

Seeds of Women's Emancipation in Ali's *Brick Lane*: A Feministic Critique

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Abstract

Women face a lot of problems and challenges in the patriarchal society. They strive hard to achieve freedom and emancipation from the clutches of patriarchy. Women's emancipation is emerging as a hot topic. Therefore, this article deals with the seeds of women emancipation in Ali's well known novel *Brick Lane* through a feministic perspective. Facing many challenges and problems, the female characters of the novel struggle hard to attain self-realization and emancipation. The story of the novel uncovers how the protagonist, Nazneen and other female characters navigate patriarchal structures and societal expectations to carve their own path towards emancipation. A thorough analysis of the novel proves that women strive hard to attain self-realization and emancipation. The findings of the study show that female characters, in order to escape the bondage of patriarchy, desire and work hard towards the path of self-realization and emancipation. It throws light on the problems and challenges of women's experiences, struggle for emancipation within the context of cultural tradition. The study will add to the already existing literature on the theme of self-realization and emancipation in the field of feminism.

Keywords: Emancipation, self-realization, patriarchy, feminism

Introduction

Monica Ali is one of the distinguished literary voices in Bangladeshi English literature. She is a prolific writer, having authored essays, short stories and novels. Her novels include *Brick Lane*, *In the Kitchen*, *Alentejo Blue*, *Love Marriage* and *Untold Story*. Ali continues to captivate audiences with her rich storytelling and characterizations, realistic and simple style, cementing her status as a prominent voice in contemporary literature.

Her novels do not only have engaging stories, witty dialogues, and scenes depicted with hauntingly detailed description, but its depth rises mainly from intricate characters, whose background, behavior, aspirations, and beliefs enable the reader to grasp their perspectives, imagine them in the real world and understand their struggles. (Janečka, 2023, p. 6)

Ali deals with issue including class conflict, poverty, identity conflict, belonging, and the marginalized status of women, sexism, and the east-west conflict, psych related issues, and the pursuit of personal autonomy in the face of cultural and gendered constraints, in her writings. *Brick Lane*, published in the year 2003, deals with the theme of the life of the immigrants, residing in London. "This novel skyrocketed Ali into being described by *Granta* as one of the most promising young writers of the 21st century" (Janečka, 2023, p. 6).

Apart from other themes, *Brick Lane* also touches upon the theme of women's emancipation in the oppressive societal order. It is an interesting novel, steeped in female related issues. It focuses upon women's emancipation from the oppressive societal structure. The story of the novel is centered on Nazneen's transformative journey, and the quest for personal agency within patriarchal structures. Initially constrained by societal expectations after her arranged marriage to Chanu, Nazneen grapples with the tensions between her desire for emancipation, and her roles as wife and mother. Nazneen, the novel's protagonist, finds freedom through quiet resistance and self-discovery.

Many women in *Brick Lane* are depicted as strong personalities, who can assume the leadership positions, indicating that women are capable of the same things as men, even

in unfavorable conditions. The novel pictures women characters' reality of having to overcome the obstacles of religious sexism in everyday life, not only from the main heroin's perspective, but from her sister's letters and other minor characters' experience. (Janečka, 2023, p.24)

The novel follows Nazneen, a young woman from Bangladesh, as she relocates to London for marriage with Chanu. As Nazneen navigates her new life in a foreign land, she grapples with societal expectations, patriarchal norms, and her own desires for emancipation and fulfillment. Initially depicted as a young girl from Bangladesh, Nazneen undergoes assimilation into the British society, following an arranged marriage with Chanu, an older man residing in London. Despite aspirations for education and independence, Nazneen finds herself constrained by societal norms that dictate her role as a wife and mother, with limited autonomy and opportunities for self-expression. Nazneen, the main female protagonist, encounters friends such as Razia and Mrs. Islam, which sheds light on the struggle of women of different social statuses concerning what they go through in a patriarchal society. Nazneen doubts her relationships with her husband Chanu and a young man named Karim and questions the societal norms around her. The novel shows a change from Nazneen's timidity to her courage and that she gains a new vision of life. She creates the first example by skating with her friends, a revolutionary act.

