. During the day time after the household work she feels that the old Nazneen is sublimated and the new Nazneen is filled with white light glory.

In a foreign land migrants search for their own roots and identity. Chanu makes optimum efforts that he retains his Bengali identity at home. In *The Namesake* also, Ashima and Ashok try that their kids learn mother tongue. But Gogol in *The Namesake*, and here Bibi-the daughter of Nazneen and Chanu, are reluctant to speak Bengali, their

mother tongue. The first generation migrants make efforts to protect their language and culture. Chanu makes his daughters to recite poems in Bengali. Shahana, whom he calls 'mehsahib', does not want to listen to Bengali classical music.

Through Karim and the Bengal Tigers, Ali mentions that the Islamic fundamentalists insist to preserve their Muslim identity along with their British identity. In this regard, Garbin mentions that various Islamic groups in Britain emphasis to preserve Islamic identity along with a British identity otherwise it would be like assimilation. (727) In an interview with Allan Gregg on '*Brick Lane and Alentejo Blue*' Monika Ali says about the plot of the novel as cultural dislocation, alienation and generational conflict. The novel received a great acclaim and she has been considered among the best authors of the last decade. She says that "she has also been grown up in two different cultures viz., of Bangladesh from father and Britain from mother side. In response to the depiction of fundamentalist, radical Islam in the novel, she replies that, it is the anger of young men who feel alien and isolated post September 11" (Interview, Ali).

VII. Nostalgia and Memory and their role in the present

Memory of the past makes the immigrant longing for homeland. It creates feelings of nostalgia and plays vital role in adjusting in the foreign country. Native food, language, customs, religious festivals and time spent with relatives etc. create feeling of nostalgia. In the era of Information Technology with speedy and easy means of communication and social media these feelings for nostalgia have boosted up. In sleep Nazneen remembers her past like going with Hasina to school, green-rice fields etc. She dreams about Hasina and her homeland. Chanu argues that basically their community is peasant, they miss their own land in London and so this pool of the land is stronger even than the pool of blood.

Dr. Azad also brings harsh reality of Bangladesh in particular and all the developing South Asian nations in general. Though the villages are recreated in the hostland, the poor souls are in some sort of exile and they plan to get on an airplane and go when they have earned enough. But one cannot say when this enough is enough. There can be number of reasons for lingering on in an alien land. Awaiting some long due promotion and a handsome raise, or becoming a more successful and wealthy person.

And thus one goes on and on in the alien land and the longing to get back gets deeper and deeper. Besides these materialistic considerations, there are other conveniences one gets used to which are all but absent home. The diaspora texts are like a candle on threshold, illuminate the reality of both the countries. Dr. Azad says:

Every year I thought, 'May be this year.' And I'd go for a visit, buy some more land, see relatives and friends, and make up my mind to return for good. But something would always happen. A flood, a tornado that just missed the building, a power cut, some mind-numbing piece of petty bureaucracy, bribes to be paid out to get anything done. And I'd think, 'Well, maybe not this year.' And now, I don't know I just don't know.
(25)

Food is a part of culture and Nazneen, while eating yogurt in London, remembers how Amma used to make yogurt. Thick and sweet and warm. Nothing like these plastic pots from the plastic English cows. But still with the sugar, it went down. And it was very convenient. When she thinks about Gauripur now, she thinks about inconvenience. Thus, Nazneen feels herself in a confused state that for every material gain there is a loss which cannot be compromised. She imagines living without a flushing toilet, to abandon her two sinks –one in the kitchen and the other in the bathroom, to make a fire for the oven instead of turning a knob in Gauripur. Nazneen longs for Bangladesh, thinks her sister working in a garment factory ironing collars in place and fun with her friends. Nazneen remembers giant fisherman's net in her village. She dreams of Mumtaz. She remembers her Abba, Amma and Hasina. Through Hasina's letter written in January 2001, from Dhanmondi, Dhaka; Nazneen gets idea about Hasina's present. Hasina lives at House of Falling women in destitute hostel. James alias Jamshed Rashid and Lovely alias Anwara Begum come there and take over her at their house in Dhanmondi. Hasina's duty is to take care the children, cleaning, wash plate, wash clothes, shopping. All these make Nazneen more attached to homeland and delays or obstruct her efforts in getting adjusted in a foreign land. Thus, feelings of nostalgia and memory play very significant role in the novel to make the characters get attached to homeland even after a long stay in the hostland.

