

**THE PORTRAIT OF A POST-COLONIAL AND POST-
MODERN WOMAN IN LONDON: A STUDY OF CLASH OF
CIVILIZATIONS IN MONICA ALI'S BRICK LANE**

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by

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1. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than for which it is now submitted.
2. The advanced study in the English Language and Literature graduate program of which this thesis is part has consisted of:
 - i. English literature including novel, poetry, a comparative approach to world literatures, and examination of several literary theories as well as critical approaches which have contributed to this thesis in an efficient way.
 - ii. The thesis is composed of main sources and secondary sources, particularly books and scholarly articles from a variety of journals and theoretical books.

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INTRODUCTION

Postcolonial as a term that basically refers to the period after colonization years still saves its eminence and popularity in the modern literary world. With the new writers' texts and interpretations, it is possible to say that postcolonial theory has strengthened itself and added a lot to its fame. Especially postcolonial writers such as Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith and Monica Ali, and their postcolonial novels have become very influential in the literary world. Their postcolonial novels usually focus on different cultures and identity problems related with these differences, which is a real issue that lots of people experience in today's mostly multicultural world. In postcolonial novels, the reader is usually presented a big theme that includes a country with a history of colonization and an immigrant character who is in search of his or her identity in a colonizing Western country. Postcolonial novels usually talk about immigration and the immigrants in the Western world because there are millions of immigrants living in Western countries and they have identity problems, and as these works are read and evaluated by millions of different people from all around the world, they create a multilingual circulation and a wealthy literature.

Contemporary literature in an age of globalization is, in many ways, a comparative literature: works circulate in several literary systems at once, and can- some would say, need- to be read within several national traditions...Multilingual circulation of immigrant fiction destabilizes nation-based conceptions of literary culture. (Walkowitz 529-30)

Monica Ali's famous novel, *Brick Lane* published in 2003, is one of the above mentioned postcolonial novels in that it examines an immigrant Bangladeshi woman and her story in London among the Bangladeshi community living in Brick Lane where mostly

Bangladeshi immigrants live. Although Brick Lane is a street in London the Bangladeshi immigrants have turned it into a Bengali town with their language, religion, traditions, traditional restaurants, shops, clothes and spices: “Brick Lane embodies a rare cultural continuity in London's history of immigration--the synagogue where Jewish immigrants prayed is now a mosque; many of the Bangladeshi population work in the same trades as their Jewish antecedents” (Glanville 2). Bangladeshi immigrants have brought their traditions and try to keep them alive; however, this does not mean that they do not have any problems of adaptation or cultural conflicts. Naturally they experience adaptation problems due to the fact that they come from Bangladesh, a former colony of England, and they come from villages and do not have any idea about urban life. Monica Ali examines the adaptation and identity problems of the Bangladeshi immigrants in her novel.

Monica Ali is the daughter of a Bangladeshi father who studied in England. Her mother is English. Her parents met in England and married in Bangladesh. Monica Ali was born in Dhaka and when she was three years old, her parents had to leave Bangladesh and go to England due to the civil war that broke out in Bangladesh. Monica Ali wrote *Brick Lane* in order to talk about the problems of the Bangladeshi immigrants living in London as she is the daughter of an immigrant father and has experienced the effects of immigration herself. In an interview with Neela Sakaria, Ali says that she has benefitted from her experiences a lot while writing her famous novel. She remarks that she has used her father’s stories and memories about Bengali life, and adds that she has made a large research in order to obtain authentic information from the people living in Brick Lane. Ali claims that she has Bengali origins although she has grown in England, and so she tells the problems of the Bengali people as one of them:

You are always drawing from your experience. So with every character you’re writing about, you’re writing a part of yourself. Even

with the darkest characters, you're reaching inside yourself to the less nice parts of you. You're always writing on that level. Also, many of the issues I deal with in the book are things I've thought about for a long time. The concept of the generations in an immigrant community is something I lived with myself and experienced. Then I did do research as well. I interviewed a lot of people around the area of London, social workers, police workers etc. But you know, I am not a journalist so I did step back from that for a while and allow myself to imagine the particular context. There is another aspect which is my father's storytelling. He grew up in Bangladesh and tells stories of village life. I wanted to preserve some of that for my own children. Like Makku Pagla and his famously patched umbrella that he drowns in the well, was a story from my father's village. (Ali 2)

Although Monica Ali claims to have Bangladeshi origins and writes *Brick Lane*, a novel about the Bangladeshi immigrant community in London, she has received lots of criticisms from some literary critics on the issue of her authenticity. These critics claim that as Ali has grown up in England among the English society and still lives in London with her family, she is not a Bangladeshi but a British writer, therefore she does not have the right to write about the Bangladeshi community living in London because her perspective is a British one and it will not reflect the reality about the Bangladeshi immigrants. In addition, they claim that as she does not live in Brick Lane, she cannot give first hand information about them. In her book, *Zones of Instability: Literature, Postcolonialism and the Nation*, Imre Szeman says that authenticity is very important for postcolonial texts:

Indeed, most contemporary postcolonial writers reside in the first world, and may even be citizens of first-world countries. The worries

that this raises about the political and cultural authenticity of these contemporary texts begs the question of the conditions assumed for authenticity, that is, the organic connection between the writer, his or her people, and the national soil that is thought to be a guarantee of authentic cultural expression. (29)

One of the most fervent critics of Ali is Germaine Greer. She criticizes the authenticity of *Brick Lane*, too. She says that writers can do anything with words and can create a world which is very different but more realistic than the real world that they talk about. She adds that this situation can be very dangerous for the Bengali people who have become the characters of the novel as they are misinterpreted and misrepresented: “Writers are treacherous; they will sneak up on you and write about you in terms that you don’t recognize. They will take your reality, pull strands from it and weave them with their own impressions into a tissue that is more real than your reality because it is text” (Greer 1). She contends that although Ali says that she has got Bengali origins and tries to write a multicultural novel, she is more British than she is Bengali; therefore, her novel is not authentic.

Ali is on the near side of British culture, not far from the middle. She writes in English and her point of view is, whether she allows herself to impersonate a village Bangladeshi woman or not, British. She has forgotten her Bengali, which she would not have done if she had wanted to remember it. When it comes to writing a novel, however, she becomes the pledge of our multi-ethnicity. (Greer 1)

Another fervent critic of Ali is Iftikhar Ahmad. He goes further than Greer and claims that Monica Ali does not misrepresent only the Bengali community in London but also all of the Muslim immigrants around the world. He agrees with Greer on the point that Ali is British and very far away from her Bengali identity, and adds that Ali’s novel became very popular

and won awards due to the fact that she reflects the realities from a British perspective: “Monica Ali, who was mis-educated and de-educated by the British education system, portrays Bangladeshi Muslims in Brick Lane as backward, uneducated and unsophisticated. This is the main reason why her book was selected for Guardian First Book Award” (Ahmad 1). Criticisms do not just come from the literary critics; also the Bangladeshi community criticizes Ali and *Brick Lane* for misrepresenting the Bengali people, Bengali culture and traditions. After the publication of the novel, they organized some protests and burned Ali’s novel. They even warned her not to come to Brick Lane. Moreover, when she applied for a visa in order to visit her birthplace her application was rejected: “In mid-2003 the Bangladeshi High Commission refused her a visa to visit her birthplace. This must have been bitter enough, but returning would have hurt even more” (Greer). Besides, when there was a plan to make a movie version of *Brick Lane*, the local people said that they did not want to be filmed in this way. A writer, David Cohen makes a research in Brick Lane about the novel, *Brick Lane* and talks to the local people there. A local Bengali man, Salique says that Ali looks down on their society and her novel is based on lies:

If the book is even 10 per cent true, I would stop my protest and forget it,” he (Salique) says. “It’s not a work of fiction, it’s a work of lies. She has tried to make herself famous at the expense of our community. Freedom of speech does not mean you can just denigrate a community. That historian [David Irving] who said the Holocaust didn’t happen is behind bars. You can’t just say what you like. (Cohen 1-2)

Monica Ali gets disturbed from all these criticisms and protests, and in her interview with Sakaria she says that, as she claimed in the novel, Bengali society is racist. She says that writing about Bengali immigrants is very difficult in that they expect a writer only to reflect

their good sides, and she adds that as a writer she has depicted everything as she has seen with all its rights and wrongs: “There is certainly racism in our society. The truth is complex and diffuse. I wonder if this would happen, though, to a white writer writing about an unpleasant white character whom a white person complained about” (Ali). She says that she has focused on the real problems of the Bengali community such as overcrowding, generational gaps and clashes, adaptation problems and drug usage. She states that people should not get hurt when they read their problems from a writer’s novel, and should not organize protests but try to find solutions to these real problems. Ali has received more positive criticisms than negative ones, and has taken her place in the literary world as a well-known postcolonial writer. She was the first writer to examine the Bengali community in London; therefore, she faced the possible difficulties that a writer can meet in her first work which is also a debatable one. Despite the protests, they also made the movie version of the novel and released it in 2007.

In this thesis, I intend to analyze *Brick Lane* from several different points. In the first chapter, I will claim that *Brick Lane* is a postcolonial novel by referring to the postcolonial theory, different interpretations of the theory, and how *Brick Lane* is a postcolonial novel. I will talk about the colonial history of England and Bangladesh. In the second chapter, I will talk about the issue of immigration in the novel by giving detailed information about England and the Asian immigrant waves, and claim that the characters of the novel have identity problems due to the fact of immigration and cultural differences. In the third chapter, I will talk about Samuel P. Huntington’s clash of civilizations theory and claim that in the novel the characters clash due to cultural and religious differences. Lastly, in the fourth chapter, I will give detailed information about the major characters of the novel.

CHAPTER ONE: *BRICK LANE* AND POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

1.1- Definition of Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism is a highly debated term. Literally, it means the period after colonialism and its effects on the once-colonized nations. Some critics agree on this definition of postcolonialism, while some others claim that colonialism has not ended and is just disguised. They agree on the belief that postcolonialism is another version of colonialism and the heritage of colonialism that continues to affect the world, and the relations between the once-colonized and colonizing countries.

The term postcolonialism is not the same as after colonialism, as if colonial values are no longer to be reckoned with. It does not define a radically new historical era, nor does it herald a brave new world where all the ills of the colonial past have been cured. Rather, postcolonialism recognizes both historical continuity and change. On the one hand, it acknowledged that the material realities and modes of representation common to colonialism are still very much with us today, even if the political map of the world has changed through decolonization. But on the other hand, it asserts the promise, the possibility, and the continuing necessity of change, while also recognizing that important challenges and changes have already been achieved. (McLeod 33)

According to John McLeod in *Beginning Postcolonialism*, postcolonialism does not refer to a radically different era from that of colonialism; however, it carries the implication of a fact that change is necessary in the modern world. Therefore, colonialism turns into postcolonialism. While McLeod defines the term of postcolonialism in this way, Bill Ashcroft

defines it in a different but parallel way. He contends that postcolonialism analyzes the inherited power relations which were the heritage of the colonial era when the third world countries were colonized by the first world countries, and their effects on the modern world. He says clearly that these power relations that were set up by the colonizing countries and their impact are still felt considerably in today's world although they have changed their names and now are pervasive through cultural relations.

Post-colonial analysis increasingly makes clear the nature and the impact of inherited power relations, and their continuing effects on modern global culture and politics. Political questions usually approached from the stand points of nation-state relations, race, class, economics and gender are made clearer when we consider them in the context of their relations with the colonialist past. This is because the structures of power established by the colonizing process remain pervasive, though often hidden in cultural relations throughout the world. (Ashcroft 1)

Peter Childs agrees with McLeod and claims that although colonialism is officially considered over by the colonizing countries, it still continues under different names in various forms such as cultural and economic relations and agreements. Colonizing countries are still dominant over the once-colonized countries and world politics. In the period after decolonization, although armies have withdrawn, former colonizing countries continue their control on some colonies. For example, although France withdrew its soldiers from the African countries and these colonized countries gained independence, France is still an important and dominant country for them as it continues to affect their economy in indirect ways.