Similarly, Hasina also fought for her freedom and empowerment. By the end, Razia takes the steer of her journey and begins challenging the norm. Her transformation causes Nazneen to be reborn as a bold and resilient woman. Through her flee to home for the husband she loves, her shorter hair and even putting on men's clothes are evident signs of women's freedom sprouting and growing. Razia is also a symbol of independent women. Razia's attempt at Nazneen to get a job, her big admiration for English literature, and her love of ice skating indicate that Razia is journeying toward emancipation. Despite facing numerous hardships, Razia remains steadfast and resolute in her determination to overcome adversity. Her passion to assimilate into the Western society manifest her adaptability and willingness to embrace change and emancipation.

This research is aimed at exploring the seeds of women's emancipation embedded in *Brick Lane*, using a feminist critique to analyze the transformative journey of Nazneen and other female characters as they navigate the intersections of tradition and modernity, cultural heritage and individual agency. In their quest for self-discovery and self-recognition, they represent the timeless struggle for liberation, a beacon of hope in a world where destiny and desire converge. Through close examination of character dynamics, thematic motifs, and narrative techniques, it sheds light on women's struggle for emancipation in patriarchal system. It criticizes the patriarchal system as a major hindrance in women's desire for self-recognition and emancipation.

Research Questions:

1. How does *Brick Lane* depict seeds of women's emancipation in the patriarchal society?
2. What narrative techniques and thematic motifs are employed by Monica Ali to convey the journey of self-realization and empowerment of the female characters?
3. In what way does this research condemn the patriarchal structure as a barrier in women's emancipation?

Research Objectives:

1. To analyze the seeds of women's emancipation in the patriarchal society.
2. To examine specific literary devices, character developments, and thematic elements utilized by Monica Ali to convey themes of female empowerment and self-realization.
3. To criticize the patriarchal structure as a barrier in women's emancipation.

Literature Review

In every corner of the globe, women who constitute about half of humanity, navigate a world rife with inequality, subjugation, and relegated status. They find themselves ensnared in the web of oppression, relegated to the margins, and subject to exploitation within patriarchal societies. Feminism stands as an ideology advocating for the equitable rights of both men and women across various spheres, encompassing politics, decision-making, careers, and the realm of parenthood. It comprises a multitude of social, cultural, and political movements aimed at fostering parity between the genders (Widya&Asnani, 2020). Feminists “engage the problem of the social, political, and cultural obstacles to eliminating domination, and different feminists have different visions of life in a world male without male oppression” (Wright, 1993, p. 39). Lombardi (2000) argues that feminist criticism goes beyond interpretation; it serves as a political endeavor aimed at transforming the reader’s consciousness and their connection to the material being read. Women’s emancipation and feminist critique play pivotal roles in literature, serving as vehicles for exploring and challenging societal norms, power structures, and gender dynamics.

Perfect (2008) investigates portrayal of stereotypes in the novel *Brick Lane*, offering insights into the complexities of these representations. He examines divergent perspectives on whether *Brick Lane* reinforces or challenges stereotypes, particularly within prevailing postmodern interpretations. Hiddleston (2005) focuses on Ali’s art of storytelling and characterization in the novel. By analyzing narrative techniques, character development, and thematic exploration, he has explored aspects such as narrative structure, use of symbolism, character motivations, and the portrayal of cultural and social dynamics within the literary landscape. Ali’s novel “burst into the public domain in the summer of 2003, generating both enthusiastic critical acclaim and defensive anger” (Hiddleston, 2005, p. 57).

Yousaf (2008), exploring the cultural identity in Ali’s novel, pinpoints that Ali’s novel deals with the theme of cultural identity in London. Her characters face the dilemma of mixed identity and cultural assimilation. Novel’s characters like Nazneen, Mrs. Azad and Razia occupy a hybrid space, giving rise to a novel cultural identity characterized by multiculturalism and multilocationalism. “The quest for identity is presented as a means of expressing self-identity and ultimately cultural identity” (p. 72).

Mortada (2010) is of the view that in *Brick Lane*, the Bangladeshi women emerge as custodians of their culture, irrespective of whether they dwell within or beyond the borders of their homeland. She points out that there exist disparities within the Bangladeshi culture concerning gender roles where women navigate and fulfill these roles within their societal context as depicted in the novel.

Despite various groundbreaking achievements by women in various parts of the world; women still remain confined to their homes and more so into the ideological products their culture expects them to be by framing themselves into the notions set for them by their culture. (Mortada, 2010, p. 53)

Germanà (2011) contends that the concept of separation plays a pivotal role in navigating the politics of self-concession within the emergent field of postcolonial migration as portrayed in Ali’s novel. Germanà (2011) remarks that “dress becomes an even more problematic hub of intersecting questions of identity, involving trajectories of integration and assimilation, or resistance to either process” (p. 67).

