DISCOURSE ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN MONIKA ALI’S BRICK LANE

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ABSTRACT

The scope of this paper is to bring out the elements of women empowerment in Monika Ali’s Brick Lane. Monika Ali is one of the most renowned and widespread novelists of twentieth century. Brick Lane is the first of Monika Ali’s novels published in 2003. The most appropriate and enduring theme in the novel is women empowerment. Each and every part of the life lived by the protagonist clearly depicts the everyday conflict faced by the subaltern as a whole. The life women lived and struggled under the overbearing mechanism of a closed society were reproduced in this novel. Monika Ali’s smartness is seen in the ways in which she constructs her characters. Women have been shaped, conditioned and disregarded by male-controlled society as apparent in this play. She comments on the harsh behaviour and activities of men towards women.

When a woman has a job and relies on herself, she is not frightened to leave her own who offend her, such as spouse or father. Hazina, sister of Nanzeen, agonized a lot by men in her life. Nazneen who hears women’s misfortunes from Hazina, and Razia (friend of Nazneen), comprehends that women will always be defeated in their whole life until they have the consciousness of freedom and have a work of their own. At last, she leaves her husband and starts a garment business with the support of her friends.

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, Third World.

Every Woman who wishes to enjoy the bliss of freedom needs courage and knowledge to attain the same. Monica Ali provides this kind of message through the voices of different women in her novel. Women have to do all the onuses without any remuneration or appreciation. Without them, the family would not function normally. So ingrained is the male-controlled system in Nazneen that during the time of Raqib’s hospitalization, when she understands that Chanu is a good cook but had never helped her.

Women lead their survival based on the expectations of their family, society and community. Nazneen was bounded by different varieties of social obstacles in her personal and public life. Tradition makes the women dependence on men. Equally in Bangladesh and Britain, men rule the labour market. Immigrant Bangladeshi women like Nazneen and Razia have to be governed by on differing gender. Men beat their partners. Women’s feelings have no values. From time to time they have to sit for marriage twice of their ages.

Women needed to fund to the family earnings, but it was hard for them to get employments. Men are several times idle and could have taken care of the kids, but that looked to be out of the question. The immigrants keep in tight connection with their relations in their home countries and habitually send money to them. In Brick Lane too, Nazneen has kept in contact with Hasina and has sent her money, and has prearranged to go back to Bangladesh. Her attachment with Razia assisted her to regulate herself. Their friendship, helped Nazneen to break free from the society’s tight hold and make a life time of her own. Razia signifies a strong-minded woman, who did not follow the rules of the Bangladeshi society. She made her own life despite of the difficulties she tackled. She was courageous enough to start a business and that way allowed Nazneen to get her own living and become more independent.

However, even Razia was not able to do all this before her husband died, because he would not have approved of her working. In many areas of production, the women labor force is needed for their services. However, here in addition, their work has not given its suitable place, the work that women do have measured insignificant and low-priced. This justifies their poor reward. The subordination of women extends to the workstation also; they hold lesser posts while the jobs that convey authority and respect have been reserved for the men. The nature of the job that women do is also a form of abuse, as the women do the lowly work.

Hazina penned letters to her sister, which is the foundation of information about Bangladesh. Women labors of the garment workshop are not only grossly low paid. Also have to agonize terrible working conditions and situation; they are often victims of physical abuse-beating, rape, molestation and not only by male bosses and administrators but by members of the police force. All this was intimated in Hasina’s letters. In addition to this, when Nazneen starts taking on stitching jobs, although it is the woman who is working, the man controls the money coming in. Still later, Chanu wants Nazneen to question for more money for her sewing jobs. Chapter Nine draws an important parallel between the lives of
Nazneen and Hasina. While Hasina’s life as a prostitute was managed by Hussain, Nazneen’s work as a seamstress is organized by Chanu.

Hasina, Monju and all the other distressed women of the third World are not able to voice or express their problematic state to the world around them. In her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Spivak discourses these difficult accurately. Through this novel, Ali tries to give voice to this subaltern woman and to draw attention to her life and difficult situations. According to Spivak, the subaltern cannot tell means even when the subaltern makes an effort to speak, she cannot not be received.

Nazneen, Razia, Hunufa and Jorina did not have any motivations or thoughts when they first arrived in England. However, they find out that their new country will somewhat going to offer. They start to fight for freedom and a better future. Razia was deeply irritated about her husband who agrees to send most of the money to his motherland. Razia feels a victim of his supremacy. After Razia’s husband expires, the first thing she thinks about is having a profession. When a woman has a job, she is not terrified of losing her own people who humiliate her, such as spouse or father.

Nazneen hears many women’s misfortunes from Hasina, which makes her to understand that women will always be defeated and suffer in their whole life until they have the realization of freedom, which is willing to get rid of the life relying on men. Aleya, who has five kids, wants the money so that she can send her children to school. Her husband does not need her to work outside the home. However, in conclusion, Aleya’s husband admits and he buys her a burkha. When the protests against the garment girls start, Aleya’s husband frights, and she has to attire the burkha inside the place of work as well. Far ahead on, when Aleya gets a new sari as a bonus for being the finest worker in the factory, her spouse is not clever to control him. He completely wounds her by beating.