In the period after decolonization, it rapidly became apparent that although colonial armies and bureaucracies might have withdrawn, Western powers were still intent on maintaining maximum indirect control over erstwhile colonies, via political, cultural and above all economic channels, a phenomenon which became known as neo-colonialism. (Childs 5)

The postcolonial period is mostly known for the postcolonial literary texts and authors because in this period, writers and intellectuals in the once-colonized countries have started to write as a response to the colonizers and their writings about the once-colonized people. In literary history, there are many texts about colonized people, their countries and traditions written by the colonizers. These texts often intended to enlighten the people in the colonizing countries about the third world countries. Colonizing countries wanted to know about the other people living in distant parts of the world. There was such a need, so some writers from the colonizing countries came to the colonized land in order to observe the people, their life styles, traditions, and religions; however, their writings were very superficial about the colonized because they wrote down what they had seen from their own view points and often added their own comments, and presented these texts to the reader in the colonizing countries, especially to European reader. They did not communicate with the colonized and they did not ask them about anything, but they just created their stories by using the colonized land as their setting and the colonized people as the characters. They interpreted and shaped their characters according to their perspectives and purposes. Colonized people were just objects that were written about; they were not the subjects in their stories; however, they have decided to be the subjects, producers and authors of their own stories in the postcolonial era in order to rewrite their written histories by the colonizer. They have wanted to speak for themselves and express what they think and how they think. They have aimed at defining

themselves so that all the made-up definitions are exchanged with the real ones. The pen was only in the colonizer's hand, but now it is also in the once-colonized writer's hand:

Postcolonialism in part involves the challenge to colonial ways of knowing, writing back in opposition to such views. But colonial ways of knowing still circulate and have agency in the present; unfortunately, they have not magically disappeared as the Empire has declined. (McLeod 32)

In the literary field, postcolonial texts, especially novels have been very popular in the last decades. These texts have been mostly written by members of once-colonized nations. The works of Zadie Smith, the recent writings of Salman Rushdie, the novels of Hanif Kureishi and Monica Ali are good examples for these postcolonial texts. They all explain the multicultural societies and cities, and interpret postcolonialism in a different way from previous writers: "Such fictions, while still committed to teasing out the tangled origins of history, bring a new headiness to their description of the present moment" (Seshagiri 501). These authors have usually tried to show how their colonized people suffered during the colonization years under colonial power, and how they still suffer mentally due to the traumas they experienced in the colonial age. These literary texts focus mostly on identity problems as these are the most important problems for the once-colonized people. In the colonial years, not only their land and raw materials, but also their culture and history were exploited. After colonization came to an end and the colonizers left their countries, they remained with their exploited local cultures, identity problems and the colonizer's language. Therefore, their aim was to rehabilitate their local cultures in order to reach the original form of it before colonization, as Fanon states in his article, "On National Culture". They wanted to define their identities in their own words and principles. In "Modernist Ashes, Postcolonial Phoenix: Jean Rhys and the Evolution of the English Novel in the Twentieth Century", Urmila

Seshagiri states that “the very structure of English fiction now begins to empty itself of modernism’s cherished vitality and to move toward the cultural and artistic terrain in which postcolonial literature would subsequently flourish” (492). As it is mentioned above, there is a variety of postcolonial texts in today’s literary world and new ones are appearing every day. Due to this reason, it is necessary to analyze each text if it is a postcolonial text or not. “Post colonial, post-colonial, postcoloniality or postcolonialism, this term has lots of different usages and problems due to this situation. Every writer uses it in a different way and puts a different meaning on it” (Childs 15-16). In a postcolonial text, there should be some basic elements such as a country with a history of colonization, colonized characters, colonized-colonizer relations, identity problems or the rewriting of a colonial text. McLeod describes postcolonial texts in the following way:

Very basically, and in a literary context, postcolonialism involves one or more of the following: Reading texts produced by writers from countries with a history of colonialism, primarily those texts concerned with the workings and legacy of colonialism in either the past or the present. Reading texts produced by those that have migrated from countries with a history of colonialism, or those descended from migrant families, which deal in the main with diaspora experience and its many consequences. In the light of theories of colonial discourses, re-reading texts produced during colonialism; both those that directly address the experiences of Empire, and those that seem not to. (McLeod 33)

1.2- Postcolonial Literature and *Brick Lane*

Monica Ali's highly debated and famous novel, *Brick Lane* is a postcolonial text. According to McLeod's definition, *Brick Lane* is postcolonial with the plot set in Bangladesh, a country which has a history of colonization. The novel has other issues that make it a postcolonial text such as the mental legacy of colonialism for the Bangladeshi people, migration and migrated colonized people in England, diaspora experiences, and the identity problems. As this novel was written by Monica Ali whose father is a Bangladeshi immigrant living in England, and this writer has written about her people's problems in London, *Brick Lane* is a postcolonial novel.

In *Brick Lane*, Monica Ali mostly focuses on the problems of the once-colonized Bangladeshi people who live in the colonizer's country, England. Their vital problems are identity problems, identity formations, migration and adaptation, and some related economic problems. The main characters of the novel are chosen from the Bangladeshi community living in South London in a place called Brick Lane. This community consists of the Bangladeshi immigrants and their second and third generations. This community is colorful and rich in itself as it includes a variety of generations and these generations have different perspectives about living in England. Ali's characters, especially Chanu, usually talks about the colonization period and the fact that their country was colonized by England in which they live now. Each member of the Bangladeshi community has a different reason for coming to England; however, their common reason is to earn money and use this money back in their country. Especially after the Second World War, Bangladeshis migrated to Britain for different reasons:

It is fair to say that since the end of the Second World War the former colonising nations have experienced the arrival of many peoples from the once-colonised countries who have established new homes at the

old colonial centres. The reasons for migration have been variable. In Britain, colonial peoples were specifically recruited by the Government to cope with labour shortages, such as the drive after the Second World War to employ Caribbeans in public services like health and transport. Others arrived to study, or to escape political and economic difficulties in their native lands. Some followed family members who migrated before them. As a consequence, at the end of the millennium Britain can boast a wide variety of diaspora communities that may trace connections to locations such as Australia, Africa, South Asia, the Caribbean, China or Ireland. (McLeod 206)

The novel mentions the history of colonization. The characters of the novel, the ones that experienced the act of migration still remember the colonial years although the second and the third generations do not feel in the same way with their parents. This remembering is inevitable because the setting is London and the characters are migrants from a once-colonized country.

England colonized lots of third world countries including Bangladesh. After England departed all of its colonies, and the colonization era was over, there were numerous different consequences for both the colonized and the colonizer countries. Among England's consequences, migration was the most remarkable one. During and after the colonial years, England received a huge wave of immigration from its former colonies. These immigrations affected England, its demographic, cultural and economic structure to a large extent. Especially, London has become a cosmopolitan city in which millions of immigrants from different countries, regions, colors and religions live together. The British Empire changed colonized countries, but it was changed too by its colonial encounters:

It seems an obvious point that the British Empire was an international affair. Through the work of colonialism countless people voyaged out from Britain, often settling around the world in a variety of different places. But less well-known today, perhaps, were the voyages in by the colonized peoples from around the world who travelled to Britain where they remained for the rest of their lives. Often these voyages took place under duress, as in the instances of plantation owners taking slaves to put to work as servants in their British homes, or the use of South Asian women as ayahs by families employed by the East Indian Company during and after their return to Britain. If the British Empire changed life in colonized countries, then Britain too was changed forever by its colonized encounters. (McLeod 205)

London's being the setting for the novel is very important in that it is a planned choice as it was the capital of the colonizing British Empire and it is still the capital of England. London brings the memories of the colonization years to the minds of the reader. In addition to this fact, the name of the novel is *Brick Lane* which is a name of a district in South London where mostly Bangladeshi immigrants live.

London is a world city. No one planned for this. It happened as the result of a number of factors, including the city's uncontrolled population growth, its chaotic government, feeble planning, successive waves of immigration (the accidental by-product of Empire), and the relentless march of global capitalism. (Travers 1)

London also has turned into the center of postcolonial resistance. According to McLeod, in *Postcolonial London*, intellectuals of London's immigrant communities have turned into postcolonial writers like Monica Ali. They live in the once-center of the British

Empire, use the colonizer's language, and write their postcolonial texts in order to claim their existence and identities (McLeod 6). "London occupies a particularly significant place in the evolution of postcolonial oppositional thought and action, and has long been an important site of creativity and conflict for those from countries with a history of colonialism" (6). Monica Ali has a very different standpoint in that she was born in Bangladesh, her father was Bangladeshi and her mother was English, and she was brought up in London. She has a hybrid identity; therefore, she tries to grasp the problems of the other migrants and in-betweens in her novel. She knows about identity problems as she has experienced herself, and tries to reflect them.

Language was a very important tool for the colonizer. They used it in order to colonize the countries; they made English language education a compulsory means of communication for the colonized people; they used it in order to write about the colonized people so that they could inform the other distant countries; they used it in order to make the colonized people forget their native languages, local cultures and identities. Language was very important for the colonized people, but it was replaced with the colonizer's language. In postcolonial literature, language is very important as well, because postcolonial writers use the colonizer's language as a means of attacking them back. Language is still an important tool. In *Post-colonial Studies: Key Concepts*, Bill Ashcroft mentions about the importance of language for the colonial period and postcolonial literature. He states that post-colonial studies are particularly sensitive to language, since language has itself played such a leading role in colonization, "Ordinary words take on new meanings, and specialist language and concepts from a number of disciplines are redeployed with different emphases and context" (Ashcroft 2).

Brick Lane is written in English. In some parts of the novel, Ali even uses broken English in order to show that the person speaks with broken Bengali. She does not only want

the Bengali to read the novel, she also and mostly wants the English to read the novel and see what kind of problems Bangladeshi community in London has. Ashcroft says that “post-colonial societies can take over those aspects of the imperial culture- language, forms of writing, film, theatre, even models of thought and argument such as rationalism, logic and analysis- that may be of use to them in articulating their own social and cultural identities” (19). In the novel, language becomes an important problem for the characters. For some of the Bangladeshi people, speaking in English is the symbol of assimilation, while for the others it is just a way of communicating with the other members of British society. The ones that do not know English have communication problems with British society. As they do not communicate, they do not know each other and they have some prejudices against each other.

By appropriating the imperial language, its discursive forms and its modes of representation, postcolonial societies are able, as things stand, to intervene more readily in the dominant discourse, to interpolate their own cultural realities, or use that dominant language to describe those realities to a wide audience of readers. (Ashcroft 20)

Here I want to discuss the colonization history of Bangladesh by the British Empire, that is to say today’s England as it is very important for the novel because the setting is England and the characters are Bangladeshi, which means that once-colonized people have come to live in the colonizer’s land. Therefore, it is unavoidable that both the colonized and colonizer people will remember the colonial years, which is seen throughout the novel. Most of the characters of the novel are aware of the fact that their country was once colonized by England. This feeling is very important and confusing for them because it affects their sense of belonging to England. They have been living in this country for decades and their children were born in this land; however, this remembering the days of colonization and the still ongoing mutual feelings of racism have a deep impact on their concept of home. They feel

that they do not belong to England, and although they want to return back to their original country, they feel that they are strangers in Bangladesh. This means that they all occupy a space in-between. Prior to 1947, Bangladesh was an eastern state of India, known as East Bengal. After India's independence from Great Britain, from 1947-1971, Bangladesh comprised the eastern section of the Islamic nation of Pakistan and was known as East Pakistan (Baluja 50). These two parts were very different from each other in that they had different languages and religious sensitivities. Although the two parts were mostly Muslim, West Pakistan thought that East Pakistan was too Indianized, and West Pakistan started a war against East Pakistan in order to impose their own beliefs, which resulted in millions of Bangladeshis' death. In addition to this, West Pakistanis raped thousands of Bangladeshi women so that they could bear their children. However, at the end of this war, Bangladesh gained its independence in 1971 and became an independent country. It is clear that Bangladesh was colonized by Britain as a part of India till 1947; however, it did not only suffer from the colonizer country but also from their kin country, West Pakistan:

In 1947, India's independence from British colonial rule resulted in the creation of a new homeland for the Muslims of India. Using Islam as the principle of nationhood, the eastern and north-western corners of the country came together as a single nation. The two parts, East and West Pakistan, were however culturally and linguistically distinct. West Pakistan, the centre of political authority, attempted to transpose that authority to secure cultural dominance on the basis that East Pakistani practice of Islam was too Bengali (hence too Hinduized/Indianized). Resistance to the imposition of administrative, economic, military, linguistic (Urdu in place of the prevalent Bengali) and political control crystallized in the nine-month-long Muktijuddho

in 1971. East Pakistan became independent from West Pakistan and Bangladesh was formed on 16 December 1971. The new nation of Bangladesh was faced with the staggering statistics of three million dead and two hundred thousand women raped in a span of nine months. These crimes were perpetrated both by the Pakistani army and by their local Bengali collaborators. (Mookherjee 159-160)

In *Brick Lane*, Ali often mentions the colonial years. She also writes about the war between West Pakistan and Bangladesh. One of the main characters of the novel, Chanu who is Nazneen's husband, remembers the war between West Pakistan and Bangladesh and asks the other people who believe in the concept of ummah whether it will be possible or not by reminding them the bloody war Muslim against Muslim from their history: "Brothers! These peasants claim to be my brothers" (Ali 294). Chanu is a very important character in the novel because he is one of the main characters, and more than that, as he is an educated man who has an English Language and Literature degree from Dhaka University and other certificates from some other colleges in different fields, he always makes speeches about his country and the colonial years to his wife, Nazneen, and their daughters, Shahana and Bibi. He says that remembering the beauties of their home country and not forgetting those years of colonization are very important for their identity. He says that they do not teach good things about Bengal, but just about famine and floods. He talks about the colonization period. He says that Europeans came there to do trade and Bangladeshis were very wealthy then. But now they are not wealthy any more:

You see all these people here look down on us as peasants know nothing of history. In the sixteenth century, Bengal was called the Paradise of Nations. These are our roots. Do they teach these things in the school here? Does Shahana know about the Paradise of Nations?