Janečka (2023) touches upon the theme of assimilation and immigrant identity within diasporic communities, examining the intersecting influences of sexism and racism in *Brick*

Lane. Through the framework of migrant literary theory and feminist perspectives, the study delves into the nuanced portrayal of these dynamics in Ali's novel. Janečka (2023) concluded that "accepting cultural values and norms of a new country, can have strong influence on immigrant identity, resulting either in positive, or negative outcome" (p. 28).

Paudel (2019), examining the idea of gender and racial subalternity in *Brick Lane*, points out that the novel's significance lies in its portrayal of Bengali women, facing the issue of identity and racialism. He critically analyzes how cultural signifiers shape the representations of women in the novel. Nazneen, main character of the novel "lives with subaltern identities accepting the oppression of gender and culture" (Paudel, 2019, p. 1).

Prior literary analyses demonstrate that *Brick Lane* has been approached from diverse angles, including postcolonialism, identity, ethnicity, and race, among others. This research is going to uncover the theme of seeds of women's emancipation through feminist perspective.

Theoretical Framework

Women are deprived of their basic rights. In fact, their life is controlled by the oppressive patriarchal system. This has been so since the start of civilization. "Centuries ago women were defined as properties of their fathers and husbands, late 18th century and the beginning of the 19th one, western society knew a very huge emergence of women consciousness where they became aware for their social existent and independent members in" (Sabrina, 2018, p. 1). The term 'feminism' originates from the French word 'féminisme.' Feminism embodies the notion that women deserve "equal rights, power, and opportunities as men" (Feminism, 2024), advocating for fair treatment and parity in all spheres of life. According to Hooks (1984), feminism is accurately described as a "to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (p. 24). This social and political movement traces its roots back to the 1920s, marking the onset of the first of four waves of feminism, primarily concentrated on women's suffrage. Despite the significant strides made in advancing women's rights, evident in the visible improvements achieved, gender inequalities persist in certain cultures even in the contemporary era. The feminist movement, a ubiquitous manifestation of women's collective advocacy for social, economic, and political parity with men, spans across diverse institutional frameworks globally.

Feminism is a mass movement commenced by women of all groups to eradicate all forms of feminist oppressions by men that are prevailing in a patriarchal society. It always fights against all types of oppressions on women. It is a procedure that takes attempts to understand and conceptualize gender roles and advocates for the annexation of women's interests in social organization (Mohajan, 2022, p. 1).

Married women frequently face economic vulnerability. In situations where marriages turn sour, they encounter two difficult choices: either they opt for divorce, if it's even an option, and endure the challenges of being single mothers with limited financial resources, or they feel compelled to remain in unhappy marriages, trapped by economic dependence (Guvunen & Rendall, 2013). Feminists advocate for the guarantee of equivalent individual liberties and rights for both men and women. Lawford-Smith (2022) remarks that "Feminists can agree that equal opportunity is important, so that at the very least we should be working to get rid of direct and indirect discrimination" (p. 8). Being a woman hinges on personal identification rather than external criteria.

Many feminists today tend to use self-identification as the sole criterion for being a woman. For them, what it means to be a woman is to be a person of either sex who

identifies as a woman. Identifying as a woman has no specific content, for example relating to appearance, behaviour, or character. (Lawford-Smith, 2022, p. 11)

Despite the passage of time, women persist in their quest for liberation, epitomizing an ongoing struggle against entrenched systems of oppression.

Feminists of all types can agree that male violence against women and girls is a problem and needs to be addressed. It is uncontroversial that this includes phenomena like trafficking into sexual slavery, acid attacks, honour killings, domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, child abuse, and child marriage. (Lawford-Smith, 2022, p. 7)

Feminism emerges as both a shield and a sword, empowering women to confront systemic injustices and dismantle entrenched structures of oppression. Through solidarity and collective action, feminists forge pathways toward a more just and equitable society, where every individual is afforded dignity and opportunity (Ratna, 2004). The pursuit of independence brings its own set of challenges, demanding resilience and perseverance from women striving to break free from societal constraints. Perez(2012) pin points that “Stress and struggle came with independence”. Through perseverance and the assertion of their capabilities, women continue to navigate the path towards full emancipation, asserting their rights and contributions in all spheres of life.

