

# ALIENATION IN MONICA ALI'S *BRICK LANE*

**A.Deepa Arthi Yalini**

M.Phil Research Scholar, Department of English, Urumu Dhanalakshmi College, Trichy.

**Mr.S.Kandasamy, M.A.,M.Phil., PGDY.,**

Asst.Prof.& Head Department of English, Urumu Dhanalakshmi College, Trichy.

## **Abstract**

*“Brick Lane” by Monica Ali is a novel about various experiences of immigrants mainly focusing women from Bangladesh to Britain. The Bangladeshi men in their novel apt for diaspora to find well paid jobs to send money back to their homelands and even save up to return back to Bangladesh. “Brick Lane” offers contrasting experiences of diaspora across generation gender and class locations. Immigrants who are able to adopt the differences or climb up the social ladder continued to stay England and made it home. Whereas those who can't return back to Bangladesh due to bad experiences they faced in England as immigrants overall women folk within this novel seem to integrate well and build a new life in England compared to their men who eventually failed and return back to their homelands.*

## **Introduction**

Monica Ali Novel Brick Lane gained an enormous popularity within a very short time. For the book Ali was awarded literary prizes such as the US Award of the National Book Critics' Circle or the Booker Prize. The novel, however, was not only a commercial success, it also placed the author next to Kureishi and Rushdie. Apart from this positive reaction by many critics, Ali saw herself confronted with massive criticism of her own community that accused her of having painted a negative picture of Bangladeshis living in the UK. Thus, at the same time Brick Lane turned out to be the most controversial work of fiction to have been published since Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988). This criticism centered on accusations such as the allegedly negative portrayal of Muslims as uncultivated and old-fashioned or Ali's presentation of a female character who uses the west to emancipate herself

from traditional and male dominated family structures. This progressive description of a Muslim woman irritated western readers alike, who simply did not know such a type of character who tries to be a modern and a muslim woman at the same time.

Ali here uses the image of a modern Muslim woman as some kind of door opener for other Muslim women in order to reflect the traditional image of female presentation and representation in the western and the Muslim worlds alike. She hereby especially offends fundamentalists for whom words and books seem to be dangerous to the religious purity and the expanding position of the Quran in Islam. They range from Muslim immigration to Great Britain, Fundamentalism, the description of Muslim life in London, otherness and gender role descriptions to the question of identity. Ali, however, must be regarded as belonging to the second generation of muslim writers, because she enhance the problems Rushdie and Koresha are concerned about. One of the south Asian Diasporic who has written the draw of experience of Bangladesh immigrants and their struggle in constructing identity in Monica Ali. Through her novel Brick Lane and through her sense of technical assurance and inborn generosity the writer has reached a prestigious place among the great novelists row. Her first debut novel Brick Lane fulfilled and established Ali as a writer of real literary depth and dimension. Monica Ali is found to be anaturalistic writer who writes like a bird singing with some artistic deliberation.

### **Concept of Alienation**

The separation or estrangement of human beings from some essential aspect of their nature or from society, often result in feelings of powerlessness or helplessness. Marx's general theory of alienation is no longer relevant, many firms today seem to have taken on board some aspects of the theory for example, it is well establish that increasing worker

representation and participation reduces workers 'alienation', as outlined in the Taylor Review of modern working practices.

Another example of how firms combat alienation is the various media and tech companies which design work spaces to be homely and comfortable. Today, the concept of alienation has become part of ordinary language, much used in the media. They may be told, for example that groups are becoming alienated from society, or that young people are alienated from mainstream values. With such usage of the concept they get the impression of the feeling of separation of one group from society. But the concept has traditionally been used in sociology, mainly by Karl Marx to express a much more profound sense of estrangement than most contemporary usage.

Marx's concept of alienation was very abstract and linked to his general theory of society, with its revolutionary conclusions and as such, not especially easy to apply to social research. However, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century some sociologists stripped the concept from its theoretical origins in order to make the concept more useful for empirical research. One example is Robert Blauner's *Alienation and Freedom* (1964) in which he compared the alienating effects of working conditions in four industries focusing on the experience of the four key aspects of alienation, powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation and self estrangement. Blauner developed ways of measuring these different types of alienation incorporating the subjective perceptions of the workers themselves, arguing that routine factory workers suffered the highest levels of alienation. However, he found that when production lines became automated, workers felt less alienated as they had more control over their working conditions.

Origins of the concept sociological usage of the term stems from Marx's concept of alienation which he used to develop the effects of capitalism on the experience work in particular and society more generally. Other sociologists have attempted to apply the concept of alienation to criminology (Smith and Bohm, 2008) and even the study of health and illness (yuill 2005). Marx developed his theory of alienation from Feuerbah's philosophical critique of Christianity. Feuerbach argued that the concept of an all-powerful God as a spiritual being to whom people must submit in order to reach salvation was a human construction, the projection of human power relations onto spiritual being.

Christianity effectively disguised the fact that it was really human power relation which kept the social order going, rather than some higher spiritual reality. Thus alienating from the truth of power was really maintained. Marx applied the concept of alienation to work in industrial capitalist societies, arguing that emancipation for workers lay in heir wrestling control away from the small, dominating ruling class. Later, Marxist inspired industrial sociologist used the concept to explore working relations under particular management systems in factories.

Marx's historical materialist approach began with the way people organize their affairs together to produce goods and survive. Marx to be alienated is to be in an objective conditions which as real consequences, and to change it they need to actually change the way society is organized rather demanding, but Marx argued that it was also less alienating because workers (craftsmen for example) had more control over their working conditions, work was more skilled and it was more satisfying, because workers could 'see themselves in their work'. But the real strangeness of the story is not the fact of the physical transformation but of what it represents. At one point Gregorsamsa says of his family and his work life. The fruits of his labour were transformed into the provision of money and he earned enough to

mee the expenses of the entire family and actually did so. They had just become used to it, the family as well as Gregor, the money was received with thanks and given with pleasure but that special warmth was missing.