All she knows about is flood and famine. Whole bloody country is just a bloody basket case to her. If you have a history, you see, you have a pride. The whole world was going to Bengal to do trade. Sixteenth century and seventeenth century. Dhaka was the home of textiles. Who invented all this muslin and damask and every damn thing? It was us. All the Dutch and Portuguese and French and British queuing up to buy? (Ali 194)

Chanu is always proud of his country and its history even if it does not have good circumstances for the people living there. He has lived in England for thirty years, but he does not forget his country's history and does not have a feeling of belonging to this country of the colonizer despite the fact the colonization was long ago. Although he has English Literature education, although he speaks English, although he quotes the Western philosophers and writers in his speeches, although he has come to England to be a big man, he does not feel belonging. He thinks that Bangladesh is his home and he should return one day. He tries to impose his opinions about Bangladesh and England to his wife and daughters; however, they go on thinking and feeling in a different way about their country of origin and about the country in which they live. They feel belonging to England, and Chanu observes it and becomes very angry and disappointed:

Four European countries fought over the place. And when the British took control, this is what gave them strength to take all India. During the eighteenth century this part of the country was wealthy. It was stable. It was educated. It provided- we provided- one third of the revenues of Britain's Indian Empire. A loss of pride is a terrible thing. (Ali 196)

Chanu decides to return to Bangladesh with his family in order to protect his children from the assimilating effects of the colonizer country. In every opportunity, he talks about his decision of going back to his friend, Dr. Azad, Nazneen and his daughters; however, his idea of returning is not much appreciated by the children. They feel that England is their home. In their trip to the museums, an English man asks them where they are from and Shahana answers in the following way: “I am from London” (Ali 318). In fact, her answer and feeling of belonging to England is normal as she was born in London and she has never seen Bangladesh before. However, Chanu does not see it as a normal behavior and tries to impose them his thinking style in vain. In one of his books, Bellah talks about the importance of the past for a community’s existence. He says: “Communities...have a history- in an important sense are constituted by their past- and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a ‘community of memory’, one that does not forget its past. In order not to forget that past, a community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative” (Bellah 153). From Bellah’s perspective, what Chanu does is logical because he tries to impose upon his daughters that they are Bangladeshi immigrants living in England, and their country was a very rich and important country in the past which was colonized by England. He thinks that this history should be an important part of their identity. However, his daughters are not immigrants but the children of immigrants, therefore, their case should be examined carefully because they cannot feel the same things with their families as they have never been to their original country before.

We must think of our children first. God knows what they are teaching them in these English schools. In all my life, I feel this is the best decision I have made- to take my daughters back home. I am preparing them. You see, to go forward you must first look back. We are taking some stock of the glorious British Empire. When I was in

school, do you know what we learned? The English gave us the railways. As if we should get down on our knees for this. Do you think they would have brought the railway if they did not want to sell their steel or locomotives? Do you think that they brought us railways from the goodness of their hearts? We needed irrigation systems, not trains. (Ali 265)

As a conclusion of this chapter, it is clear that postcolonial theory and literature is a very popular and still highly debatable area in today's world. There are lots of discussions about the definition and usage of the term postcolonial; however, critics mostly agree on the fact that postcolonial is a concept that is used for defining the period after colonization was officially declared to be over. In addition, most of the critics agree on the opinion that colonialism still goes on but in different forms hidden in cultural and economic relations. In his book, *An Introduction to Postcolonial Theory*, Childs states that the label post-colonialism needs not to be thought of as defining a doctrine, like colonialism, but as marking a strategic phase. He says that "post-colonial is a term which, like post- fascist Europe, both draws attention to a none-too-distant iniquitous past and affirms a commitment to rejecting, not forgetting, the effects and ideologies of that past" (218). Similarly, Stuart Hall defines the term postcolonial and claims that "the postcolonial does not mean that we have passed from a regime of power-knowledge into some powerless and conflict-free time zone" (254). Nevertheless, it does also stake its claim in terms of the fact that some other, "related but as yet emergent new configurations of power-knowledge relations are beginning to exert their distinctive and specific effects" (254). As postcolonial theory is very significant in the modern world, postcolonial literature continues to have an important place in today's literary world. Postcolonial writers produce great works of literature in order to examine the colonial years and the problems and the sufferings of their people. Monica Ali is one of these writers and her

novel *Brick Lane* is one of the important postcolonial works about the Bangladeshi after colonization. As it is seen in her novel, postcolonial theory focuses on “an exploration of the ways in which the dominated or colonized culture can use the tools of the dominant discourse to resist its political or cultural control” (Ashcroft 19).

Despite the fact that postcolonial theory is very popular and used by a great deal of writers, there are lots of critics in the literary world. They claim that postcolonial theory is not a theory that belongs to the third world countries which were colonized, and was not triggered by the once-colonized writers. They think that it was triggered by the West itself as the colonized writers used Western language, philosophy, techniques and even education while writing their texts. They argue that postcolonial theory is the child of colonization, so the West still goes on dominating the world. Lassner explains this situation by saying that an oppressive colonialism is found to infect postcolonial politics and literature even today (2). McLeod summarizes the critics’ claims as follows:

Because the West always remains the place of power and privilege with western-based academics dictating the shape and form of postcolonial literary studies, we might argue that there is engendered an unequal neo-colonial relationship between academics based inside and outside the Western notions. According to this view, postcolonialism is nothing but a Western practice using Western theories that is performed in Western universities in the main by privileged migrants from the once-colonised nations who have been able to secure lucrative posts. Thus defined, the asymmetrical, unequal relationship between the West and the once-colonised countries resembles too closely colonial relationships. (248)

CHAPTER TWO: THE ISSUE OF IMMIGRATION AND HOME CONCEPT IN *BRICK LANE*

2.1- Immigration and Racism in London

In *Brick Lane*, immigration is one of the most important themes. The setting of the novel is a street called Brick Lane where mostly the Bangladeshi immigrants live, and Brick Lane is a place in South London in England. England is one of the countries where millions of people immigrated to, especially in the period after WW II. After WW II, England had labor shortages; therefore, it opened its doors to the immigrants from all around the world, but especially from its former colonies such as India, Bangladesh or China. These immigrants helped and still help England's economy; however, they have influenced the demographic and cultural structure of the country as well. Immigrants came, but they brought their cultures, languages, cuisines, traditions and religions with them. All these elements made England a multicultural country. Especially London has become a cosmopolitan and multicultural city. According to Tony Travers, London is different from the rest of the United Kingdom in the way that one country is different from another: "It is more urban, less white, richer, poorer and, increasingly, more international than the rest of the country. The city's hectic cosmopolitan buzz is in stark contrast to the traditional image of grey, repressed Britain" (1). London has gained a colorful and culturally rich appearance after the immigration waves:

Since the end of the Second World War, the urban and human geography of London has been irreversibly altered as a consequence of patterns of migration from countries with a history of colonialism, so that today a number of London's neighbourhoods are known primarily in terms of the overseas population they have nurtured. Whitechapel and Tower Hamlets boast significant Bangladeshi

communities; Brixton has long been associated with Jamaican, Trinidadian and Guyanese settlers; Southall has significant numbers of Indian and Pakistani peoples; Earl's Court is renowned for its Australians and New Zealanders; Hampstead is a centre for South Africans in London; Clapham and Balham are home to many with links from Ghana. It is estimated that 300 different languages are readily spoken within the boundaries of the British capital. (McLeod 4)

In *Postcolonial London*, McLeod examines London and its colonial history, its being a center for the resistance to the British Empire, its being a centre for postcolonial literature, its immigrants and the immigration's effects on the English culture in London. He starts his book giving an anthropologist's view about the changing face of London. One afternoon, in May 1955, the anthropologist Sheila Patterson took a journey to Brixton in South London. Turning down a side-road away from the main shopping street, she was overcome with a sense of strangeness, almost shock. In the familiar environment of a South London street, she was surprised to find that almost everybody in sight had a colored skin (1). She talks about this experience in her book and observes that London has changed a lot and turned into a colorful city with the help of immigrants and their joy of life. These immigrants changed the cold and grey face of London with their different cultures and colorful lifestyles. London reminds her of the days of the British Empire with all its different subjects. She describes what she has seen in the following way:

Waiting near the employment Exchange were about two dozen black men, most in flimsy suits of exaggerated cut that, as I was later to learn, denoted their recent arrival. At least half of the exuberant infants playing outside the pre-fab day nursery were *café noir* or *café*

au lait in colouring. And there were colored men and women wherever I looked, shopping, strolling, or gossiping on the sunny street-corners with an animation that most Londoners lost long ago.

(13)

McLeod comments on this scene and says that Patterson's shock bears witness to a new London community in its interstices and hitherto neglected locations. He observes that the newcomers make different use of urban space, liming Brixton's streets and turning the street-corners into sociable sites of community and communication that perhaps recall similar locations in Kingston, Bridgetown or the Port of Spain. Therefore, there is another London being created here, "one which admits the times and places of overseas to the supposedly humdrum heart of the aged British Empire, creating a novel environment which also epitomizes the perpetually changing milieu of city living" (McLeod 1). Then, he mentions about the problems of the immigrants generally and adds that in the 1950s and 1960s immigrants were within, but not a part of London's economic and social fabric. Immigrants, especially the ones who were once colonized, were demonized in terms of race. They were not citizens but strangers and there were invisible barriers between them and their white neighbors:

Brixton's diasporic peoples, like many other new Londoners from countries with a history of colonialism, would be subjected to a series of attitudes which frequently objectified and demonized them, often in terms of race, while questioning their rights of citizenship and tenure in one of the world's most historically cosmopolitan cities. The perpetual identification of these peoples and their families as strangers in, rather than citizens of, London bears a witness to the profoundly polycultural character of the city in the postwar years and to a number

of reactionary responses at the levels of state and street which refused to accept the newcomers' legitimacy and rights of tenure. (McLeod 2)

Racism was one of the most important problems that immigrants faced in London. They were discriminated nearly in all areas of life. McLeod remarks that "prejudices towards newcomers have been, and still can be, found within employment, housing, government and the Metropolitan Police" (4). This means that the new comers did not only suffer from discrimination problems, but they also suffered from poverty due to the fact that they were not given jobs as they were mostly once-colonized people and they belonged to a different race. McLeod focuses on the fact that this problem of racism still continues in the beginning of the twenty-first century in London although many years have passed. In one of his articles about London, Tony Travers agrees with McLeod and states that "there is still racism and homophobia- last year a bomber attacked Asian, black and gay neighborhoods in what was supposed to be Europe's most tolerant city" (3).

But most significantly, it points to the fact that living amidst the contradictions of class and race, which define the realities of the hybrid spaces of the black and Asian diasporas in Britain is a journey which as yet remains fraught with difficulties, difficulties which are in many ways still unresolved. (Nasta 190)

In *Brick Lane*, Ali focuses on the issue of racism in most parts of the novel. Her characters, especially Chanu and Karim make long speeches about racism in England against the immigrants. However, Ali does not examine this issue of racism from only the perspective of the English. Her characters show that immigrants are also racist and have a sense of racism although they do not have the similar dominating power as the English people. Both sides have prejudices, misconceptions, and misunderstandings about each other, which cause hostilities. These hostilities appear as acts of racism. They do not know each other.

Nevertheless, the real cause of racist acts is the racism theory created by the West itself. According to the race theory, there are different races in the world, and some races are superior to others, which means that the other races are inferior. In this equation, the white race is superior to the colored races, so the white race can dominate and colonize the other races, especially in order to civilize them because the white race is superior as it is more educated, civilized and rational. This theory of racism lies under the beginning of colonization period, and it is harshly criticized today by lots of people all around the world. In *Brick Lane*, Chanu tells Mrs. Azad that they live in a racist society here in England and it is very difficult for immigrants to cope with this racist society: “I am talking about the feelings of alienation engendered by a society where racism is prevalent” (Ali 116). Karim, who is Nazneen’s lover, is the leader of a Muslim activist group called the Bengal Tigers. He says that he and the other Bengali people have set up such a group in order to fight racism and racist English people. He explains that he experienced racist attacks in his childhood and youth. Karim talks about his school days when there was racism everywhere:

We set it all up for them. When I was at school, we used to be chased home every day. People getting beaten up the whole time. Then we got together, turned the tables. One of us got touched, they all paid for it. We went everywhere together, we started to fight, and we got a reputation. But now, these kids – they don’t remember how it used to be. They are in their gangs, and they fight the posse from Camden or King’s Cross. Or from the next estate. Or they stay away from all that, earn good money in the restaurants, and that is all they care about. They do not think that they can be touched. (Ali 279)

Chanu talks about his work environment and his boss, Mr. Dalloway, and adds that he has waited for a promotion for many years, and he cannot get this promotion because he is not white. He thinks that as he is a Bangladeshi immigrant, it does not matter how educated he is, he will not get the promotion. He tells Nazneen that Mr. Dalloway is a racist man and discriminates against his employees. Nazneen talks to Razia, one of her neighbors in the estate, and tells that the English society is racist: “My husband says they are racist, particularly Mr. Dalloway. He thinks he will get the promotion, but it will take him longer than any white man. He says that if he painted his skin pink and white then there would be no problem” (Ali 69). Later, in the middle of the novel, the reader sees that Chanu cannot get the promotion and someone else gets the promotion; therefore, Chanu resigns from Mr. Dalloway’s company. At the end of the novel, he is fed up with this racist society as he could not realize any of his dreams in England. He came to England with big dreams of being a big man and returning to his country in order to be useful there. This feeling of disappointment becomes unbearable for him and he decides to return to his country, Bangladesh with this family. He tells Nazneen and the other few people around him that he does not want to raise his children in such a racist society. He claims that this racism and the corruption of English society will destroy his daughters; therefore, in order to secure their future he decides to get away from this land of the former colonizer. He imagines that everything is wonderful in his country and that when he returns, he and his family will be very happy there. One day he reads a newspaper and comes across a piece of information about a survey which is about the happiest nation on earth. This survey shows that the Bangladeshi people are the happiest nation in the world, and, then, Chanu reads loudly and talks about it to Nazneen and Shahana. He is very happy as he has found a piece of information which he can use in order to justify their return to Bangladesh. Shahana does not care about the survey and Nazneen says that she does not believe in it as her sister, Hasina is not happy in Dhaka.

