

## **The concept of hybridism in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane***

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### **Abstract**

In general, Diaspora narrative centres on a range of topics related to migration, emigrant experiences, and nostalgia. An immigrant's life narrative demonstrates how human traits alter in a foreign setting. The references within the text highlight the idea of hybridity in the context of post-colonialism, emphasizing the dichotomies that result from racism. Here in this paper, a detailed examination is attempted of Monica Ali's diaspora story *Brick Lane*. The predicament of Bangladeshi immigrants' lives is examined. The work is situated in London, with racism serving as a recurring motif. The objective of this paper is to draw attention to the diaspora narrative's mixed components.

**Keywords:** Post-colonialism, immigrants, racism, hybridism, and diaspora narratives.

After World War II and the end of colonization, the British Empire experienced a spectacular collapse. "The 'when' question is the easiest one to tackle. Everyone knows that the Empire fell soon after the 1939-45 war." (McIntyre 11). The lives of prominent characters who dwell in the London setting are the subject of *Brick Lane*. According to Ghanaian poet Kwame Dawes, the majority of Black writers who were born in Britain established a new Black British voice as he points out "to challenge the notions that they are not at home when they are in England." (Dawes 261). The story offers insightful

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observations on events that occurred in the protagonist's life in the 1960s—a Bangladeshi living in London. It is nonetheless apparent from the novel that there was a noticeable shift in the conversation surrounding migration following World War II.

Regarding “coloured” immigration, Spencer (153) states that it would almost certainly lead to racial strife. In *Brick Lane*, Ali portrays the blend of recent immigrants and native English speakers with striking detail. The story opens the door for the development of new racist beliefs that inform readers about racial hybridity. Ali confronts the prevailing Racist society in Brick Lane by enforcing the new ideal hybridity of culture. Ali employed the “internal monologue” (Childs and Fowler 121) as a means of illustrating the ideas that go through a character's head. Monica Ali uses the story of a Bangladeshi family living in Tower Hamlets, London, to highlight the predicament faced by Muslim-Asian immigrants in the country. *Brick Lane* illustrates the growing hostility between immigrants and native Londoners, focusing on racism from the 1980s to the 2000s, to show that racism persisted in England even after World War II.

The author highlights the experience of the Bangladeshi family to depict England's situation during the massive immigrant wave. In *Brick Lane*, Ali's first book, the ignorant girl's journey to becoming a distinct individual with a self-constructed identity in her new country is explained. There are numerous factors related to the immigration procedure. In the past, migration was caused by natural disasters and the lack of necessities for subsistence. However, the primary driver of migration in the modern era continues to be the desire for personal economic advancement. The diaspora writers attempted to incorporate their emotions into fictional aspects because there are many different reasons why people migrate. At first, the authors focused on the reasons behind the uprooting and the disputes encountered in the new site. Therefore, the previous diaspora writers' foundation was built on concepts like rejection, conflict, and dilemma among the immigrant population. Being aware is the first step toward transformation. Acceptance is the second step. According to the American-Canadian psychiatrist Nathaniel Branden, Nazneen had a complete metamorphosis from a person who placed a lot of faith in fate to a liberated person who overcame barriers that she primarily put in her way.

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Ali highlights the necessity of acculturation in the heterogeneous culture through Nazneen's self-grooming narrative. Because Chanu might be compared to the hare in the well-known classic *The Hare and the Tortoise*, Nazneen is aptly represented by the character of the tortoise. It is meant to be Chanu's pride. Not to mention, the hare's mental critique of the tortoise is noteworthy. It seemed extremely heated and certain that it would win the race. The hare was oblivious to the changes occurring in its surroundings. However, the turtle will prevail and win the race. Through a phone call at the start of the narrative, Nazneen—whom Chanu completely underestimates—apparently emerges as the remarkable successful being who embraces estrangement. However, Chanu, who was quite self-assured about his abilities and presence among the alienated, was unable to stay there for very long and left for his native country.

Like many other immigrants, Nazneen was a woman who faced a variety of typical emotions until she realized that she had the power to control her own destiny. Thus, by escaping the tragic fate, the narrative depicts the woman's journey towards both internal and external independence. Significant figures including her sister, eldest daughter, close friend Razia, and her dual love—one with Chanu and the other with Karim—had a significant impact on Nazneen's journey toward independence. Specifically, it is evident that the alienation stems from the individual's cultural and psychological limitations as well as the uniqueness of the new community. For instance, in reality, Oldham is a town in Lancashire, England. Recently, there was a report about the residents in a press release of Manchester 1824, The University of Manchester in an article by Stephen Ashe, report co-author titled “New report highlight widespread inequalities in Greater Manchester town” as follows:

“The researchers found that deprivation and inequality are widespread in Oldham, and that it fares poorly across a range of social and economic indicators. While it is the case that white working-class communities have suffered through deindustrialization, austerity and welfare reform, black and minority ethnic groups often suffer disproportionate disadvantages, particularly in areas such as employment and housing.”

Any person who has experienced alienation may experience a range of emotions as a result of their estrangement, including hopelessness, helplessness, loneliness, and

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isolation. As a result, Nazneen experienced a similar trauma at first and was unable to fight back against fate. However, after realizing the situation, her resolve and mental shift caused her to undergo a complete metamorphosis. She was able to embrace her estrangement and revealed her true self to her spouse. Nazneen's action demonstrates how she developed into a dynamic person on both a sociological and psychological level.

Apart from questioning the idea of cultural homogeneity, Chanu's perspectives on his people and his conversations with Dr. Azad illustrate the different degrees of integration and assimilation that the younger members of his community experience. As members of the first generation of immigrants, their conversation during Dr. Azad's supper at Chanu's residence reveals their perceptions of their neighbourhood and their level of interaction with the host country. "Not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance," is how Ashcroft defines integration (Jenkins qtd in Ashcroft 5). Chanu finds it difficult to reconcile his life as a Westerner and a Bengali.

Because he cannot be both and cannot reject either, his sense of self and culture are hybridized. His situation makes more sense when we consider that hybridity is defined as "the idea that identities are made up of all the different cultures with which they have contact," as stated by Homi Bhabha. Ideas, languages, and material items are shared when two civilizations or nations come together. They both have to alter and adapt as a result of that sharing process. Therefore, neither Eastern nor Western culture or nation can be considered "pure." (Haydon and Fay, 11) This kind of cross-cultural hybridity is evident in Chanu's situation as well as in his opinions and remarks regarding his own neighborhood. At the beginning of the book, he is eager to thrive in England; but, his decision to return to Bangladesh later on serves as another illustration of this hybridity. "Reminiscences and dreams of a lost homeland are beneficial for maintaining identity and ensuring survival." (Weedon 27). Although Nazneen here reports Chanu's well-informed remarks from his Open University classes, Razia takes a more pragmatic approach, merely differentiating between people as good or bad, which is another way to destroy the binary divisions because she asserts that there are all kinds of people in all communities and that no community is homogeneous.

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The act of surrender and submission that is Chanu's decision to give up on his goals shows how racism still exists in the country and affects the day-to-day lives of British citizens, both native-born and foreign-born. Chanu's dream of achieving success in British society is not fulfilled. The social and political structures of the country are biased, and the characters cannot handle them. His decisions are a reflection of his dismal assessment of the state of the society in which he lives. The characters' subjective experiences on Brick Lane are used to highlight the subjectivity of racism.

Forty years after the War, *Brick Lane* serves as an example to show how colonialism and the War continue to have an impact on immigration. Also it demonstrates how diaspora writers are incorporating different hybrid components into their narratives.

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