VIII. Issues related to alien language, social mobility and politics of struggle for survival in the hostland

Language is one of the factors that make immigrants feel isolated. They could not express themselves in a foreign language and feel inferior. Nazneen could say two things in English: 'sorry' and 'thank you'. Initially, she could not get acquainted with the native people living in Tower Hamlets. She feels English as a new language which prevents her to express her feelings to anyone. When Dr. Azad comes to Nazneen's home for dinner, she does not speak much as feels shy because of language barrier. A person can recollect his past only in mother tongue. In *The Namesake* Jhumpa Lahiri expresses the same feelings when Ashima goes to America after marriage and misses her mother tongue.

Monika Ali mentions immigrants' efforts for survival in a new land. Mrs. Islam opines that if one wants to mix with other people, then one has to give up his /her culture to accept theirs. Mrs. Azad is having western culture. She smokes, drinks beer and her clothes does not suit a Bangla Muslim lady. Mrs. Azad argues favouring western culture.

Listen, when I'm in Bangladesh I put on a sari and cover my head and all that. But here I go out to work. I work with white girls and I'm just one of them. If I want to come home and eat curry that's my business. Some women spend ten, twenty years here and they sit in the kitchen grinding species all day and learn only two words of English. They go around covered from head to toe, in their little walking prisons, and when someone calls to them in the street they are upset. The society is racist. The society is all wrong. Everything should change for them. They don't have to change one thing. That is the tragedy (116-17).

Chanu imitates western culture agrees to drink beer with Mrs. Azad to which Nazneen thinks a bad habit. When Dr. Azad says that it may be harmful to health and against religion, Chanu defends it being the culture of London.

It is the wish of every immigrant that after earning some handsome, s/he goes back to homeland for permanent settlement and not to spoil their kids. Chanu says scarcity of money is the main problem. Dr. Azad comments to make money to which Chanu replies, "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" (113).

The struggle of the first generation immigrants is narrated through the life of Dr. Azad in the early phase of arrival in London. Dr. Azad and his wife struggled a lot during his study of medicine in London. They ate rice and dal only and drank water to bloat out their stomachs. Nazneen's struggles –physical, mental and economic, is depicted when her son Raqib is sick and she goes to hospital with Chanu. During treatment, Raqib dies at the hospital. Nazneen tries to empty her mind and accept each new thing with grace or indifference. While she wants to look neither to the past nor to the future, Chanu lives exclusively in both. Chanu seems negative. He does not wish to stay in a foreign land if it is not going to make him rich. Chanu feels frustrated that in spite of having degrees and certificates he could not get a good job. Nazneen starts knitting and could earn 3 pounds and fifty pence in one hour. Nazneen thinks of change in her life through clothes and style. Suddenly, she is gripped by the idea that if she changes her clothes her entire life would change. She thinks about wearing a skirt and a jacket and a pair of high heels, walk around the glass palaces on Bishops gate and talk into a slim phone and eat lunch out of a paper bag. She imagines if she wears trousers and underwear, like the girl with big camera on Brick Lane, then she would roam the street fearless and proud. Chanu helps Nazneen in her sewing business. He collects order, money etc. as middle man. Chanu also struggles to survive on an alien land. He gets a driving licence and gets employment as a driver at Kempton Kars. He thinks that now his home fund will prosper. A new middle man Karim appeared in Nazneen's life and changes her mind set and supports her. She decides to live in London and no to return, though she has to adjust a lot to make her decision come true. Here, a female protagonist, not much literate, adjusts herself in an alien world after struggle, whereas an educated Chanu could not.