In the novel, there are two activist groups; one of them is English and the other one is Bengali. The motive that lies under their activism is racism; one group fights for the Bangladeshis living in Brick Lane. The Lion Hearts fight for the English people who live there. The Lion Hearts want to send the Bangladeshi people away. They give leaflets to the people living in estates whether they are immigrants or white people; they try to create a feeling of hatred for the Muslim immigrants. In these leaflets, they claim that England is their country and they should not tolerate Muslim immigrants with their cultural and religious traditions. Even some of them tease the Muslim girls who wear the hijab. In front of schools, they tease the immigrant students. They harass Muslim people in London. They tell them to go back home. They have killed an immigrant, a man called Shiblu Rahman. They say that not the different races but different cultures and religions clash, so immigrants have to go; however, the real problem for them is race itself. They see immigrants as a threat to their culture, which is stated in one of their leaflets clearly:

The Islamification of our neighborhood had gone too far. A Page 3 calendar and poster have been removed from the walls of our community hall. How long before the extremists are putting veils on our women and insulting our daughters for wearing short skirts? Do not tolerate it! Write to the council! This is England! (Ali 275)

The Lion Hearts give a speech on the estate and shout that there should be discos and bingo parlor and also the sale of alcoholic drinks on these estates where immigrants and English people live together (Ali 276). In addition, they organize a march against the Bengal Tigers. The Bengal Tigers organize another march against them in return (Ali 277). Both of the groups try to encourage the people to have racist feelings about each other. However, it is clear that not many people favor their attitudes because first the Lion Hearts cancel their march against the “Muslim mullahs” due to the fact that they do not have the enough number

of people. When they give up their march, the Bengal Tigers cancel their march, too. It is obvious that these two activist groups exist in opposition to each other. If one of them weakens, the other one weakens automatically.

It is the experience of racism and the barriers this provides to an inclusion in British national identity that provides the impetus for these characters to seek refuge in the collective identity of Islam. Karim finds group solidarity as a powerful way to resist the widespread racist violence toward South Asians in Britain he experienced as youth... As the name suggests The Bengal Tigers emerge as a binary opposite to the British Lions, who employ a local propaganda campaign against the Muslim community. (Roy 3-4)

Throughout the novel, the Lion Hearts and the Bengal Tigers carry on a leaflet war against each other. If one of them says something annoying about the other's culture, the other responds quickly in another leaflet. In addition to this lane that consists of written materials, they try to steal each other's leaflets in order to destroy their plans. They are more similar to children who play a game than activist groups. They hate each other. The Lion Hearts give a leaflet which talks about Islam and tries to blemish it by drawing a dark and unlovable picture of it for the English people and the other immigrants who believe in other religions. From this perspective, it is obvious that the Lion Hearts attack the Bengal Tigers and the Bangladeshi people by aiming at their religion which is very important and sacred for them. They insult at their religion, which is a very bad attitude and unacceptable by any nation or group of people as all religions are sacred and private for the individual. When we compare the Lion Hearts to the Bengal Tigers, the Bengal Tigers do not attack the enemy group's religion and religious sensitivities, which is a good feature of them. They do not insult Christianity or Christians; they do not focus on religion. Their main focus is the alleged white dominant culture that tries

to assimilate their Bengali culture in London. The Lion Hearts give a leaflet which says: “Islam burns with hatred. It gives birth to evil mass murders abroad. In our town, it spawns vicious rioters (Ali 444). The chairman of the Bengal Tigers, Karim comments on this leaflet in the following way: “Islamic terrorists. Islamic terrorists. That is all you hear. You never hear Catholic terrorist, do you? Or Hindu terrorist? What about Jewish terrorist?”(Ali 445). He objects to the all stereotypes about Islam and Muslim people, and adds that why there are no labels such as Catholic terrorists or Jewish terrorists although there come out terrorists from these religions, too. He means that there is prejudice all over the world about Islam and Muslims, and no one dares to challenge this. He thinks that the silence of Muslims will mean that they also accept the claimed situation of being terrorists. He adds that they will show all the people in London that Muslims are strong and peaceful: “When we march, we will show them how wrong they are about Islam. They will see we are strong. And we will show them we are peaceful that Islam is peace” (Ali 451). In order to show their peace and power, they plan a march against the Lion Hearts’ march. Nevertheless, I do not agree with the idea of marching as it is not possible to show the English people their peaceful lives through an act of marching. I believe that marching is not a solution because whether they want it or not, there will be violence between them and the Lion Hearts. Only tolerance and mutual understanding can help them and their racist feelings.

As it is mentioned above, the real reason of these leaflets and activist groups is the drive to include and exclude some people from English society. The Lion Hearts contends that England is their own country, and immigrants, especially Muslims, are dangerous strangers in this land and as soon as possible, they should return to their home country. Their argument is based on the idea that England belongs to English people and immigrants are not English; moreover, they cannot be English as they come from different races. In the core lies the race theory. Karim says that there are lots of people outside full of hatred; but if they march

against them, they will get into a fight. Also, if they march, they will show that they are also full of hatred: “Out there, right now, are people who are twisted with hatred for us and for Islam. They are planning to march right on our doorsteps, and we are not going to let them get away with it” (Ali 456). Karim is in fact very different from the other Bangladeshi people in that he is not an immigrant but a child of an immigrant who was born in England. Unlike the other characters of the novel that plan to return to Bangladesh, he believes that England is his home. Therefore, he and other young people similar to him fight against the Lion Hearts and racism in order to tell them that England is their country as well: “Lion Hearts. They are behind it. We are going to make them pay, man. Just a front. They are only a front. We know everything about them. Everything...This is my country” (Ali 224).

Karim explains that the Bengal Tigers is not a group of violence, and they do not want any trouble; however, they just struggle in order to secure their rights in this country. They just give an answer to the Lion Hearts when they attack their culture or religion. If the Lion Hearts do not disturb the immigrants, especially Bengali immigrants in Brick Lane, the Bengal Tigers will not even exist as there will be no need to fight for rights. Bidhan Roy comments on this situation as it follows: “The emergence of the Bengal Tigers in *Brick Lane* is both produced by, and dependent upon, the aggressiveness of the British Lions” (Roy 4). From this perspective, the Bengal Tigers’ existence can be justified; however, this does not mean that all their acts are right and reasonable. They should keep away from violence under any circumstances. Karim tells that racism has changed its appearance and turned into the clash of cultures and religions. He tells that the Europeans got more sophisticated as they created this new term of clash of cultures and religions. They do not say racism any more, but now they attack the immigrants by claiming that their cultures and religions are different so they clash: “It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind

and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural” (Huntington 22). Karim explains that the new theory is not as true as it seems on the surface because there are still racists all over England:

We do not want no trouble. But if they come asking, yeah, we will give them what they want. Few years ago they would never dare. We was better organized. Now we’s too busy fighting each other. The racists –they cleared out of here ages ago. Thing is they is getting more sophisticated. They don’t say race, they say culture, religion. They put their filthy leaflets through my front door...We are into protecting our local ummah and supporting the global ummah. (Ali 256)

2.2- Immigration and Bangladeshi Diaspora in London

As it has been explained in the beginning part of this chapter on immigration, London is a cosmopolitan and multicultural city where millions of people from different nations and countries live. It is different from the other parts of England as the majority of the immigrants choose to live there. Travers mentions this multicultural structure of London saying that “half of all the UK’s ethnic-minority populations live there” (1). On the surface this may seem as a problem as it is a densely populated city; however, it has many advantages for the city and the whole country in that these differences make London have a multicultural, colored and rich society. Travers observes that immigration has been an enormous economic advantage. He gives an example from a recent study conducted about London. According to the recent study *Multilingual Capital* (edited by Phillip Barker and John Eversley, Battlebridge Publications), there are more than 300 languages spoken in London. When the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development was set up in London, it managed to find employees

speaking 38 different languages from within the capital itself. In addition, it is clear that these different people contributed to the multicultural structure of London a lot. “The impact of new and established immigrants on London’s cuisine, fashion and music cannot be exaggerated” (Travers 3). Travers adds that London will go on taking more immigrants from all over the world and, according to the recent studies on immigrants, they get accustomed to the education system and the social fabric of London more easily now.

Nevertheless London will most likely remain a city of mass international immigration and, therefore, population growth. The desire of new immigrants to get on and to build themselves into their host community is visible in the educational attainment of the children of earlier arrivals in Britain. Some London boroughs have recently had big improvements in their examination results as the result of the performance of the children of previous immigrants. The capital’s economy will continue to benefit in a number of ways from its ever-going ethnic minority and immigrant populations. (Travers 3)

England has a history of immigration for centuries; however, some critics claim that England started receiving immigrant waves just after the Second World War. McLeod focuses on this issue of immigration in his *Beginning Postcolonialism* and says that England had lots of immigrants before World War II and even in the 18th century. As it was a colonizer country and it had lots of colonies all around the world, it had immigrants from its colonies normally. These immigrants came to England to work on ships or sometimes even as slaves in order to work in the English people’s houses. English people claimed to be a homogenous society and still claim so; however, it is an undeniable fact that it had a multicultural structure even centuries ago.

The burgeoning interest in these and other 'Black Britons' living before the decline of Empire is partly a consequence of the work of writers and critics from Britain's diaspora communities who are challenging popular ways of thinking about British history, such as the mistaken view that migration from countries with a history of colonialism has only happened since the 1950s. It is a falsehood to think that Britain and other colonizing nations were culturally and ethnically homogenous before the Second World War. (McLeod 206)

Susheila Nasta mentions Britain's multicultural structure in one of her books, *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* and talks in a parallel way with McLeod. She observes that Britain has had a multicultural society for centuries and this is an undeniable fact: "Britain has had a black and Asian population for well over 400 years, at least as long, that is, as the history of the Empire abroad" (2). She says that as a colonizer country, British Empire colonized lots of countries and, as a natural result of this, it had many immigrants even in the seventeenth century. She states that the East Indian Company, an economic institution of the colonizer, caused many immigrants to come to England at that time. She adds that English people believed and still believe in an imaginary homeland built on the idea of purity of their nation, but their nation was not pure centuries ago.

For Britain's contemporary black and Asian diasporic populations, a diverse population that has emerged out of an imperial history dating back at least as far as the early trading activities of the East India Company in the early seventeenth century has frequently been seen as the repressed and dark side of the nation's unconscious, an eruption figured through successive waves of colored immigrant invasions. Moreover, the more visible presence of a substantial black and Asian

population in Britain during the years following the Second World War has not only challenged embedded conceptions of Englishness, an imagined homeland built on ideas of purity, rootedness and cultural dominance, but also brought into closer view some of the less palatable realities underlying the ancient myth of England as a green and pleasant land. (Nasta 2)

As it has been pointed out above, England started to receive the most significant immigrant waves especially after the Second World War. English government employed them in various work fields. Although this step of the English government was welcoming the new comers, this does not mean that the immigrants did not experience racist attacks and discrimination at that time. The government needed the employees, but the society was not totally ready for the immigrants and their possible effects on their culture. Moreover, some English people believed in the racist theory that defended that the white race was superior to the colored races. Therefore, they could not accept the immigrants and their existence in their country. They did not want them to be a part and citizens of their country, because they thought that colored people could not be English. To them, immigrants were just employees and guests that would work and return to their own countries when the time came. However, it did not go as they expected.

Although migrants pass through the political borders of nations, crossing the frontiers and gaining entrance to new places, such norms and limits can be used to exclude migrants from being accommodated inside the imaginative borders of the nation. The dominant discourses of race, ethnicity, and gender may function to exclude them from being recognized as part of the nation's people. Migrants may well live in new places, but they can be deemed not to belong there and

disqualified from thinking of the new land as their home. Instead, their home is seen to exist elsewhere, back across the border. (McLeod 212)

In *Brick Lane*, the reader sees that the characters are Bangladeshi immigrants. When we look at the history of immigration to England from south Asian countries, it is clear that Bangladeshi people started coming to England early in the seventeenth century when the East Indian Company was effective in India and England. As it has been stated in the previous parts, Bangladesh was a part of India when India was colonized by the British Empire. Therefore, Bangladeshi immigrants, mostly men who worked on ships, came to London centuries ago; however, the majority of the Bangladeshi immigrants arrived after WW II.

Migration to the United Kingdom from the countries of South Asia is tied to the colonial relationship between the two regions. During the nineteenth century, men from Bengal and other regions of British India worked on ships traveling to London. These men would often stay in London for short periods while waiting for a ship to return to British India. Some of these seamen stayed and settled in England, sometimes marrying British women. During WW I and II, Bengalis continued to work on British ships, but many more jumped ship and found work in London and other cities. These new migrants began to develop a South Asian community in the United Kingdom. (Baluja 53)

In the beginning, mostly male immigrants came and their aim was to earn some money and to return to their country, so they did not bring their families with them. However, when they became ill and needed care and when the government changed its immigration policy about immigrants, they began to bring their wives and children to England. They began

to set up communities in London. When we look at the novel, *Brick Lane*, we see that this situation is illustrated with characters and their stories. Chanu, one of the main characters, came to London in the 1970s and started to work for a company. He was alone although he graduated from university and old enough to marry because his aim was to be a big man and then, return to Bangladesh. He would have a family there. However, his plans did not go as he had planned and he became a forty years old man who worked in the same company for years without a promotion. Therefore, he decided to marry someone from Bangladesh, and he wanted some of his relatives there to arrange a marriage with a girl. They found Nazneen's father and they arranged a marriage between Nazneen and Chanu. They married and he brought Nazneen to London in 1980s.