Research Methodology

In this study, a qualitative research methodology is utilized, centering on analyzing *Brick Lane* from a feminist perspective. A close reading of the selected text is rendered to investigate women’s emancipation within patriarchal structures. Those lines and passages which deal with the theme of women’s emancipation, are selected from the text of the novel and are interpreted qualitatively using feminism as a theoretical framework.

Textual Analysis

Brick Lane is a famous fiction, capturing the feministic concerns, Women’s emancipation emerges as the prominent theme in the narrative of the novel. Ali, the author of the fiction sheds light on women’s struggle for self-realization and emancipation in the dominantly patriarchal society. Nazneen “changes from submissiveness to independence.” (Zhang, 2010, p. 1). She travels from life of submissiveness to life of emancipation, after passing through a lot of experiences. During her time in London, Nazneen undergoes a transformative journey shaped by encounters with two distinct forms of love and the devastating loss of her son. The influence of her sister and elder daughter, along with her friendship with Razia, also significantly impact her path towards independence. Nazneen’s story is deeply intertwined with her which lays the groundwork for her struggles and eventual empowerment. Her upbringing dictates societal expectations and molds her initial perceptions of womanhood. However, as Nazneen confronts various challenges and confronts her own desires, she begins to awaken to her own agency and autonomy.

It was because of her mother’s wise decision that Nazneen lived to be the wide-faced, watchful girl that she was. Fighting against one’s Fate can weaken the blood...Not once did Nazneen question the logic of the story...What could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne. This principle ruled her life. (pp. 15-16)

“Ali not only creates characters who are on the way to independence, but also many characters who are in tragedy” (Zhang, 2010, p. 15). Trapped in a cycle of obedience and submission, Nazneen’s lack of agency perpetuates her subjugation. Nazneen’s existence is

characterized by a profound lack of agency, relegated to the role of a ‘good worker’ by her husband, devoid of any semblance of autonomy or self-determination (p. 22). Her transition from daughter to wife only reinforces the expectation of subservience, confining her to the domestic sphere and restricting her autonomy. At the tender age of eighteen, Nazneen finds herself thrust into marriage with Chanu, a man chosen by her father. When Nazneen’s father inquired her if she would get married, she “shook her head and replied, ‘Abba, it is good that you have chosen my husband’”(p. 16).

It is a fact that, in a society, where patriarchal norms reign supreme, Nazneen’s acceptance of her predetermined fate reflects the deeply entrenched gender disparities prevalent in Bangladesh. As Nazneen embarks on her journey to London with Chanu, she confronts a seismic shift in her life—a pivotal moment that serves as the catalyst for her burgeoning independence. Her marriage symbolizes both the constraints imposed by societal expectations and the seeds of her eventual liberation. She was upset to see the picture of chosen husband and to know his age. “He had a face like a frog.” (p. 16).

Initially clinging to familiar customs, she gradually embraces the liberating influence of her new environment, discovering her own worth and agency. Through her friendship with Razia, Nazneen finds solace and inspiration, breaking free from societal constraints and embracing her identity. Despite the challenges of a lackluster marriage and separation from her sister, Nazneen’s encounter with a destined lover ignites a journey of self-discovery. Wrestling with the notion of fate, she ultimately seizes control over her destiny, embarking on a path of empowerment and liberation. Nazneen also finds inspiration in her sister Hasina’s boldness and defiance of societal norms, prompting her to question her own passive acceptance of fate (Ali, 93). Hasina’s acts inspire her and sow the seeds of emancipation in her. Sometime Nazneen thinks that “If fate cannot be changed, no matter how you struggle against it, then perhaps Hasina was fated to run away with Malek” (p. 16). Fate for Nazneen is strictly her duties, something a good woman, daughter, wife, mother, friend, and sister is expected to do from society, religion or simply by someone else’s expectancy.

Nazneen’s journey takes a pivotal turn when she moves to London with her husband, confronting new opportunities and dilemmas. With the arrival in London, she grows more experienced, confident, and independent. Her identity shapes into a strong and independent woman. Despite the geographical shift, she continues to navigate her roles as daughter and wife, but the bustling cityscape prompts her to question tradition and seek autonomy. Being raised with belief in fate is essentially the sheer restriction, which separates Nazneen from making her own choices and living for more than just other people’s demands. Nazneen’s contemplations echoed a familiar sentiment: “if I were the wishing type, I know what I would wish” (p. 18). As she awakened, she found Chanu’s visage, puffy and serene in slumber, beside her. Her gaze traversed the room, settling upon the pink dressing table with its elaborate mirror and the imposing black wardrobe that dominated the space (p. 18). Wrestling with her thoughts, Nazneen questioned herself: Was it deceptive to entertain the notion, “I know what I would wish” (p. 18)? Wasn’t it essentially the same as making the wish itself? “If she knew what the wish would be, then somewhere in her heart she had already made it” (p. 18).