Nazneen who is resigned to her fate, and having the choices of fighting, fleeing or flowing through her fate, decides to flow with the tide of her fate. Nazneen experiences the trauma of being uprooted to gradually experiencing the excitement of being a global soul. For the first generation expatriate Nazneen, Bangladesh is the place which has nurtured her and her values. It is the place where she feels attached. Later on, through various incidences she gradually gets attracted to her land of adoption and accommodates

the new overseas style. She disconnects herself from her original home and taking her final decision to 'stay' back even when the husband, Chanu, whom she followed to the alien land. Her decision to stay with two daughters alone, allowing Chanu to go back to Bangladesh, is very challenging and she wants to assimilate in the foreign land and make efforts to be a successful diaspora.

Chanu has never become a part of 'adopted' land. Chanu's predicament is of a diasporic life- to be part of a nation but not of a state; to claim citizenship in one place and belong to another. He is always balancing himself on a see- saw of acceptance and denial. Razia is another example who manages to assimilate. Initially, she has no one to talk with but she learns English and adjusts her life style. When she gets citizenship, she gains confidence to prove her worth and become successful.

Nazneen thinks her hostland to be proper place to live in as she has liberty and freedom here to roam wherever and whenever. On the other hand Chanu feels frustrated as his dreams to get successful in London is delayed. His promotion is not coming through and he fears that his children may get into wrong culture of the West. Pubbing and clubbing belong to an alien culture. Nazneen tries get adjusted in an alien land whereas Chanu thinks blames all his failures on several issues like clash of cultures, of generation gap, racism etc.

Monica Ali has established this truth very convincingly. To quote from Boston Globe:

The true pleasure of this wonderful novel comes from its timeless sense of wonder and affection for the haplessness of human nature, and by depicting this haplessness, the author has made a universal comment whereby a human being's journey through life is one of constant search for a true identity. And she appears to celebrate the gains of adoption and to a large extent does not regret 'absent flavours'. (Singh 202)

It is clear that a man may be more concerned with the materialistic gains to build a house 'back home,' for a woman; it is more a sense of finding her own identity.

IX. Issues related to religion, racism in homeland and hostland

In the novel, Ali narrates issues related to religion, here Islam. Mrs. Islam talks about the madrasah, the new school. Chanu discards the education pattern in London and

says, “Don’t forget, Bengal was Hindu long before it was Muslim, and before the Buddhist and that was after the first Hindu period. We are only Muslims because of the Moguls. Don’t forget” (208).

Through Chanu, Ali mentions about how one needs to flatter the boss to get promotion in this foreign country. Chanu thinks that just because he is a non- white, he is not getting promotion. Chanu makes all the efforts to get promotion. He does not avail leave though other people take leave in job. He thinks that as Dr. Azad knows Mr. Dalloway, his boss, who is a patient of Dr. Azad. So, if Dr. Azad puts in a word for him, the promotion will be automatic. So, he invites Dr. Azad at his home for dinner. The clash because of race is a normal phenomenon in the era of globalization. Chanu says:

the White underclass like Wilkie, who are most afraid of people like me. To him, and people like him, we the only thing standing in the way of them sliding totally to the bottom of the pile. 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. That is why you get the phenomenon of *National Front*. They can play on those fears to create racial tensions, and give these people a superiority complex. The middle classes are more secure and therefore more relaxed. (31)

Chanu continuously haunted with the matter of promotion and his rival white Wilkie. He talks about ‘Race, Ethnicity and Identity’. He says that the British people do not consider his degree from Dhaka University, which is one of the best in the world. In the era of postcolonialism the mind set of both the colonizer and colonized has not changed. “They do what they want. It is a private matter. Everything is a private matter. That is how the white people live” (88). Monica Ali makes Chanu a mouthpiece of colonized persons who feels that racism still persists in the era of globalization and multiculturalism. Regarding the tragedy that lies behind successful immigrants Chanu says: “I’m talking about the clash between Western values and our own. I’m talking about the struggle to assimilate and the need to preserve one’s identity and heritage. I’m talking about children who don’t know what their identity is. I’m talking about the feelings of alienation engendered by a society where racism is prevalent”(116).