During the 1950s and 1960s, most migrants believed strongly in the ideology of return, that they would make their fortune in the United Kingdom and then return to South Asia prosperous. Consequently, most of these early migrants did not bring their families with them. However changes in immigration policy in the United Kingdom in the 1960s forced East Pakistani (present-day Bangladeshi) males to abandon the myth of return, and they began to bring over their wives and children. (Baluja 53)

Brick Lane, where Irish, Chinese and Jewish immigrants lived before, turned into a settling area of the Bangladeshi community. These Bangladeshi immigrants created a Bengali town here with their different cultural traits such as their different clothes, restaurants, meals, shops, traditions, language and religion. "Brick Lane is to London much as the Lower East Side is to New York City. The Irish live there in its decrepit structures, followed by Eastern European Jews escaping pogroms. Bengali immigrants drove the neighborhood's most recent

demographic flux” (Levisohn 1). In the novel, *Brick Lane*, Ali gives some information about the history of Brick Lane through Chanu’s speeches:

Do you know how many immigrant populations have been here before us? In the eighteenth century the French Protestants fled here, escaping Catholic persecution. They were silk weavers. They made good. One hundred years later, the Jews came. They thrived. At the same time, the Chinese came as merchants. The Chinese are doing as well. (Ali 508-9)

In *Brick Lane* the writer gives a clear description of the living area of the Bangladeshi people through Nazneen’s story. The reader learns a lot about Brick Lane. One day she gets lost in Brick Lane because her sister, Hasina gets lost in Dhaka and she wants to get lost like her; and then, there is a description of Brick Lane from her eyes. Everywhere there are Bengali restaurants which smell of a hundred different spices. There are shops which sell colorful cloths, saris, kameezs and shalwars. There are spice shops which sells lots of different Bengali spices. There are shops that sell Bengali food, fruit and vegetables. In addition, there are people talking in front of shops whether they are customers, clerks, waiters or the shop owners. The streets are crowded and noisy. Especially men are outside. There are women but usually with other female relatives or with their husbands. It is very difficult to say that Brick Lane is a part of London as it has turned into a very different place with the Bangladeshi people’s effects. Then, through the eyes of Nazneen, the reader observes the Dogwood Estate where Nazneen lives. We learn that there are a few more estates where Bengali people live. On the estate, there are Bangladeshi people and some white people who have a low income. They live together on the same buildings. There is no apparent or existing enmity between them; however, the Lion Hearts try to create an atmosphere of war between these people. Then, we see the Bengal Tigers who exist to respond them. We see the Tattoo

lady who has lots of tattoos on her body and who always sits on her balcony and drinks. We learn about the other white neighbor who lives next door and who has lots of boyfriends. Nazneen hears the sounds of her bed. There is a tree in the Dogwood Estate's court which blooms in the spring and reminds Nazneen of her home in Bangladesh. There are lots of children and young people in the court playing soccer or dealing with some other things. Moreover, we learn about the young Bangladeshi people who use drugs in these estates.

If she put her ear to the wall she could hear sounds. The television on. Coughing. Sometimes the lavatory flushing. Someone upstairs scraping a chair. A shouting match below. Everyone in their boxes, counting their possessions. In all her eighteen years, she could scarcely remember a moment that she had spent alone. Until she married. And came to London to sit day after day in this large box with the furniture to dust, and the muffled sounds of private lives sealed away above, below, and around her. (Ali 16)

Like the other immigrant communities, Bangladeshi people faced lots of difficulties at first. They experienced discrimination in every field of life in London. They were employed in the areas where English people did not want to work. They were labeled as Bangladeshi immigrants and put under the same category without looking at their education. From the novel, the reader sees an example of this. Although Chanu has graduated from Dhaka University and he has lots of certificates about several fields, he works in a company. He never tells what he does there because he does not think that he works in a proper job that is compatible with his education. Nazneen, also the reader does not know his working place and his position there. The only piece of information is that the boss' name is Mr. Dalloway and he goes to pubs to drink with his white employees and he does not give a promotion to Chanu despite his long years of experience. In the 1960s, immigrants were within, but not a part of

London's economic and social fabric. Immigrants, especially the ones that were once colonized, were "demonized in terms of race" (McLeod 2). They were not citizens but strangers and there were imaginary barriers with their neighbors. In *Postcolonial London*, McLeod mentions the difficulties that immigrants experienced and observes that these difficulties still exist for the immigrants in some parts of London and in some institutions.

Change is never easy, of course, and many of the changes to London intimated in this book have occurred in the midst of discouraging and difficult conditions. As John Eade reminds us, for example, 'Black and Asian settlers from former British colonies have played a major part in creating London's multicultural society , but it is they who experience some of the highest levels of poverty and discrimination'(Eade 2). The writing of these and other Londoners often bears stark witness to the subaltern lives and fortunes of those rendered other or marginal in a frequently hostile and unwelcoming city where prejudices towards newcomers have been, and still can be, found within employment, housing, government and the Metropolitan Police. (McLeod 4)

Bangladeshi immigrants were and still are stereotyped under the label of the South Asian. This label includes all of the immigrants from the countries in South Asia although they are very different from each other in their languages, cultures and religions. South Asian includes different groups of people such as the Hindu and Buddhist Indians, Muslim Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Chinese. South Asian is the label that includes all the colored minorities from the south Asian countries. This is the new label other than Black.

Like home, the term 'South Asian' is, of course, an invented one. Introduced in Britain in the 1970s as another ethnic label to divide and

rule, yet another physical signifier of racial difference which developed a political purchase following the expulsion of the Ugandan Asians under Idi Amin, it has its own difficulties. Often used in government censuses as a means of distinguishing Britain's black and Asian populations, it inevitably flattens a diverse range of backgrounds which stem from complex religious, linguistic and regional histories. (Nasta 6)

As South Asian as a term is used for lots of different minorities living in Britain it has a great deal of disadvantages for the immigrants. Firstly, it means that the mentioned immigrants are not English and they are South Asian; second, since all their cultural features are ignored, they are all the same for the English people. With this label, English people remind the immigrants their original home and identity. This is an exclusive label that rejects to include the immigrants into English citizenship. Susheila Nasta states that South Asian is an often used term nowadays; therefore, it should be used with great care as it may be a divisive and misleading term:

And whilst the use of the label 'South Asian' has become a convenient taxonomy in contemporary Britain – like the political usage of 'black' in the 1960s and 1970s, used to create a sense of affiliation and solidarity amongst Britain's so-called non-white, black and brown 'minorities' – it can also be divisive and misleading in literary context, when it erases the complexity of significant differences between the writers themselves. (242)

There have been and there are difficulties and problems for the immigrants in London; however, it is necessary that the English government has been changing its attitude towards immigration so that all the people living in England can be equal and English. In his article,

“Multiculturalism and Immigration: A Comparison of the United States, Germany, and the Great Britain”, Christian Joppke examines the history of immigration policies in England. He says that after WWII, English people gave more emphasis to the national identity: “In the postimperial period after WWII, when Britain faced the triple challenge of economic and geopolitical decline and potentially huge postcolonial immigration, Britain refashioned itself from a “civic” to an “ethnic” nation, in which membership became defined by birth and ancestry” (477). This definition of Englishness was not inclusive at all. Then, the British Nationality Act of 1948 solemnly affirmed the existence of a single Commonwealth citizenship in Britain and (post)colonies, with the equal right to enter Britain freely, work, and settle.” (Joppke 478) The Immigration Act of 1971 introduced the infamous “patrial” clause, which tied the right of residency to the existence of at least one British grandparent- an indirect way of saying that Britain preferred white immigrants. Finally, the British Nationality Act of 1981 adjusted nationality law to the restrictive immigration regime already in place, establishing a three tier system of British, dependent territory, and overseas citizenship, with the right of entry and residence for British citizens only. Since it was fused with the creation of boundaries to define and encompass the British nation, “immigration policy was necessarily restrictive and discriminating vis a vis members of its former colonies” (Joppke 478-79). However, as the population of the immigrants increased speedily and the government realized the need to refashion itself due to these immigration waves, they began to change the rules and policies about the immigrants. They needed to be more tolerant and elastic. Then, the English citizenship started to be given to the immigrants on certain conditions. In brief, immigration is important for Britain; especially the new generations of immigrants are very different from the former generations and they feel different. They are mostly British-born. Therefore, Britain has to change. There is a need for a new Britain:

Immigration, one of the key aspects of these public debates about national identity, remains a touchstone for the British press to be symbolic of a direct assault on jolly of England. This is fostered by allusions to the potential flood of illegal immigrants, refugee asylum seekers, and recent changes to work permits. The modified public image of the nation-state was not only due to straightforward immigration. The British Parliament has passed increasingly restrictive immigration policies throughout the last thirty years. Rather, the demographic growth of the minority populations has occurred because of the birth of second and third generations. Demographically this has changed the character of the Asian minority population to be younger and British born. Thus, the nature of who constitutes the Asian minority has also shifted since the postwar migration. Currently, it consists of a large number of British-born youths who are changing and challenging the public face of Britain in various ways. As minority populations have grown, one official response to the diversity was to take up a policy of multiculturalism. (Raj 187-88)

The English government took some important steps about the issue of discrimination as well. The English government forbade all forms of discrimination against the immigrants. They aimed at creating a more peaceful and equal environment for immigrants. As the government, it was a necessity for them to protect their rights as well as the other citizens. They started to remove all the barriers in front of equality in England.

The first Race Relations Act of 1965 set up a statutory board, with quite modest legal powers, to work against racially motivated

discrimination in public facilities like pubs, shops, and the like...A second Race Relations Act of 1968 strengthened the powers of the board to conduct investigations on discriminations in employment, housing, and the provision of goods and services. Finally, the third of Race Relations Act of 1976 outlawed also indirect forms of discrimination, and established the Commission for Racial Equality to conduct formal investigations and advise the government on policy. (Joppke 480-81)

With these new regulations, England turned from a nation state into a multicultural state where English, Latinos, Muslims, Asians, Africans, gays or lesbians live together respecting each other. As Joppke defines, multiculturalism is a thoroughly modern phenomenon in that it reflects the collapse of social hierarchies and the precarious nature of identity in an individualized social structure where traditional, identity-providing milieus of class, religion, or region have melted away (449). Still there may be some exceptions, such as some protests or attacks; however, this does not reflect the majority. England aims at a multicultural society, a society in which Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, whites, coloreds, and blacks live and work together, each has its own faith and identity, but all share a common bond of being British, by choice or by birth. As a liberal state, England has preferred to be a multicultural country. It has chosen to respect all the differences it contains in its body. “Liberal states have multiculturalism, because they have given up the idea of assimilating their members beyond basic procedural commitments” (Joppke 486). Joppke adds that cultural differences are not the business of the private initiative, but they should be the business of the state. He remarks that cultural differences are to be publically recognized and instituted (487). He says that England is a multicultural country with all its different immigrants, cultures and colors, and multiculturalism paves the way for a peaceful life in

England despite all the differences. In brief, multiculturalism is the antidote for racist discrimination in England.

Official multiculturalism has expressed itself in a multitude of legal provisions, such as partially exempting Hindus and Muslims from Britain's strict marriage rules, allowing Sikh boys to wear turbans and Asian girls to wear shalwar at school, or – curiously – excusing Sikhs from wearing crash helmets on motorcycles provided they are wearing turbans. A short walk along East London's Brick Lane or Southall's South Road conveys authentic images of Islamabad or the Punjab, with Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh men, women, and children in their traditional dresses, the sight of Mosques, and exotic smells and oriental music from the bazaars and tea houses. Clearly, there is no presumption for these ethnic groups to become British in any other sense than ownership of a British passport. (Joppke 481)

Now I want to discuss the Bangladeshi diaspora in London and their identity problems. First of all, I want to define what a diaspora is. A diaspora is a community of people living together in one country who acknowledge that the old country always has some claim to their loyalty and emotions. Usually they have a past migration history, and even the new generations are influenced by this history. Diasporas are therefore composite communities. When we look at this definition of diaspora, it is certain that Bangladeshi community living in London makes up the Bangladeshi diaspora because it includes the immigrants from Bangladesh and their children. The important thing about them is that they have a migration history. In addition, they remember their days in Bangladesh and most of them have a desire to return to Bangladesh one day.

It is tempting to think of diaspora peoples as migrant peoples, and indeed many living in diasporas certainly are. However, generational differences are important here. Children born to migrant peoples in Britain may automatically qualify for a British passport, but their sense of identity borne from living in a diaspora community will be influenced by the past migration history of their parents or grandparents. That is why it is more accurate to talk about diaspora identities rather than migrant identities; not all of those who live in a diaspora, or share an emotional connection to the old country, have experienced migration. This also should make us aware that diasporas are composite communities. (McLeod 207)

Bengali people go on conducting their traditions and cultural activities in London in order to preserve their Bengali identities; however, this does not mean that they do not adapt to the new environment there. Although it is difficult, they try to adapt to the new environment, which is inevitable for them. “Migrants tend to arrive in new places with baggage; both in the physical sense of possessions or belongings, but also the less tangible matter of beliefs, traditions, customs, behaviors and values” (McLeod 211). In *Brick Lane*, the reader sees the Bangladeshi diaspora living in Brick Lane in South London. They are a community who lives together in the same area. They have a history of a past migration. Throughout the novel, the reader comes across the word immigration and immigrants, especially in Chanu’s speeches. This diaspora has younger generations. Chanu and Nazneen are immigrants, but their daughters are the ones that were born in England. There are lots of young people like their daughters. Although they have not experienced migration themselves, they are still affected by the history of migration. However, they have certain differences from their parents. Their approach to identity problems and their concept of home differs from their

parents'. This Bangladeshi diaspora lives in London, but they have serious problems. They suffer from unemployment or proper employment, poverty, housing, ignorance and drug addiction. Moreover, they experience some attacks on their culture and religion. Karim, one of the important characters of the novel, says that he was being chased after school when he was younger. In addition, the reader sees that one day in front of the school Sorupa's daughter's hijab is pulled off: "Sorupa's daughter was the first, but not the only one. Walking in the street, on her way to college, she had her hijab pulled off. Razia wore her Union Jack sweatshirt and it was spat on" (Ali 400). McLeod defines diasporas in his *Beginning Postcolonialism* and argues that diasporas are not free from problems: "Diaspora communities are not free from problems. Too often diaspora peoples have been ghettoized and excluded from feeling they belong to the new country, and suffered their cultural practices to be mocked and discriminated against" (208).