As years pass by, Nazneen, the protagonist finds herself settling into the familiar rhythms of her life alongside Chanu. Despite initially viewing him as a good man chosen by her father, Nazneen’s perception of their marriage evolves over time. She comes to realize that while Chanu may possess admirable qualities, such as kindness, he lacks a fundamental respect for her autonomy and individuality. Nazneen’s growing dissatisfaction stems from Chanu’s refusal to

acknowledge her desires and aspirations. He dismisses her efforts to learn English, disregards her opinions, and disapproves of her friendships, relegating her role to that of a mere caretaker for him and their children. However, amidst the constraints of her marriage, Nazneen finds strength in her resilience and determination.

Despite being raised to believe in the inevitability of her fate, Nazneen harbors a quiet rebellion against the notion of predestination, and yearns for emancipation and a destiny of her own making. Nazneen entertains the radical notion that perhaps it is not fate but rather her clothing that dictates her life's trajectory. This fleeting realization prompts a surge of defiance within her, symbolized by her impulse to tear off the sari that she perceives as a symbol of constraint. However, despite this brief glimpse of empowerment, Nazneen's rebellious impulse is quickly stifled, hinting at the deeply ingrained societal norms and personal inhibitions that continue to hold her back. The sari, in this context, represents not just a piece of fabric but also the traditional roles and expectations imposed upon women, constraining their autonomy and agency. "Nazneen formerly wanted to distance herself from her duties with the form of changing to western clothing, with skirts and T-shirts, Razia breaks away from traditional sari, as well as feminine clothing altogether" (Janečka, 2023, p. 26). Nazneen's momentary desire to shed this garment demonstrate her yearning for liberation and self-determination, even as she remains bound by the conventions of her culture and circumstances. "For a glorious moment it was clear that clothes, not fate, made her life. And if the moment had lasted she would have ripped the sari off and torn it shreds" (p. 278). Though, in the mundane routine of her daily chores, she embodies the familiar persona of the 'old Nazneen' yet, she experiences a profound transformation, while watching ice-skating on television. She is transported into a world where she sheds the burdens of her ordinary existence and embraces a sense of wonder and possibility. Ice-skating captivates Nazneen's imagination, offering her a glimpse into a world where she is no longer defined by the trivialities of daily life. For her, watching ice-skating becomes more than just a form of entertainment—it becomes a source of inspiration and introspection.

As Nazneen seeks psychological liberation, she places financial independence entirely on top of her list of things that should be done to break the shackles of dependence on others. Consequently, she gains insight into the significance of financial independence and embarks on the journey to forge her own path. Nazneen's journey towards the emancipated woman is associated with the conviction that financial independence is the main cause. Initially, she rejects it, but after a while, she understands and is ready to work to participate in the family's financial matters. As her source of income, Nazneen, with Razia's support and tenacity, is the force striving her forward. The sewing job has made Nazneen feel a sense of emancipation and allowed her to navigate this new lifestyle more dignifiedly.

Karim becomes a character shaping Nazneen's emancipation journey's plot as her romance with him bursts and rocks everything up. She had been an office worker and happened to bump into him in the alleyway she was passing when walking home after her work as a seamstress. She is very soon captivated by Karim's enthusiasm, language control, and sincere treatment of her. Unlike Chanu, treating Nazneen carelessly, Karim speaks to her dignifiedly and sometimes discusses a broad range of topics, showing his vast knowledge. Through her relationship with Karim, Nazneen experiences a newfound sense of agency and self-worth. His attentiveness and encouragement embolden her to embrace her own desires and aspirations, challenging the constraints of her marriage and societal expectations. At a Muslim meeting organized by Karim, Nazneen experiences a pivotal moment of empowerment. As she exercises her right to vote, she

realizes the impact of her decision. With her support, Karim secures victory in a closely contested election for chairman. As the novelist remarks:

Karim and the Questioner stood for Chairman. It was close. Nine votes for the Questioner and ten for Karim. I have given him victory, thought Nazneen. She felt it a momentous thing. By raising her hand, or not raising it, she could alter the course of events, of affairs in the world of which she knew nothing (p. 242).