If this isn't Kafka's spin on Marx's line from the communist manifesto that the bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation into a mere money relation then they don't know what is. Gregor is metamorphosis into a bug is the outward and inward transformation of the need to earn money into their own picture of themselves. This is alienation theory in a beetle shell. It is not that he was poor and therefore suffering and needed to be kept down by a police state, but that the necessity of having to work for others at a job he hates for an amorphous output which doesn't belong to him alienates him from himself and from his labour power. Kafka's power as a writer lies in the fact that he shows the characters have no concept of what is being done to them as a result of their own alienation.

Recognition of the concepts of a alienation in western thought has been similarly elusive. Although entries on alienation did not appear in major social science reference books until the 1930s, the concept had existed implicitly or explicitly in classical sociological works of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries written by Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Ferdinand Tonnies, Max weber and Georg simmel. Marxism however represents only one stream of thought concerning alienation in modern society. A second stream which is considerably less sanguine about the prospects for de-alienation is embodied in the theory of mass society. Alienation from nature and humanity the third form of alienation Marx analyses is the most complex and pervasive with alienation of workers from their social environment. Consumed by the daily quest for survival and individual ascension in the workforce and society, it is

easy for anyone to feel isolated. Capitalism reduces workers to mere appendages of the machinery they operate.

Alienation is built into the capitalist system. It is countered when workers fight together. Instead of being atomized individuals operating in a society that exploits them, they come together as a collective force. When workers struggle together, they find a new, non-alienating bond. This bond arises in the fight against the existing social order. A voice that enable to him, channel an alienated 16-years old's thoughts and anxieties and frustrations, a voice that skeptically appraised the world and denounced its phoniew and hypocrites and bores.

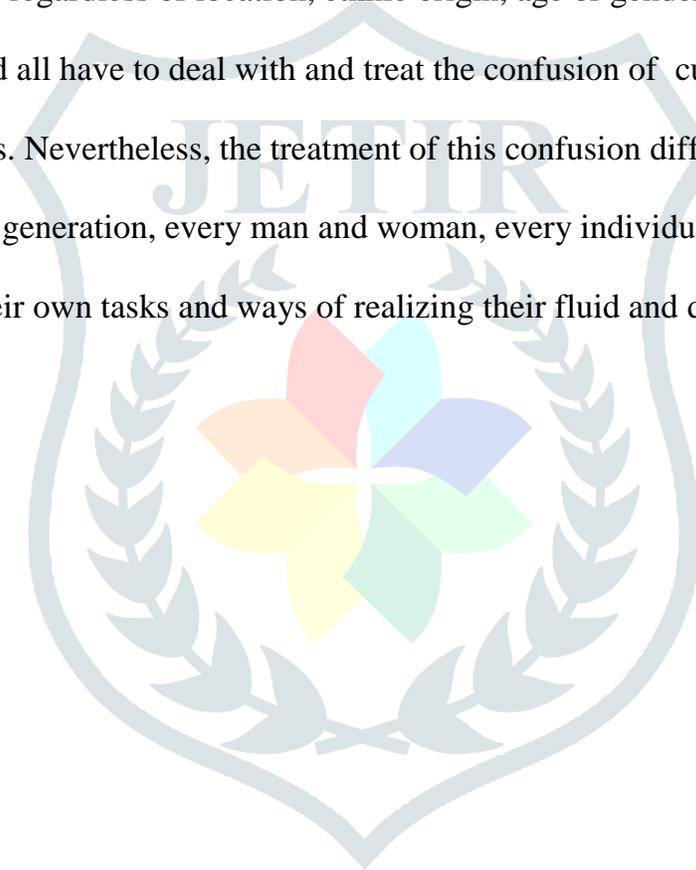
### **Conclusion**

Brick lane has a message that immigration is a complex issue on a human being level and on a collective level. Ali shows both sides, doesn't make any accusations or portray victims of an unjust system. She states facts all – round the novel to define the South Asian Diaspora in England in ways that non-diasporic audiences could easily understand. Monica Ali explores and analyses the conflicts, affirmations and appropriations of the home comprehended through the processes of unhoming, dislocation and identities as they emanate and evolve within the diasporas space.

In this way Monica Ali's Brick Lane can be considered as a major contribution to Diaspora Literature. The novel has given a Kaleidoscopic view of immigrant Londoners – the gap between their aspirations and achievements, the clash between native cultures and foreign ambiences, the need for assimilation and the fear of dissolution, the reaction of the nationalists and the emergence of the religious fundamentalists.

In Brick Lane, the narrator is more than a neutral photographer, she is an experiencing consciousness. Most of the time her point of view seems very close to that of Nazneen's, the subaltern protagonist of the novel. Here one can discern the presence of a central consciousness, which is an experiencing soul, sharing the sense of displacement and alienation of the diasporic existence. The problem of emotional conflict is felt more acutely and immediately here.

In conclusion, regardless of location, ethnic origin, age or gender, immigrants in Europe and the world all have to deal with and treat the confusion of cultural identity throughout their lives. Nevertheless, the treatment of this confusion differs according to age and gender, as every generation, every man and woman, every individual, immigrant or native alike, have their own tasks and ways of realizing their fluid and dual identities.



## Reference

Ali, Monica.*Brick Lane*. London: Black Swan, 2003. Print.

Brah.Avtar.*Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting identities*. London: Routledge, 1996.  
Print.

Cuddon, J.A.*Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. England: Clays Ltd, 1998.  
Print.

<https://www.Palgrave.com>book>,

<https://www.Timeshighereducation.com>