2.3- Home Concept, Going Home Syndrome and Identity Problems

For Asian Diasporas, one of the most important issues is the concept of home. As some of them are immigrants and some of them are the children of the immigrants, they experience a problem of defining their place in the society in which they live, and, as a result, defining their home. It is a very difficult and confusing act to define one's home if he is an immigrant living in another country. Nevertheless, in general terms, home can be defined as a place where someone feels secure and welcome. Home can be described as a place to which someone feels a belonging.

Let us probe deeper the ways in which home is imagined in diaspora communities. The concept of home often performs an important function in our lives. It can act as a valuable means of orientation by giving us a sense of our place in the world. It tells us where we

originated from and where we belong. As an idea it stands for shelter, stability, security and comfort (although actual experiences of home may well fail to deliver these promises). To be at home is to occupy a location where we are welcome, where we can be with people very much like ourselves. But what happens to the idea of home for migrants who live far from the lands of their birth? How might their travels impact upon the ways home is considered? (McLeod 210)

When we look at the novel, there are certain examples about this issue of home. First of all, Chanu is the most remarkable character about this issue. He has a degree in English Language and Literature from Dhaka University. He migrates to England and his ambition is to become a big man here and then to return to his country as a successful man. He spends many years in London. He works in different irrelevant jobs. He criticizes the other Bengali people for being ignorant, uneducated, and uncivilized. He says that they do all the donkey works in England. He looks down on his own people. He says that English people are more civilized. However, when his dreams turn out to be a disappointment for him towards the end of the novel, he starts saying that English people are racist and he decides to return to Bangladesh with his family. This situation, in fact, shows that he has a problem in defining home. Although he spends many years in England, when he realizes that he has not been successful, he decides that he should return home to Bangladesh. The reader sees that at the end of the novel, he goes to Bangladesh, but he is not courageous enough to confess that he is not happy there as well because Bangladesh is not the same place of his childhood and youth. It is different from the place in his dreams. In his book, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, Avtar Brah defines home as a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no-return, even if it is possible to visit the

geographical territory that is seen as the place of origin (192). McLeod comments on the concept of home for the diasporic people in a similar way:

Migration alters how migrants think about their home and host countries...different, imaginary land which is discontinuous with the real location. It exists primarily in the mind, and no act of actual, physical return can facilitate it. The idea of the home country becomes split from the experience of returning home. (McLeod 209)

Nazneen, the main character of the novel, has a different home concept from that of her husband's. She comes from Bangladesh to England when her father arranges a marriage between Chanu and her. She has spent her childhood in Bangladesh. She has come to England when she is 18 years old. She gets accustomed to the life in London. Although she experiences some difficulties related with living in a city because she has lived in a village in Bangladesh, she struggles to overcome these difficulties throughout the novel. At the end of the novel, Nazneen decides not to return to Bangladesh with Chanu because she makes up her mind that England is her home and she will stay there with her daughters. Like Chanu, she experiences the feeling of displacement; but unlike Chanu, she copes with it. One of the factors that help her to overcome the feeling of displacement is her lover, Karim. When they start a relationship, he becomes a role model for her in having a place in the world. He tells her that England is his home and he will defend his rights here. She thinks that he has a place in the world and this makes him different: "And most of all she thought of what he had that she and Hasina and Chanu sought but could not find. The thing that he had and inhabited so easily. A place in the world" (Ali 283).

Migrancy constructs modes of existences and ways of seeing that last beyond the actual journey between countries. Migrancy can expose the migrant and their children to displacement, fragmentation and

discontinuity. Home is a problematic concept, both in the past and in the present. Living in between can be painful, perilous and marginalizing. Migrants and their children occupy different positions due to generational differences, but they can have similar experiences of feeling rootless and displaced. The dominant narratives of belonging and identity cannot accommodate those who live in-between. But new, transnational models of identity and belonging are possible which, in Paul Gilroy's terms, challenge the certainty of roots with the contingency of routes. (McLeod 216)

Karim is another important character on the issue of home. He differs from Chanu and Nazneen in that he was born in London. He thinks in a different way from them because he thinks that England is his home. When Nazneen talks about Bangladesh as their home, Karim objects and corrects her that England is his home: "This is my country" (Ali 224). His father is an immigrant that comes to England like Chanu, and he works as a bus conductor for 25 years. Then, he retires. He always calls his son and tells him not to make any trouble. It means that he does not want his son to get involved with the Bengal Tigers. Karim says that his father has not done any trouble for anyone but just for himself. Reactions to racism have changed for the youth. They do not ignore it; they fight against it. Their fathers, mothers, grandparents maybe ignored the bad attitudes and insults but new generations are different. They are not silent; they have an opinion and they speak up their opinions. They fight for their equal rights in Britain. Karim is one of them.

The children's reactions to their parents' strategy of silence are connected to their understanding of racism, xenophobia, nationality, and belonging. Youths experiment with fighting racism at many

different levels, particularly because they have taken on board their parents' admonitions to be overachievers. (Raj 151)

Karim states that making trouble is not necessarily a bad thing. He thinks that a man should struggle to do something in this country to protect his rights. He says that Bangladeshi people should not let anyone to look down on themselves. It is clear that the new generations of the Bangladeshi Diaspora is different in that they are not silent; they speak and question. However, the first generation was silent and obedient. Even they were afraid. Although the first generation consists of immigrants who are here but whose souls are at home, the new generations feel that they belong to England. Chanu makes an important comment on the new generations of Bangladeshi society and says that the young ones will be the ones who will decide: "We always kept quiet. The young ones do not want to keep quiet anymore" (Ali 276). Karim says that immigrants should not turn the other cheek any more (Ali 248). In brief, Karim feels that England is his country although his father is a Bengali immigrant. Karim has self-confidence as he feels that he belongs to the country while most of the immigrants do not have this feeling of belonging. Bangladesh seems distant to him although it is his origin. It is clear that home concept is different for the immigrants and their children:

Migrants...with their childhood memories of a distant place, have a certain degree of interior knowledge no matter how fragmentary and fissured it may be. But to the children of migrants, the interior knowledge of a distant place is unavailable. Thus, their reflections about these places in terms of home are often differently constructed.

(McLeod 212-13)

Shahana is another important character in *Brick Lane*. She is Chanu and Nazneen's daughter. She is important in this novel as she symbolizes the new generation of the immigrants in London. From this point, she is similar to Karim because they are both new

generation Bangladeshis. Although Chanu tries very hard to impose on her his own feelings and opinions about Bengali identity and Bangladesh, she does not believe in what he says and he cannot control her. She is a child of eleven or twelve, but she has her own opinions about England and Bangladesh. She is aware of the fact that she is a part of the Bangladeshi Diaspora in London because she is a child of an immigrant; however, her opinions about England differ a lot from that of her family's because she believes that England is her home. On their sightseeing tour in London, a man asks them where they are from. In fact, "Where are you from?" "is an important question because it implies that you are non-British" (Raj 2). As an answer, Chanu tells that they are from Bangladesh; however, Shahana objects and says that she is from London: "I am from London" (Ali 318). Shahana thinks that she is a part of London. She feels at home in London unlike her father.

'Where are you from?' is a question of ethnicity and difference, especially when the identity connections between people and places are destabilized, become more problematic, or are entirely undone. What happens when people move? Or their ancestors moved? For those who migrate, move, or are born after the fact of movement, whether the children of refugees, migrants, diplomats, military, or expatriates, the question can be insidious and problematic. (Raj 2)

Bangladesh seems very odd and far away from her home concept because there is no electricity, no internet, no computer, no sink. When Chanu starts talking about going home, she becomes very angry and unhappy, because for her, home is England. In fact, this is logical in that she was born here in London and she has never been to Bangladesh before. She learns everything about Bangladesh from the Bengali community in Brick Lane, from books, and naturally from her family. She talks to her sister, Bibi and warns her that life in Bangladesh is very difficult and primitive: "In Bangladesh, you will have to brush your teeth with a twig.

They do not have toothbrushes. You know, Bibi, they do not have toilet paper either. You will have to pour water on your bottom to clean it” (Ali 434). Her father, Chanu wants to teach them the history of Bangladesh, and some Bengali poetry. He also wants to teach them about their Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim origins. Therefore, he makes long speeches and gives them tasks for memorizing poems from Tagore and some other important Bengali poets. Shahana does not want to learn them and thinks that it is meaningless to learn such kinds of things, but her mother, Nazneen wants her to obey her father. Nazneen also says that she will buy her new earrings and clothes if she obeys, so she obeys.

Shahana did not want to listen to Bengali classical music. Her written Bengali was shocking. She wanted to wear jeans. She hated her kameez and spoiled her entire wardrobe by pouring paint on them. If she could choose between baked beans and dal it was no contest. When Bangladesh was mentioned she pulled a face. She did not know and would not learn that Tagore more than poet and Nobel laureate, and no less than the true father of her nation. Shahana did not care.

Shahana did not want to go back home. (Ali 188-89)

Chanu reads a piece of information about the happiest nation on earth loudly so that Shahana can hear it and be influenced by it; however, she does not care what her father reads and deals with television or her books. She does not believe in such kinds of news because she learns from her friends that Bengali people are not happy in Bangladesh because there is poverty, famine, flood, ignorance, inequality between men and women, and inequality between the rich and the poor. One day she and her sister, Bibi talk about Bangladesh, and she warns Bibi about the traditions and the possible dangers waiting them there: “Just wait until you are in Bangladesh. You will be married off in not time. And your husband will keep you locked in a little smelly room and make you weave carpet all day long” (Ali 431).Although

Chanu tries hard to make her believe in the idea that Bangladesh is a very beautiful and peaceful country, Shahana does not believe. She has a very different and significant standpoint. Since she is a child of an immigrant, she has a more objective perspective about the comparison of Bangladesh and England.

You see all these people here look down on us as peasants know nothing of history. In the sixteenth century, Bengal was called the Paradise of Nations. These are our roots. Do they teach these things in the school here? Does Shahana know about the Paradise of Nations? All she knows about is flood and famine. Whole bloody country is just a bloody basket case to her. (Ali 194)

Shahana does not want to go to Bangladesh but her father decides that they will all return to Bangladesh. Chanu makes this decision alone and does not ask Nazneen or his daughters if they have different opinions about going home. As Bangladeshi society is a patriarchal society, the father gives the decision without asking the other members of the family despite the fact that he claims to be an educated father who is different from other Bengali men, “the ignorant types”. He says that “the children will rot here in England so they have to go” in order to protect them (Ali 191). Chanu thinks that just children and young people rot in this English culture, but what about the adults? If the young ones rot, it means that the adults may rot as well. There is a difference of generation but this does not necessarily mean that only the young ones rot and the adults are secure. When we look at Chanu and his personality, it is clear that he has identity problems because he cannot define himself and his position in this society clearly. When you ask immigrants the important question “Where are you from?” they answer in a different way each time and according to their situation: “When my interlocutors are asked this question in Britain, they are expected to reply, “India”; on the other hand, when asked the same question in India, they reply,

“Britain” (Raj 2). Bangladeshis usually do not feel that they belong to England; on the other hand, they do not feel that they belong to Bangladesh. They are strangers in both places. Chanu is one of them.

For migrants, the question behind “Where are you from?” is “When are you going back?” The implication is that the migrant is a perpetual sojourner and that the children of migrants can never be anything but a child of an immigrant. The movement is never erased, but rather is constantly being reinscribed. (Raj 200)

In the beginning, Chanu likes and appreciates English culture. However, towards the end of the novel, he changes dramatically because he cannot carry out his goals and he becomes an unsuccessful man. Then, he sticks to his Bengali identity more. When we look at his character throughout the novel, we often see that he has conflicts within himself. Chanu changes from situation to situation. If he sees a Lion Hearts leaflet he tells his daughters to wear proper things; if he sees some women in hijab he tells them to wear skirts. Chanu does not know his place in this world. He is not Bengali or Londoni. He has no fixed identity and place (Ali 283-4). He is not a religious person; he does not send his daughters to madrassah; moreover he criticizes the teaching of the Qur’an in Arabic; he does not pray or read the Qur’an; even he drinks beer; he states that Bangladesh was Hindu and Buddhist before it was Muslim. However, after the September 11 attacks, he defends his Muslim identity loudly. On his visit to Dr. Azad’s house, Chanu says that drinking alcohol is a part of the culture here although it is something bad in Bangladesh, and he drinks beer when Mrs. Azad drinks. On the other hand, when he sees some Bengali young men who have a drinking problem, he criticizes them harshly. Chanu conflicts with himself. His behaviors and opinions about some things are not certain; they change according to the situation. He does not feel good as he has inner conflicts. He drinks but he does not want his children to drink. He gets angry with them

when they wear jeans. Then, is not wearing jeans a part of London culture? He says something and acts the other way.