Nazneen and Razia talk about how husbands keep a co-wife. Razia asks about promotion of Chanu, to which Nazneen replies, “My husband says they are racist, particularly, Mr. Dalloway. He thinks he will get the promotion, but it will take him longer than any white man. He says that if he painted his skin pink and white then there would be no problem” (69). Thus, Monica Ali puts forward how racial discrimination still exists in developed world and that creates anxiety and racial issues. Chanu believes that racism is built into the ‘system’. To this Mr. Azad argues that the fact is that we live in a western society. Our children will act more and more like westerners. In *The Namesake*, Ashima and Ashok decide the name of their American born son as ‘Gogol’ – a Russian name, but later on the parents feel that Gogol is more attached to the American culture rather than native Bengali culture. He is an ‘ABCD’ - American Born Confused Deshi, as Jhumpa Lahiri referred to him.

There are some people who are orthodox in homeland but after coming to a foreign land, they may consider other native people as orthodox and themselves as progressive. Chanu does not believe in reading the Holy Qur’an. He says, “rubbing ashes on your face doesn’t make you a saint. God sees what is in your heart” (35). The conflict due to religion, race and culture is highlighted in the novel. The Bangla Muslims talks about how Shibli Rahman, a person opposing racism, had been stabbed to death in the past. Karim suggests their mission “We are for Muslim rights and culture. We’re into protecting our local ummah and supporting the global ummah”(256).

Karim at Nazneen’s residence gives her some new letters called ‘The Light’ and ‘ummah’. In London, the issue of strife between the Islamic fundamentalists and the Britishers is mentioned. The Lion Hearts i.e. Britishers have made a remark opposing the activity of the Bengal Tigers.

HANDS OFF OUR BREASTS!

The Islamification of our neighbourhood has gone too far. A Page 3 calendar and poster have been removed from the walls of our community hall.

How long before the extremists are putting veils on our women and insulting our daughters for wearing short skirts?

Do not tolerate it! Write to the council!

This is England. (275)

In response to above remark, the Bengal Tigers replied the next day:

We refer to a leaflet put recently into circulation by those who claim to uphold the “native” culture. We have a message for them:

KEEP YOUR BREASTS TO YOURSELF.

And we say this. It is not us who like to degrade women by showing their body parts in public places. (275-76)

Karim insists that the Bengal Tigers need action instead of leaflet warn. Shahana gets a leaflet entitled ‘multicultural murder’. The leaflet says, “For his history lesson your son will be studying Africa or India or some other dark and distant land. English people, he will learn, are Wicked Colonialists.” And in Religious Instruction, what will your child be taught, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? No. Krishna, Abraham, and Muhammad” (268). It further says, “Christianity is being gently slaughtered. It is “only one” of the world’s “great religions.” Indeed, in our local schools you could be forgiven for thinking that Islam is the official religion” (268). No religion preaches intolerance and hatred, but in the novel, it is mentioned that some native people think that Muslim extremists are planning to turn Britain into an Islamic Republic, using a combination of immigration, high birth rates, and conversion. At the meeting organized by the Bengal Tigers, Chanu and Nazneen go there. Karim says in a speech that Islam is a peace. The Muslim extremists feel that after 9/11 attack America is revengeful. Here, the novel depicts the realistic picture of contemporary time that racist and religious extremist people spoil the peace worldwide. In this regards, David Garbin writes that “youth group play an important role among the South Asian Muslim communities and in the case of Bangladeshi communities, the Young Muslim Organization is very influential in Tower Hamlets in 1970s” (Garbin 723).

Apart from the issues in Britain, the novel also mentions about the global issues like oppression in Egypt, and political unrest and unstable government in Bangladesh. Monica Ali highlights the global problem of settlement viz., in Russia-Chechnya there is a jihad to inherit land. In the global issue of race, religion and ethnicity, the role of UN is mentioned at the meeting of the Bengal Tigers. “If the UN participates in such genocidal sanctions backed by the threat of military violence- and if the people of the world fail to

prevent such conduct- the violence, terror and human misery of the new millennium will exceed anything we have know”(306).