Through the support of Karim, she realizes the power of her actions to effect change, even in spheres where women are typically marginalized. Karim's presence infuses Nazneen's life with fresh emotions and experiences, reminiscent of a young girl experiencing love for the first time. Through their interactions, Nazneen discovers a sense of liberation and excitement, propelling her towards a future defined by newfound agency and self-discovery. She feels "an electric current run from her nipples to her big toes." (p. 261). Initially, Nazneen resigns herself to a passive role of listening, believing it to be sufficient. Despite the urgency of her feelings, she, sometimes, feels stifled, unable to give voice to her desires, and to break free from the constraints of her past. She wants to "shout-something urgent, some matter of life or death-but the breath and the shout got stuck. They would never come out" (p. 273). She yearns for change, for a life that aligns with her true desires. Yet, the fear of upheaval and the constraints of societal expectations hold her back, leaving her unable to take the leap into the unknown. However, Karim challenges this notion by encouraging her to engage in conversation. He validates her thoughts and opinions, making her feel as if she has "stated a new truth" (p. 262), to their discussions.

At the crossroads of her life, Nazneen is confronted with a momentous decision: to return to Bangladesh with Chanu or to marry Karim, the man who has ignited her first experience of love. Despite her newfound desire to pursue her own happiness, Nazneen grapples with the belief that fate ultimately determines her path. She reflects on the years spent resigned to acceptance, following the teachings of her mother to embrace whatever life throws her way. Seated between Karim and Chanu at the Muslim gathering, Nazneen undergoes a profound realization, recognizing the deep-seated influence of her mother's teachings. With a gentle embrace, she suppresses a smile against her shoulder, reflecting on the immense effort she has invested in suppressing her emotions and striving for acceptance throughout her life (p. 354).

Despite her yearning for autonomy, she finds herself bound by the constraints of societal expectations and the weight of familial obligation. Just as her mother chose acceptance in the face of life's hardships, Nazneen recognizes the inevitability of her circumstances. She embraces the truth that life's journey is often shaped by forces beyond one's control, resigning herself to the path laid out before her. In the end, she gradually sheds the shackles of traditional norms, and begins to re-conceptualize her principles of life. Nazneen defies expectations, by neither returning to Bangladesh with Chanu, nor accepting Karim's offer.

Razia, Nazneen's steadfast friend, serves as a poignant example of female self-reliance and resilience. "She manages to detach herself from the traditional role, she becomes a role model for Nazneen, and she strives for the best life conditions for herself and her children" (Janečka, 2023, p. 26). Despite facing numerous hardships, Razia remains steadfast and resolute in her determination to overcome adversity. As Nazneen's first companion in London, Razia's life exemplifies the stark realities of independence and self-sufficiency. In contrast to Nazneen's initial beliefs, Razia's experiences challenge the notion that women are dependent on men for their livelihood. Following the untimely death of her husband, Razia is thrust into the role of sole provider for her family. Confronted with the harsh realities of life, Razia recognizes the

importance of securing her own financial independence through employment. By relying on herself and her own capabilities, Razia demonstrates that women can thrive independently, unencumbered by traditional gender roles or societal expectations. Razia “changes not only in psychological, but also in physical sense and she distances herself from her femininity” (Janečka, 2023, p. 26). Her example inspires Nazneen to reconsider her own beliefs about female independence and autonomy, ultimately paving the way for Nazneen’s own journey towards self-empowerment and emancipation. Moreover, Razia’s efforts to integrate into Western society, symbolized by her acquisition of a British passport and her choice of attire, reflect her adaptability and willingness to embrace change. Despite the challenges posed by her circumstances, Razia remains steadfast in her pursuit of a better life for herself and her children.

Towards the close of the novel, Nazneen makes the bold decision to remain in London with her daughters, mirroring the independent life led by her friend Razia. It is Razia who assists Nazneen to find a job that leads her to gain financial independence. Razia’s help shows that women need to be financially independent. Through Nazneen’s experiences, the author Ali (2003) emphasizes the necessity for women to assert their independence, even within the confines of marriage. Nazneen’s busy daily schedule of basic household chores symbolizes the societal norms and the difficulties experienced by several female figures in the novel. The hardships faced by Nazneen’s sister, Hasina, opened her eyes to the widespread subjugation and suffering of women. This emphasizes the value of gaining freedom and independence from men.