You see it is part of the culture here. It is so ingrained in the fabric of the society. Back home, if you drink you risk being an outcast. In London, if you do not drink you risk the same thing. That is when it becomes dangerous, and when they start so young they can easily end up alcoholic. For myself and for your wife, there is no harm done. (Ali 112)

Shahana says that she will run away if they want to take her with them to Bangladesh: “I am going to run away if he tries to get me on an aeroplane, I will bite his hand and run” (Ali 394). She tells her mother that she understands her better and that she does not want to go. She wants her mother to talk to her father so that he can change his opinion. When her father is angry with her, he says that she should change her opinion and join them; otherwise, he will beat her. She answers him back and says that she did not want to be born in England: “I didn’t ask to be born here” (Ali 189). There is always a battlefield at home between Chanu, Shahana and Bibi because Chanu does not want to understand that his daughters are different from him in that they go to English schools, they know English culture better, they were born in England, they feel different about England, they feel that they belong to England. He wants them to be like him, which is impossible.

Nazneen thought about it...The eternal three-way torture of daughter-father-daughter. How they locked themselves apart at this very close distance. Bibi, silently seeking approval, always hungry. Chanu, quivering with his own needs, always offended. Shahana, simmering in –worst of all things – perpetual embarrassment, implacably angry.

It was like walking through a field of snakes. Nazneen was worried at every step. (Ali 216)

Chanu is very determined in his decision to go home. It is like an obsession for him. He tells Nazneen that the children can adapt to anything or any new environment implying their plan to go home; however, he is not aware that Shahana is not a child anymore and she does not want to go. Nazneen also does not want to go, either: “Children can adjust to anything. The place is immaterial. They will make their own place within the place” (Ali 403). Chanu thinks that the children will easily adapt to their new home, Bangladesh. He does not see that they belong to England. Nazneen is aware of her daughters’ feelings, so she tries to be reasonable in her decision about going. She examines all the possibilities: “If they went to Dhaka she could be with Hasina. Every nerve ending strained towards it is if the sheer physical desire could transport her. But the children would be unhappy. Bibi, perhaps, would recover quickly. Shahana would never forgive her” (Ali 191). She tries to give the most reasonable decision about the issue of going home, although it will be very difficult for her.

Her first thought was that she would go to Dhaka with her husband and her children. It would be the right thing to do, and she would be with Hasina again. Doubts assailed on her on all sides. The children would be miserable. Shahana would never adjust. What would happen to Chanu in Dhaka? If his dreams fell apart, what net would catch them all? How would they live? How would they eat? Would it not be better to stay here and send more money to Hasina and help her that way? Maybe even bring her over here. But if Chanu went ahead and left without them, then what? Would she marry Karim? Did she want to marry him? It would be difficult for the girls. And it would be impossible simply to spurn him. (Ali 443)

In the end, Shahana runs away in order not to go to Bangladesh. Nazneen tries to find her and it takes a long time for her to find her. When she finds Shahana, she tells her that they will not go with Chanu to Bangladesh, and if they want to do something else, they will decide she should stay here with her daughters even if Chanu goes. Shahana gets very happy. They tell Chanu that they do not want to go to Bangladesh; however, Chanu says that it is his last chance and he has to go. He goes and Shahana comments that he father will come back to England one day and he will be happier then: “We don’t have to go. Do we, Amma? He could come back. And when he comes back he will be a lot happier” (Ali 527).

Now I want to discuss the “going home syndrome” in *Brick Lane* (Ali 24). In the novel, the reader witnesses that Chanu has an obsession with the idea of returning to Bangladesh. As he grows older and his plans turn out to be a failure in England, he wants to return to Bangladesh in order to use his last chance there. He thinks that Dhaka will be his last chance in order to succeed in something: “All these years I dreamed of going home a Big Man. Only now, when it is nearly finished for me, I realized what is important. As long as I have my family with me, my wife, my daughters, I am as strong as any man alive” (Ali 524). At the end of the novel, he realizes that the most important thing in his life is not to become a big man but to have a family. His plan is to return to Dhaka, build a house there, have a good job and live with his family. England, once the country of his dreams, but now the country of his failure and disappointment, makes living very difficult for him because with each breath he takes, it reminds him his failure. He wants to get away from this land, and he wants to be welcomed in a land where he may feel belonging and comfort of mind. He believes that returning to Bangladesh will cure him. In addition, he does not want his daughters to experience the same difficulties that he has experienced. One day Chanu and Dr. Azad have a talk on the problems of the Bengali community in London and the issue of going home. Chanu says that he will not risk his children in such a corrupt city, so he plans to go home. Dr.

Azad tells him that he calls this situation with a special name, the “going home syndrome” and defines it for Chanu: “This is another disease that afflicts us. I call it Going Home Syndrome. Do you know what that means...They will never save enough to go back. Every year they think, just one more year. But whatever they save, it is never enough” (Ali 24). Then, he adds that once he thought about going home himself, but now he does not think about it anymore: “I used to think all the time of going back. And now, I don’t know. I just don’t know” (Ali 25). Chanu listens to Dr. Azad and makes his own comment on the issue of the going home syndrome. His comment is very ironic:

Our community is not educated about this, and much else besides. But for my part, I do not plan to risk these things happening to my children. We will go back before they get spoiled...It is natural. These people are basically peasants and they miss the land. The pull of the land is stronger even than the pull of blood...They don’t ever really leave home. Their bodies are here but their hearts are back there. And anyway, look how they live: just re-creating villages here. (Ali 24)

In the passage above, it is clearly visible that Chanu has conflicting opinions and feelings about the issue of going home. In the same passage he criticizes the Bangladeshi people who want to return Bangladesh; and then, he expresses that he also wants to go back home to Bangladesh in order to protect his children. Besides, although he talks about the re-created villages, he lives in one of them, Brick Lane. In fact, for Chanu, going home means more than just going home. Going home means escaping from all the disappointments and failures in London. It means getting away from all the inner and outer conflicts. It means to make a new start in another place where he may feel better as he is more educated than the majority. Chanu creates his own Bangladesh in his mind. While creating it, naturally he

benefits from his childhood and youth memories, but he puts more from himself and his dreams.

It is clear that 'home', like migrancy itself, is a perpetually shifting concept. It is both here and there, past and present, local and global, traditional and modern. It may provoke a referential construction of a past lost, but may also be a deliberately invented construct, an imaginary homeland built on shifting sands of memory, extending and reshaping the boundaries of both the familiar and the strange, whether encountered at 'home' or 'abroad'.(Nasta 244)

Although the people in Bangladesh queue in order to come to England to escape the poverty there, Chanu imagines a Bangladesh where everyone is happy. He believes in the piece of news about the happiest nation on earth because in the Bangladesh of his dreams, everyone is happy. It is the country of his last hopes. It is the country where he has not experienced a failure. It is a new page. It is like his mother's hug for him. However, the reader and also Nazneen learn through the letters of Hasina that everything is not good there: "A thousand thoughts crushed into Nazneen's skull. Dhaka would be a disaster. Shahana would never forgive her. Chanu would be finished. It was not even going home. She had never been there. Hasina was in Dhaka, but the city of her letters was an ugly place, full of dangers" (Ali 466). Women are oppressed by men. Women are beaten and acid is poured onto them. Women are excluded from the society if they are divorced or widows. The government is not stable. There is corruption in the government and the police. The Police force is corrupt. University professors sell exam questions. There are no proper houses. There is an electricity problem. Briefly, the real Bangladesh is the opposite of the Bangladesh in Chanu's mind.

This disjunction between past and present, between here and there, makes home seem far-removed in time and space, available for return

only through an act of imagination. Speaking of Indian migrants, Rushdie writes that ‘our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind’ (Rushdie 10). In this formulation, home becomes primarily a mental construct built from the incomplete odds and ends of memory that survive from the past. It exists in a fractured, discontinuous relationship with the present. (McLeod 211)

Chanu’s plan to go home becomes more and more important for him day by day because he does not want to spend one more day in England. He teaches his daughters Bangladeshi literature and history so that they can adapt easily. “For five days he had been teaching his daughters to recite ‘My Golden Bengal’. This evening they were to perform the entire poem. Chanu was taking his family back home and Tagore was the first step of the journey” (Ali 187). He regularly reminds his family that the day of their return comes closer. “The migrant occupies a displaced position. The imagination becomes more and more the primary location of home but the mind is notoriously unreliable and capricious” (McLeod 211). Chanu is very happy and excited due to this plan of returning, but still he does not ask the other members of his family what they think of it. He resigns from his job with Mr. Dalloway as he cannot get promotion, and he becomes unemployed. In order to save the money for the plane tickets, he lets Nazneen to work, so he buys a sewing machine for her: “As you are all aware, we have decided-as a family- to return home. Your mother is doing everything possible to facilitate our dream through the old and honorable craft of tailoring. And don’t forget it was we who invented all these weaves of cloths- muslin and damask and

every damn thing” (Ali 220). Later, he finds a job as a taxi driver. He says that all his opinions about England have changed and now he only focuses on going home:

You see all my life I have struggled. And for what? What good has it done? I have finished with all that. Now, I just take the money. I say thank you. I count it. You see, when the English went to our country, they did not go to stay. They went to make money, and the money they made, they took it out of the country. They never left home. Mentally. Just taking money out. And that is what I am doing now. What else can you do? (Ali 227)

Another remarkable character on the issue of going home is Razia, one of Nazneen’s friends in *Brick Lane*. She can be defined to be the exact opposite of Chanu although she is a woman. She is not an educated person, but she is open to changes and improvements in her life. She has also economic problems because her husband works in a butcher shop and sends all the money he earns to Bangladesh to his relatives and to some religious people so that they can build a mosque there. As he sends all the money, his family suffers. In addition, he does not let Razia to work to support her family. One day her husband dies in a work accident and she stays alone with her two children. She can and has to work in order to support her family. She never thinks of going to Bangladesh because she knows that widows are not appreciated so much there. They usually have to live with their husband’s family and be a servant in the house for the rest of the family. One example of such widows is Mumtaz, Nazneen’s aunt. When her husband dies, she comes to her brother’s house to live with his family. Razia knows what may happen in Bangladesh, so she stays in England with her children. Moreover, her opinions about the home concept and English society are different. She feels that she belongs to England and England is her home. She states that she feels secure and free here. In one of their talks, Nazneen talks about Chanu’s criticisms about the English society. Razia tells

Nazneen that he should not complain a lot about England, and if he complains, he should not have come: “Ask him this, then. Is it better than our own country, or is it worse? If it is worse, then why is he here? If it is better, why does he complain?” (Ali 70). She is a rational woman. She knows what she is and what she is not. She does not have big ambitions and expectations from this country and this society. She wants to give her children a good life and education. She starts a sewing business and becomes successful enough because she can support her family and even she gives job to Nazneen, Jorina and Hanufa. She talks to Nazneen about Bangladesh and says that English people give them money, houses and take their children to school if they do not work, but they do not help them and give them such kind of opportunities in Bangladesh and she adds: “Tell me this. If everything back home is so damn wonderful, what are all these crazy people doing queuing up for visa?” (Ali 468). Everyone in the Bengali community finds her a bit weird as she is different from the other women with her self confidence, short hair, pants and union jack sweatshirt; however, she is happy with the life she has in England. She starts learning English in college. She learns English not only to understand her children but also to stand on her feet and communicate with all the other people in England.

CHAPTER THREE: CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS AND *BRICK LANE*

3.1- The Theory of the Clash of Civilizations

“Civilization is a cultural entity” (Huntington 24). It can be described as the total of traditions, customs, culture, language, history and religion of a group of people. A country, a nation, several countries, or just a group of people can create a civilization. In the world, there exist lots of different civilizations. A few examples of civilizations are the Islamic civilization, Western civilization and Hindu civilization. Each civilization has certain characteristics. Civilization has become one of the most important issues in today’s world politics because one of the well-known Western writers, Samuel P. Huntington has put forward a theory called the Clash of Civilizations to the world’s agenda. In his essay, “The Clash of Civilizations?” he claims that there are different civilizations in the world, and these civilizations will be the cause of the conflicts in the modern world and also the cause of a possible Third World War: “The next world war, if there is one, will be a war between civilizations” (39). It is clear that Huntington was influenced by Bernard Lewis’ article, “The Roots of Muslim Rage”; because Lewis was the first to use the term, clash of civilizations.

We are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilizations- the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both.

(Lewis 60)

In this chapter, I will define Huntington's thesis and give detailed information about it. Then, I will discuss the criticisms that Huntington's thesis has received. I will examine the thesis of *Dialogue of Civilizations* and I will analyze this clash theory in Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane*. First of all, I want to start with Huntington's definition of civilization. He argues that civilization is the highest cultural grouping of a people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have.

What do we mean when we talk of a civilization? A civilization is a cultural entity. Villages, regions, ethnic groups, nationalities, religious groups, all have distinct cultures at different levels of cultural heterogeneity...A civilization is thus the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species. It is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by the subjective self-identification of people. (Huntington 24)

Huntington says that civilizations may involve a large number of people, as with China, or a very small number of people, such as the Anglophone Caribbean. A civilization may include several nation states, as is the case of Western, Latin American and Arab civilizations, or only one, as is the case of Japanese civilization. Civilizations obviously blend and overlap, and may include subcivilizations (Huntington 24). Huntington's definition of civilization and his opinions about the size of a civilization seem good; however, the problem starts when he counts the civilizations and begins to classify countries under the headings of these civilizations.

In *A Study of History*, Arnold Toynbee identified 21 major civilizations; only six of them exist in the contemporary world.

