



THE THEMES OF IDENTITY AND DIASPORA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE NOVEL BRICK LANE OF MONICA ALI

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Abstract

Monica Ali is one of the chief British authors of present time who is best known for her Diaspora writing. She was born in the year 1967 in Dhaka, East Pakistan to Joyce and Hatem Ali. She moved to England with her parents when she was only three. Ali began her tutoring in Bolton School in Great Manchester. She proceeded with her study in Oxford University where she concentrated on Philosophy, Governmental issues and Economics. She wedded to Simon Torrance later in life. Ali got chose as one of Grant's "Best Young British Novelist of the Decade" in the following year she was granted as "The Newcomer of the Year" Monica Ali made a literacy splash with a debut novel; Brick Lane - was short listed for the Man Booker Prize and translated into dozens of languages. Her first novel Brick Lane (2003) is an epic saga about a Bangladeshi family living in the UK and explores the British immigrant experience. It was made into a film in 2007. Her second novel, Alentejo Blue set in Portugal, was published in 2006 which is a story of uprooting and modernization told through the lives of local people. Alentejo Blue a string of loosely conjoined stories about English characters in Portuguese village (Mamarrosa). Her novel "In the kitchen" (2009) Monica wonderfully portrays the life struggles, desires, hardships of the common man and the executive chef Gabriel Lightfoot at the Imperial Hotel in London. In Untold Story, Monica imagines and analysis what might have happened if Princess Diana had survived that car crash in Paris — and then gone on to fake her own death and fabulously created the character.

Keywords: Family, life, death, identity, individuality, independent, love, fate.

Introduction

The novel centers around the life of Nazneen, a Bangladeshi immigrant who marries an older man named Chanu Ahmed. In London, Nazneen is exposed to a new culture and struggles. Nazneen also maintains contact with her outcast sister, Hasina, who ran away with a man in a love marriage. In her letters, Hasina describes her difficult life working in a factory, and then later as a prostitute. The couple has a son, but he dies as an infant. This loss draws the couple closer together, and Nazneen gives birth to two daughters, Shahana and Bibi. In order to get the money to return to Bangladesh, he takes work as a cab driver, allows Nazneen to work sewing clothes, and borrows money from wealthy Mrs. Islam.

Background of the themes in the novel

Once Nazneen begins working, she meets Karim, who brings her sewing supplies from his uncle's store. They end up having an affair, and Karim also opens Nazneen's eyes to growing injustice and racial tensions. However, Nazneen is haunted by guilt and ends up having a mental breakdown. After she recovers, Nazneen ends the relationship with Karim. Nazneen becomes increasingly convinced that she cannot go back to Bangladesh. She plans to tell Chanu on the day that they are scheduled to leave.

On the day the family is supposed to leave for Bangladesh, Nazneen is horrified when she learns that her daughter Shahana has run away and might be caught up in the violence. With Karim's help, she is able to find Shahana, and that night Nazneen tells Chanu that she and the children will be remaining in London.

In the months after Chanu's departure, Nazneen finds a newfound sense of independence and freedom as she works to provide for herself and her children. Meanwhile, Hasina finds a fresh start and the possibility of love with another man in Bangladesh. The novel ends with Nazneen going ice skating for the first time, symbolizing her dream of finally leading an independent life.

The Theme of Fate and Choice of the novel 'Brick Lane'

The development of events outside a person's control, regarded as predetermined by a supernatural power, Fate is introduced as a major theme in this novel when Nazneen is a newborn; her life is left to a fate or choice. In the initial stage of her life, we can observe Nazneen as a strong believer of Fate, her marriage with much older man Chanu was the acceptance of fate. Marriages are made in Heaven. When she lost her infant son, she accepted it thinking that it is the fate of her baby. Hasina's description of her struggles in the form of letters, made Nazneen realize her inability and incapability of not being able to offer any support to her sister which results in accepting the circumstances faced by Hasina as her fate.

Once Nazneen begins working and earning, her confidence grew to such a level that she stopped believing in fate and started making her own choices, which was an excellent turning point in the life of any woman. She learns she

can make choices and decisions. She begins to experience desires and to act according to her desires. She begins to dream about her life and started to fulfill her dreams. She chose to remain in England with her daughters, now she knows she can support them. Nazneen, who is ignorant, poor, illiterate, migrant, dependent can make such a choice in life is a shocking revelation not only to her husband Chanu and her lover Karim but also to the readers.

The Theme of Life and Death of the Novel Brick Lane

Life and death are introduced as themes in Brick Lane right from the start. When Nazneen was born she is not breathing, leaving everyone to think that she is dead. As a young girl Nazneen watches her mother dying. Nazneen has a son dies as an infant. Throughout the novel, the black wardrobe in the bedroom is troubling Nazneen. She compares it to a sin, and keeps dreaming about it. In one of her dreams she is locked inside of it as it falls down and crushes her. The wardrobe is almost like a coffin and represents death in the novel. When Nazneen arrives in London as the young bride, her life is turned upside down. Back in the village there were always people everywhere. Her new life is quite the opposite. Even though she never directly shows that she wants to end her life, the passage tells the readers about her ideas. Nazneen sister Hasina's struggle for survival also represents the theme of life and death.

The Theme of Identity and Diaspora of the Novel 'Brick Lane'

Brick Lane deals with the theme of identity and Diaspora. Chanu, being an educated man with a job finds difficulties with everyday life in London reflects the element of Diaspora and the theme of identity. Nazneen has to deal with different culture in London. To speak English is a part of British identity. Loneliness is also closely related to identity. When Nazneen finds her own identity, she finds a stable life in her true self. By losing her father, Nazneen also loses a part of her identity. Karim is also a victim of Diaspora. Hasina's struggles in her life for her identity are clearly visible. By the end of the novel Nazneen finds her true identity and individuality. How Pecuniary Independence transforms the attitude of a woman to altitude can be clearly visible in Nazneen

Conclusion

The main themes of Monica Ali's novel "Brick Lane" are Identity, individuality, life, death, fate are crucial in her novel as almost all the characters strive with questions about who they really are. Haseena strives hard to find her individuality, identity, and independence. Fate, choice, life and death revolved around her life because of her only wrong choice she made in her life that is eloping with a man whom he loved without being able to stand on her own feet. Shahana also thinks in a similar manner, because of Nazneen Shahana was rescued. Nazneen was also in the opinion that by marrying Chanu, she could lead a secure life but nothing worked. As long as women are not pecuniary independent, women have to pay for it every moment in their life. This is clearly portrayed by Monica Ali in the novel "Brick Lane" as an advice or as a warning to women.

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