Through Karim, Ali mentions about the issues of Muslim community. Karim delivers a brief speech on the issue of violence on Muslims in various parts. He says, “Think global but act local. Official messages of support would be dispatched to the appropriate ummahs around the world-Oldham, Iraq and elsewhere” (309). Karim and Chanu talks about the danger to Muslim because of Terrorists attack to New York. Karim thinks that a devout Muslim right, willing to sacrifice himself for his religion, never goes to bars and watch naked girls, drinks alcohol. Nazneen also thinks that a Muslim can not commit suicide.

While racism prevails in the community, especially from white supremacist groups, it escalates after the events of September 11, 2001, prompting a debt-ridden Chanu to consider re-locating back to Dhaka, much to the chagrin of Nazneen and her daughters. Thus, Ali as a writer of diaspora put forward some issues related to race and religion at local as well as global level which are required to be resolved to maintain global peace.

X. Issues of subaltern, especially condition of women in homeland and hostland

The novel is written by a diaspora writer from Bangladesh. She has represented the voice of women and in particular, has given voice to the women of Muslim community. In patriarchal system, birth of a baby girl is not a welcome. When Nazneen is born, her parents get disappointed. As an infant, she needed some medication but she was left to her fate. As a woman Nazneen is very submissive and allows her father to choose spouse for her. Nazneen’s father decided her to marry to a person of his choice to which Nazneen replied, “Abba, it is good that you have chosen my husband. I hope I can be a good wife, like Amma” (7).

Chanu is a person who dominates his wife, Nazneen feels that Chanu may scold her if finds the place untidy. Initially, when in Bangladesh after marriage, Nazneen finds Chanu gentle and kind, but after one week when she comes in the UK, Chanu describes Nazneen on telephone to his friend as not beautiful, but not so ugly either. He adds that

his wife is a good worker, does not know English, a girl from the village, and totally unspoilt.

It has been found that a woman bearing no child is tortured by society. There is a mention of a woman in London from Bangladesh, committed suicide from 15th floor as she does not have a child after twelve years of her marriage. Through Chanu, Ali informs that birth of a male child is welcome in patriarchy whereas a female child is not receiving a warm welcome. When Nazneen is expecting a child, Chanu becomes excited and says that now Mr. Dalloway cannot stop my promotion as he is about to have a son.

Chanu, as a husband, is an orthodox, conservative. He does not allow Nazneen to go out. She has to cut corns of Chanu. But he, as a hypocrite, says: "I don't stop you from doing anything. I am westernized now. It is lucky for you that you married an educated man. That was a stroke of luck" (39). Ali depicts that in patriarchal Muslim society, what husband thinks, it is always to be followed. Chanu wishes to back to Dhaka. When Nazneen proposes to do sewing at home with other women like Razia, Chanu objects and asks her to mix with respectable people.

The novelist brings the issue of patriarchal set up where a working woman is considered below dignity for a man. In her first letter to Nazneen, in fact, Hasina recounts Aleya, who is from Noakhali, works with Hasina, says that she earns for her child but her husband says, "Why should you work? If you work it looks bad. People will say he cannot feed her"(157). Her husband asks her burkha and waits at the factory gate. Chanu boasts about his status and says, "Some of these uneducated ones, they say that if the wife is working it is only because the husband cannot feed them. Lucky for you I am an educated man" (193). Chanu does not allow Nazneen to learn English.

Meera Bharwani in her doctoral research examines these in the light of physical violence, mental violence, double standards of patriarchy and sexual exploitation in the diasporic location as well as in the home country. Nazneen's mother and her behaviour is an important indicator of all that women are made to endure and their indoctrination in the regulations of providence (Bharwani 236). Thus Ali has portrayed the plight of women in patriarchy both in Bangladesh and in London especially in Muslim community.

2.5. Conclusion

The extensive critical study of the novel on the basis of the selected parameters reveals that Ali has given voice to various issues of diaspora. The reason for migration is different viz., for career, for living luxurious life, for the betterment of children, marriage to an immigrant and in some cases it is illegal for getting opportunities in developed countries.