Nazneen grows up in Bangladesh and she was severely affected by those traditional concepts. It is usual that the Third-world women did not treat similarly with men. She has no consciousness of liberty. Therefore, she admits her life instead of changing it and fighting for her equivalence with man. Nazneen is inferior to men in almost all aspects of her life. She grows up in Bangladesh. She is submissive to her father earlier she gets married and she is submissive to her husband after she gets married. She is made-up to be a good daughter and a good wife. She cannot have a job outside and she was not permitted to have any contact with the outside world. Though, Nazneen lives in London with her husband since her wedding.

Nazneen’s sister Hasina escaped with her lover. Soon after, Nazneen’s father Hamid presented her a picture of a man. Nazneen does not enquire questions about her future husband nor desires to see his photograph. Nazneen does not have the bravery to raise her voice against her father. She even does not have the thought of saying ‘no’ to her father at the time of her marriage. After their marriage, she understands that the man she married was old. Nazneen has given in an arranged marriage to Chanuahmed, a man double her age. He had an ugly face. He takes her to London, where he has lived and functioned for almost two decades.
In one way, Chanu is like a chameleon-changing colours to suit its environment. He changes his opinion, according to his own shortcomings and fears. Chanu does not listen to Nazneen, or consider her thoughts and desires to be more important than his own. Nazneen escapes to the sanctity of the kitchen, hoping to escape more of Chanu’s talks and self-appraisal.

In Bangladeshi culture, the birth of girls intended paying dowry to the groom’s family at the time of their daughter’s marriage. Having a boy meant security for old age as it was mutual that the sons took care of their parents. When daughters married, they often had very little contact with their own family. Nazneen is born to her father’s dissatisfaction as he wanted a boy. When Nazneen’s baby dies, her sister writes her a letter where she needs Nazneen to have more sons. Nazneen never found out her father’s true feelings towards her. She lived her life unaware of whether her father cared about her or not. He did not come to say goodbye to Nazneen the morning she left for England by aeroplane.

A woman’s choice is always restricted. In some corner of her awareness, she wants liberty. She wants liberty to study English and for ice-skating. Her first son Raqib dies. Then she gives birth to two daughters Shahana and Bibi. She comes in contact with Karim. Her desire for learning is appreciated by Karim. He gives her Bengali news sheets to read. Chanu as a contrast has never given her anything to read. He has crushed her wish to study English. He is always gripped in his work, and never cared for her views.

In his essay, Orientalism, Edward Said educated that “the orients or Europeans have no control to do anything.” Equally, immigrants also don’t have any power to do anything. But at the same time, it is understandable that the diasporic community not only faces difficulties in the settled society but also relishes the great economic opportunity. So diasporic experiences are like a penny, which has both sides. At the first level of their immigration, they may tolerate countless glitches but at the final space of their life, they got lots of reasonable welfare from the settled land.

Nazneen’s mind starts distracting from domestic work to learn something. Chanu has shown as a classic South Asian who discourages his wife from learning English. By means of language as a tool, which is essential for power, the ‘male’ who is an Orient is scared of his wife receiving that power which can ultimately lead to his losing influence and dominance. Since English is not Nazneen’s verbal, her learning English language means getting into the public circle of the foreign land. Razia elucidates that, London girls love even the smallest pieces of clothes. They named it as fashion. She started a business with her friends. These London young girls prepared to pay more for ethnic clothes with some western touch. After the departure of the husband, Nazneen stays back in London only with the help of her friend Razia. For, she breaks up her ties with her lover Karim. She had learnt the traditional craft of tailoring. However, she does not have any straight connection with the garment factory. So, she lives only with the support of Razia.

Razia’s husband refuses to give her any more money until all the containers of rusks and raisins in the house are over, with the result that the family, including the kids have to eat
only biscuits and raisins for three days and little Shefali gets diarrhoea. In this way, the children get comprised in the husband’s violence causing more agony to the stressed mother. After the death of the husband, Razia has left unaided. She proves her independence, attains freedom and lives in a good living atmosphere in London. The novel also recommends that the immigration to western lands makes oriental women more balanced and radical to demand the oppression against women. The western land, which is traditionally more flexible than her own country, gives her liberty and opportunity to contemplate about the possibilities beyond mere playing the parts of mother, wife and daughter.

From a feminist view, Brick Lane offerings an effective female transformation from subjugation to freedom. Despite all her griefs and difficulties, Nazneen by the end of the novel is the contradictory of Nazneen at the beginning. In Bangladesh and even in her first years in London, she is quite inactive and unwilling to change her life. Brick Lane is a story of enablement. In this novel, we come across many women who gain slow empowerment. In the end, they prove that they can stand single-handedly by their own efforts.

WORKS CITED

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In Bangladesh, women showed a good deal of empowerment in their capacity to articulate their needs and in their receptivity to new ideas. More impressive was the emergence of women’s groups as a dynamic, articulate constituency (Krishna Raj and Kay 2002). These first-hand observations and in-depth interviews appear to validate the findings of other studies (Cheson and Kuhin 2002).

Concept of Women Empowerment

The concept of empowerment has been the subject of much intellectual discourse and analysis for the purpose of this discussion, the conceptual framework expounded by United Nations Measuring Women’s Empowerment as a Variable in International Development. Anju Malhotra, PhD International Center for Research on Women. Sidney Ruth Schuler, PhD JSI Research and Training Institute. The discourse on social inclusion also sees the potential for empowerment in a collective form, whether it is through political, economic, or social mobilization of groups. Narayan et al. 15.