Nazneen disobeys the rules, running as a voice in her head, thus showing bravery in challenging oppression, by expressing her standpoint for emancipation. While there have been several compromises, she makes a great claim to her rights when Mrs. Islam urges her to pay off Chanu’s debt. Nazneen’s transformation is seen in her relationship with her children, where she can now tell her husband’s side while also speaking about her rights. This transition implies Nazneen’s increasing self-awareness and firm determination in his head. In the end, after several breakthroughs, Nazneen favors herself as a person and lives in London with her daughters. Engaging in outdoor activities with her children and Razia, she finds joy and contentment reminiscent of her love for ‘ice-skating, now symbolized by her playful ‘ice-skating’ on two legs. This newfound emancipation marks the beginning of a fresh chapter in Nazneen’s life, free from the constraints of her past. Razia’s statement, “This is England, you can do whatever you like,” encapsulates the newfound freedom, Nazneen and her companions experience. Nazneen’s journey illustrates a shift from passively accepting her fate, as taught by her mother, to actively pursuing her desires, and shaping her own destiny. Despite the challenges she faces, Nazneen learns to navigate life’s complexities and discovers the significance of both enduring hardships and pursuing her aspirations.

Nazneen’s sister, Hasina also plays a big role in facilitating her life and her sister’s life, by challenging the supremacy of patriarchal system. She also struggles hard to attain emancipation. Combating the notion of fate, she ultimately seizes control over her destiny, embarking on a path of empowerment and emancipation. Nazneen is also impressed and inspired by her sister Hasina’s boldness and defiance of societal norms. Hasina’s acts such as running away from home for love marriage, wearing man’s clothes and keeping short hair are indicative of seeds of women’s emancipation. Sometime, Razia prefers Western culture to Eastern culture as in former culture women are more independent, more self-reliant and more prosperous than in latter culture. “Razia always said, if you go out to shop, go to Sainsbury’s. English people don’t look at you twice” (p. 40). This utterance by Razia testifies the aforementioned fact. As it has already been stated, Razia, too, favors women’s emancipation. Her act of finding job for

Nazneen, her passion to learn English, her act of watching ice skating---everything proves Razia's journey toward women's emancipation. Razia's efforts to assimilate into the Western society manifest her adaptability and willingness to embrace change. Razia remains steadfast in her pursuit of a better life for herself and her children despite difficulties. Despite facing numerous hardships, Razia remains steadfast and resolute in her determination to overcome adversity. In brief, the female characters of the novel recognize their worth by putting efforts to attain emancipation and liberation from the patriarchal system. They challenge, and even negate the supremacy of patriarchal system by travelling towards the path of self-recognition, self-awakening and emancipation. In brief, *Brick Lane* is a famous novel, having feminist concerns, as it tackles the idea of women's oppression as well as women's struggle for emancipation from patriarchal system. The female characters of the novel attempt to demolish the oppressive structure of patriarchy by self-assertion and self-realization.

Conclusion

The findings of this research manifest that women's emancipation emerges as a key theme in Monica Ali's selected fiction. Monica Ali's female characters attempt to assert their individuality by traveling towards self-realization, and putting efforts to emancipate themselves from patriarchal clutches. They long for social, economic and political freedom. They emerge as bold, brave and fearless figures, while liberating themselves from the oppressive male dominated society. They achieve success in their mission to a large extent. Nazneen's journey towards independence is marked by a series of internal and external conflicts, each contributing to her awakening consciousness. While being involved with love, loss, family relations, and friendship, she is a picture of women's emancipation as she chooses her way of life, unsociable norms and standards, with a rebellious nature. Even though, she is deeply rooted in her old-fashioned heritage, she begins to learn that she can do and become whatever she wants in her new surroundings. She respects the new opportunities that lead to her personal development and self-expression. Besides Nazneen, the other fellow females, namely Hasina and Razia, also tend to keep their reinvented way of life, away from patriarchal bondage. They symbolize self-recognition, personal understanding, and emancipation and a strong opposition to the repressive patriarchal society. They become daring, robust, valiant, independent, and emancipated human beings who, by objecting to this system and questioning it, come to the fore as the newly emerged antidote to the main sickness of patriarchy.

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