As a diaspora text, *Brick Lane* depicts the condition of homeland viz., Bangladesh in detail. Chanu, Nazneen, Razia, Dr. Azad, Mrs. Azad etc. talk about their homeland and compare it with their present life style. The connection between Bangladesh and Britain is maintained through the transnational sisterhood between Nazneen and her rebellious sister Hasina. The representation of Bangladesh in the novel is then considered largely in terms of the migrant Nazneen's memories of it and her sister Hasina's negative experiences of continuing to live there, which can be learnt through the device of Ali presenting the reader with Hasina's letters to her sister. Thus the novel always presents Bangladesh at a distance, as either a distorted memory or through a letter in broken English, never as a direct representation in the way one reads the Bangladeshi community in Britain. Ali narrates glorious past of Bangladesh, and the contemporary situation of Bangladesh. Ali, as a bifocal visionary, depicts the life in Brick Lane, the ghettos, small houses and struggle for getting employment in London by the immigrant. Ali as a diaspora writer mentions that life in London is not full of roses and the immigrants have to compromise at various levels in a hostland. Ali has not depicted the hostland outwardly. Unlike in Anurag Mathur's *An Inscrutable American* or Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, this novel rarely mentions about streets, geography and culture of London.

Change is a very subjective constant. It means different things to different individuals. It is a welcome respite to some, whereas to some it is only a very reluctant alternative to quickly adopt the means to achieve the end and be done away with. In the novel, for Nazneen and Chanu change strengthens what they have secretly hoped and wished to do. Regarding the dilemma of the characters, Neera Singh writes,

The novel takes the reader to and fro, from the lanes of her adopted land, to the alleys of the land of her origin... At the end, the protagonist has

undergone a mental transformation and has prepared herself to embrace the norms of an alien culture and seemingly begin 'a new life in a new land', thus keeping the thread of the diasporic yarn firmly entrenched in the fabric of her and her children's lives. (198)

Identity is not only constructed from within the minority culture, Ali also deals with the dichotomy between the 'home' country and the 'host' community. Racism as a theme is not focused on as a plot but becomes interspersed as a part of everyday reality. As Hussain Yasmin mentions, "Issues of home, belonging and identity are central to *Brick Lane*. The idea of diaspora in *Brick Lane* invokes the imagery of the traumas of separation, dislocation and adaptation that are central to the experiences of migration"(95).

Thus from the analysis of the parameters the novel provides enough voice to the issues of diaspora related to depiction of homeland, hostland, settlement, identity, alienation and assimilation on the hostland. It also discusses issues of race, religion and women as subaltern.

Works Cited

- Ali, Monica. *Brick Lane: A Novel*. New York: Scribner, 2003. Print.
- . "Monica Ali on 'Brick Lane' and 'Alentejo Blue' " *Interview by Allan Gregg*. 12 Dec 2011. Web. 22 Nov. 2012.
- "Bangladeshi English Literature." *en.wikipedia.org*. Web. 25 Oct. 2010.
- Bharwani, Meera. "Changing Diasporic Representations: An Interrogation of the Responses to the Trauma of Violence in Select Writers of the South Asian Diaspora Post 2001." Diss. SNDT Women's University. Dec. 2011. Web 15 March 2013.
- Garbin, David. "An Overview of Religious and Political Dynamics among the Bangladeshi Diaspora in Britain." *Sociology of Diaspora a Reader Vol 2*. Ed. Sahoo Ajaykumar and Brij Maharaj. Jaipur: Rawat, 2007. 718-728. Print.
- Hussain, Yasmin. *Writing Diaspora: South Asian Women, Culture and Ethnicity*. England: Ashgate, 2005. Print.
- Singh, Neera. "The Agony and the Ecstasy of Being on a See-saw of Denial and Acceptance in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*". *Diasporic Writing: The Dynamics of Be/longing* Ed. Singh Neera. New Delhi: Books Plus, 2008. 195-202. Print.
- Tripney, Natasha. "Untold story by Monica Ali.-Review." *theguardian.com*. 15 July 2012. Web. 10 Sep. 2012.
- Walter, Natasha. "*Alentejo Blue* by Monica Ali." *theguardian.com*. 20 May 2006. Web. 9 June 2011.
- Williams, Grimes. *Londonstan. Sunday Book review*. 6 Aug. 2006. Web. 10 Sep. 2010.