



Journey Towards Freedom: Nazneen's Liberation To A Breakthrough Moment

Sukanya Kar

Ph.D Scholar

Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya, Nagaon, India

Abstract: Our celebrated protagonist Nazneen is a warrior in the truest sense of the term. Her life journey –her liberation moment to chase after her aspirations breaking the barriers and accepting and achieving her individuality has taught us a lot. From being an illiterate, immigrant Bangladeshi lady to an enslaved wife confined within the four walls of her London flat and then her transformation and awakening in establishing her own identity and freedom empowers us and we are in full applause in praise of her bravery, strength and vitality.

Keywords: *Independence, transformation, freedom, goosebumps, liberation, breakthrough, hegemony, patriarchy, migration, displacement, woman empowerment*

Bricklane by Monica Ali is all about the crisis of independence in the life of the protagonist Nazneen Ahmed, born and brought in Mymensingh district in Bangladesh. She was married to Chanu Ahmed at the age of eighteen years and migrated to London. Juggled up between the original Bangladeshi identity and now a new one she integrated in England, she was both a stranger and an alien socially and culturally. But shockingly even in this dire situation Chanu instead of understanding her situation continues to overrule and impose the constraints of a conservative, orthodox, typical Bangladeshi identity of marginalizing women and shackling them within the limits of male hegemony. This is the reason partly that Nazneen engages in an extramarital affair with a Bangladeshi boy Karim.

Nazneen felt so caged and alienated within her flats in Bricklane of England that she faced deep monotony due to the rapidity of household chores. She was searching for a fresh start but her husband Chanu used to disempower and enslave her. Chanu once said “Why should you go out? If you go out, then people will say, I saw her walking on the street and I will look like a fool”(Ali, page-30)¹. This sort of confinement within the domestic environment of the flat is a sort of ‘parda’(veil) that symbolizes slavery in Islam.

Thus Nazneen's journey from the lush, green grounds of her home towns in Bangladesh to a concrete apartment in “Bricklane”, London is transience in several layers of mental transitions. She crosses all the barriers laid by her parenting society, nation and individuality serve to create a niche for herself. The multicultural ambience of the West gave her the strength and courage to challenge the hegemonic practices of both East and West. So, we find that the novel in short revolves around a lady who marries a man due to her social obligation. Her personality is shaped by the walls of culture, fate, religion, racial discrimination and patriarchy. Towards the end, Nazneen is a transformative lady who challenges all those struggles and comes out victorious.

The narration of “Bricklane” revolves around the life of Nazneen whose crisis for independence and freedom ends with her going ice-skating for the first time symbolizing she finally meeting the fate of her independence. In short, Nazneen has undergone psychological migration, displacement and identity crisis that firstly defragmented her, letting her struggle, fight and finally cherishing victory into her authentic self.

The partition and separation had a drastic impact on the lives of the people affected by the holocaust. The partition and separation literature in particular and South Asian literature, in general, tends to explore the sense of loss, separation, migration, rehabilitation, dislocation, nostalgia and longing felt by communities facing the upheaval of a divided nation. The displacement and dislocation that brought the refugees who registered themselves in government records or undeclared refugees from East Bengal and the sense associated with it have always been a leading question. It sets the stage for establishing a sense of identity around regional lines that triggers a familiar process of nostalgic longing and loss for all those good past days against these endless struggles. Psychological migration, transition, cultural transformation, and religious conversion during the partition era have left a deep mark on our psyche. The partition period left millions of young girls with no identity, ethnicity, or culture shackled, hampering their dreams with the cerebral imprisonment into four walls of a cage. The sufferings of the tragedy of the

¹ Ali, M., 2004. *Brick Lane*. 2nd ed. London: Black Swan Publications, pp.30

holocaust of partition of India have affected families, communities and especially women. Partition and separation gave the fruit to encouraging communalism that affected the community and society at large.

Brick Lane

narrates the life of Nazneen whose crisis for independence and freedom ends with her going ice-skating for the first time symbolising her finally meeting the fate of her Independence. Nazneen's relocation to London and her difficult life finds her in a renewed sense of Independence that is a blissful one.

One evening the television set was on when Chanu Ahmed was viewing a woman triumphant, Nazneen asked, "What is this called?" Chanu glanced at the screen and said in English, "Ice-skating." Nazneen repeated 'ICE-E-SKATING.' Chanu wanted to correct her and so he said, 'No No No E Iceskating'. Try it again.' This time Nazneen hesitated and replied deliberately 'Ice-eskating.' (Ali page 36,37)²

Chanu smiled but our protagonist Nazneen had already made up her mind to learn some English. But when she expressed her wish Chanu puffed his cheeks and spat the air out in a fuff, and Chanu vehemently denied the need of her to learn English and said 'Where's the need anyway?'

It is very surprising how the girl who had no idea about ice-skating and who couldn't even pronounce it correctly was determined to walk the path of her dream fate. It is rightly said that-"fortune favours the brave", so is the case with Nazneen, the immigrant girl who married and was confined within the four walls and was prohibited from all sorts of freedom-even to learn English, to go to college and have independence of her own. But it is of no surprise to us and we applaud our protagonist for the breakthrough moment that she brought and we have our goosebumps to picturesque ourselves while turning the pages of the novel Bricklane by Monica Ali. She provides us with a ray of hope, a beacon of light for all those girls whose soul calling and life purpose call them to change the course of their lives. We are highly inspired to witness Nazneen's gradual transformation & change towards liberation as quoted by Albert Einstein 'Change is the only constant thing in life and we learn to move ahead by embracing change.

REFERENCES

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² M., 2004. *Brick Lane*. 2nd ed. London: Black Swan Publications, pp. 36,37, print.