Civilization identity will be increasingly important in the future, and the world will be shaped in large measure by the interactions among seven or eight major civilizations. These include Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilization. The most important conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating these civilizations from one another. (Huntington 25)

He refers to Arnold Toynbee's identified 21 civilizations, and adds that just 6 of them exist today. Then, he says that there are seven or eight civilizations in today's world. I believe that civilization is an abstract concept and it is very difficult to define and classify them because it is very difficult and nearly impossible to examine all of the countries and also the groupings of people in the world and their civilizations. Huntington's claim that there are seven or eight civilizations is not reasonable. Also, it is clear that although he tries to give an exact number, he himself is not sure about the certain number and this statement shows it: "These include Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilization". There can and do exist more than seven or eight civilizations in the world. As a civilization is the highest cultural grouping of people, it is certain that there are hundreds of different cultures on earth, which paves the way for the possibility of more than eight civilizations. Huntington's classification of the countries under the mentioned civilizations is more problematic in that he puts several different countries under the same category. For example, he argues that Islamic civilization includes lots of different countries such as Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Indonesia, Pakistan and some other Muslim countries; however, when we look at these countries, it is clear that they cannot be categorized under the same heading because they have important distinctive features. They have really different cultures from each other although they are all Muslim countries. One more example

about these categories is that Huntington puts Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tadjikistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan in the same category despite the fact that they differ seriously from each other.

Culture and religion also form the basis of the Economic Cooperation Organization, which brings together ten non-Arab Muslim countries: Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tadjikistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. One impetus to the revival and expansion of this organization, founded originally in the 1960s by Turkey, Pakistan and Iran, is the realization by the leaders of several of these countries that they had no chance of admission to the European Community. (Huntington 28)

Huntington's Clash of Civilizations theory is based on the differences between civilizations. He means the differences between cultures and religions. At the beginning of his essay, he talks about the post-Cold War years and says that before the Cold War, there were conflicts inside the Western civilization. However, after the Cold War, the conflicts moved and changed their places. He claims that in today's world the conflicts will occur between different cultures and religions, that is to say, between civilizations. In his claim, he makes a more specific point and adds that these conflicts will occur between Western civilization and non-Western civilizations because non-Western civilizations will get more powerful after the Cold War and they will join the West in shaping world affairs and relations.

These conflicts between princes, nation states and ideologies were primarily conflicts within Western civilization, "Western civil wars", as William Lind has labeled them. This was as true of the Cold War as it was of the world wars and the earlier wars of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. With the end of the Cold War,

international politics moves out of its Western phase, and its centerpiece becomes the interaction between the West and non-Western civilizations and among non-Western civilizations. In the politics of civilizations, the peoples and governments of non-Western civilizations no longer remain the objects of history as targets of Western colonialism but join the West as movers and shapers of history. (Huntington 23)

Huntington claims that until the Cold War, the benefits of the countries and nations had been effective in their relations and conflicts with other countries and nations; however, in today's modern world, the benefits are put away on a shelf. In this modern world, not the benefits but the differences will be effective in the relations, conflicts and wars. He says that differences among civilizations are not only real; but also they are basic. Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, languages, cultures, traditions and, most important, religions. The people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husbands and wives, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy (25). He claims that these differences are the product of centuries, so they will not soon disappear. He states that they are far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes (25). Huntington contends that during the Cold War the world was divided into the First, Second and Third World countries; however, in the post-Cold War era, it is more meaningful to divide countries according to their different cultures and religions. According to Huntington, the differences between civilizations will cause all the conflicts in the modern world. In the post-Cold War period, differences will cause the clash of civilizations.

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future. Conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase in the evolution of conflict in the modern world. (Huntington 22)

According to Huntington, civilization is a cultural entity that can change: “People can and do redefine their identities and, as a result, the composition and boundaries of civilizations change” (24). In fact, Huntington’s this statement is conflicting. If people do redefine their identities and boundaries of civilizations do change, how can he define eight civilizations clearly? If civilization is a cultural and abstract entity that can and does change, is it possible to define easily the existing civilizations in the world? I do not believe that it is possible to categorize countries and civilizations easily. Huntington’s drawing a world map in which he shows the civilizations and the borders of civilizations is unacceptable and hard to believe: “But Huntington looks past all that. The crooked and meandering alleyways of the world are straightened out. With a sharp pencil and a steady hand Huntington marks out where one civilization ends and the wilderness of the “other” begins” (Ajami 2). In addition, while defining the features of civilizations he argues that civilizations are dynamic: “Civilizations are dynamic; they rise and fall; they divide and merge. And, as any student of history knows, civilizations disappear and are buried in the sands of time” (24). This is another conflicting statement with the rest of the theory because if civilizations are dynamic,

it means that they can change and renew themselves according to the need and time. That is to say that they are not fixed, unchanging, or fossilized, which means that they can adapt to the new world order, solve difference-based problems and prevent all possible conflicts.

Civilizations are not only dynamic in the sense that they rise and fall, they also grow and change through interaction with each other. Therefore the West of today is not necessarily the West of fifty or one hundred years ago any more than Confucian civilizations exactly replicate their antecedents. They will share strong bonds but also have developed new qualities through their histories and experiences, including the experience of interaction with other cultures. (O'Hagan 27)

In Huntington's theory, the most interesting and debatable part is his claim about religion and its effects on civilizational conflicts. Huntington asserts that countries will clash due to cultural but mostly religious differences. According to him, "cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and hence less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones" (27). However, when he compares religious differences with cultural differences, he puts forth that cultural differences can be negotiable to an extent but religious ones even cannot be talked about. In addition, he says that as people define their identity according to ethnic and religious terms, they are likely to see an "us" versus "them" relation existing between themselves and people of different ethnicity or religion" (29). Besides, Huntington states that in the modern world ideologies have lost their importance and popularity, so the governments and groups of people will give more emphasis to religion and civilizational identity in order to get support, which means that religious differences will be on the agenda and cause tension and violence between people. He says, from this perspective,

you are what you are. Briefly, religion, more than ethnic origin, draws clear lines between people and these lines cause clashes.

In conflicts between civilizations, the question is “What are you?”

That is a given that cannot be changed. And as we know, from Bosnia to the Caucasus to the Sudan, the wrong answer to that question can mean a bullet in the head. Even more than ethnicity, religion discriminates sharply and exclusively among people. A person can be half-French and half-Arab and simultaneously even a citizen of two countries. It is more difficult to be half-Catholic and half-Muslim.

(Huntington 27)

I believe that religions should not discriminate, on the contrary, when you take them not like the terms invented by humans such as nation, race and ethnicity, but as a term that is very holy for all kinds of people on earth since it is the relationship between man and God, there is no clash. In fact, there is harmony.

Religion contributes profound humility in relation to human thought and action that is sensitive to human fallibility, if not sin and evil, and appreciates the limited capacity of the inquiring mind to grasp the fullness of reality or to claim the truthfulness and correctness of any particular interpretation of what needs to be done in the world. This allows persons to remain open at all stages to dialogue with strangers and apparent adversaries, which can serve to correct mistakes and insensitivities, and to experience a sense of awe in face of the divine, which can protect humanity from idolatry. (Falk 30)

All religions tell humans to be in harmony with other people. Also, when we look at history, there was no clash purely because of religion, and it is evident that behind all clashes underlie some hidden benefits of nations. Moreover, labeling people according to their religions and assuming that they have fixed and unchanging identities is not rational. Religion is only a part of one's identity. It does not determine and tell everything about a person. Amartya Sen wrote a book in order to criticize Huntington's thesis. In *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, he talks about the roots of clash and violence and adds that when you look at human beings, the many different responsibilities and different elements that make up their identities, there will be mutual understanding and no clash. However, if you persist in seeing a person just as a Muslim or Asian, you cannot solve the problem and you may clash.

In our normal lives, we see ourselves as members of a variety of groups- we belong to all of them. A person's citizenship, residence, geographic origin, gender, class, politics, profession, employment, food habits, sports interests, taste in music, social commitments, etc., make us member of a variety of groups. Each of these collectivities, to all of which this person simultaneously belongs, gives her a particular identity. None of them can be taken to be the person's only identity or singular membership category. (Sen 4-5)

Huntington discusses the relationship between globalization and religion, and makes another debatable argument. He claims that due to globalization and the increasing communication between people all around the world, nations will stick more to their civilizational identities and religions. Therefore, civilizational identities will be more important for people and differences will be more apparent, which will cause conflicts and clashes between nations: "The world is becoming a smaller place. The interactions between peoples of different civilizations are increasing; these increasing interactions intensify

civilization consciousness and awareness of differences between civilizations and commonalities within civilizations” (Huntington 25). Régis Debray, in his article “God and the Political Planet”, talks about the relationship between globalization and nationalism in a parallel way with Huntington: “Our village is, at the same time, ever more planetary and chauvinistic. One exists because of the other; that is why we are experiencing the age of nationalism, separatism, irredentism and tribalism whose hidden face is that of segregation, war and xenophobia” (3). However, I claim that it is possible to look at globalization from another perspective. Due to globalization and increasing interaction, different people from different cultures learn a lot about each other, and this increasing awareness can lead a mutual understanding and tolerance. Huntington explains his main worries about globalization in his essay by reminding that people, especially young and educated people all over the world are getting more conscious about religion because they plan to put religious identity as the main binding element for their people in the globalized world:

The processes of economic modernization and social change throughout the world are separating people from longstanding local identities. They also weaken the nation state as a source of identity. In much of the world religion has moved in to fill this gap, often in the form of movements that are labeled “fundamentalist”. Such movements are found in Western Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism, as well as in Islam. In most countries and most religions the people active in fundamentalist movements are young, college-educated, middle-class technicians, professionals and business persons. The “unsecularization of the world”, as George Weigel has remarked, “is one of the dominant social facts of life in the late twentieth century”. The revival of religion, “la revanche de Dieu”, as

Gilles Kepel labeled it, provides a basis for identity and commitment that transcends national boundaries and unites civilizations.

(Huntington 26)

One of the most important criticisms about Huntington's thesis is that he often contradicts himself. At the beginning of the essay, he mentions differences and says that differences do not necessarily mean clashes and violence: "Differences do not necessarily mean conflict, and conflict does not necessarily mean violence. Over the centuries, however, differences among civilizations have generated the most prolonged and the most violent conflicts" (25). However, after a few pages he writes about crisis and bloodshed. In a way, he says something and does something else. He tries to be objective and utters the former statement; however, he shows his opinion about this theory with this latter statement. He believes that wars will break out and are already breaking out due to clash of civilizations: "The fault lines between civilizations are replacing the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War as the flash points for crisis and bloodshed" (29). He conflicts with himself by saying that differences do not necessarily mean conflict or violence, and then adding that differences will cause great conflicts, crisis and bloodshed throughout the world. According to him, in the post-Cold War era, not ideologies but cultures will cause bloodshed and war, "The Velvet Curtain of culture has replaced the Iron Curtain of ideology as the most significant dividing line in Europe" (31).

As in the previous politico-economic war, so too in the present one a group of academics is providing the conceptual ammunition for the new war. It is being fought under the banner of 'The Clash of Civilizations?' As in the conflicts during the Cold War, the predicted coming conflicts between the First and the Third Worlds will be politico-economic and not civilizational conflicts. (Tarock 5)

Another important criticism about Huntington's clash theory is that he gives specific examples about religious identities and conflicts related to religious identities. One of his specific examples is Islam. He specifically talks about Islam and even adds that Islam is equal to violence. He claims that throughout the history, there was always a tension and rivalry between the West and Islam by referring to the Crusaders and the Ottoman Empire: "This centuries-old military interaction between the West and Islam is unlikely to decline. It could become more virulent" (32). He adds that this tension does not change in the modern world; moreover, this tension will increase as people living in Muslim and Western countries will get more conscious about their civilizational and religious identities.

This is particularly true along the boundaries of the crescent-shaped Islamic bloc of nations from the bulge of Africa to the central Asia. Violence also occurs between Muslims, on the one hand, and Orthodox Serbs in the Balkans, Jews in Israel, Hindus in India, Buddhists in Burma and Catholics in the Philippines. Islam has bloody borders. (Huntington 35)

Huntington claims that Muslims are the only cause of the violence in different parts of the world. It has bloody borders, that is to say, Islam clashes with several different neighbors from different civilizations as it is a violence-based religion: "To Huntington, the salient characteristics of the Third World are hatred, irrationality, religious extremism, terrorism, natural inclination towards war" (Tarock 14). I believe that Huntington's observation about Islam and Muslim countries is totally biased and subjective. What about the other side of the coin? Do not the Serbs or Jews impose violence on Muslims in the Balkans or in Palestine? Or do Muslims impose violence on Serbs and Jews? Are they powerful in those mentioned regions enough to use violence? I believe that Huntington's observation and generalizing statements about Muslim countries are wrong. The historical truth is that there occurred lots

of wars between lots of countries and nations; however, the reasons were almost always benefits, especially economic ones. Sometimes it was a piece of land or sometimes it was a quest for independence. Whatever the reason is, war is bad. It should be replaced by mutual understanding. Huntington's biased attitude towards Islam is often seen in different parts of the essay.

Another remarkable conflict of Huntington's thesis is his attitude towards the West. Throughout his essay, he mostly praises and rarely criticizes the West. He tries to be objective, so in some parts, he criticizes Western civilization; however, I claim that his side is very clear in that he mostly defends Western civilization and its attitude towards other civilizations although in "Civilizational Conflict? Looking for Cultural Enemies", Jacinta O'Hagan criticizes Huntington for being unclear in his attitudes towards West: "There appears to be ambivalence in Huntington's essay as to whether Westernization is a force that will bring civilizations together or drive them further apart. Huntington's ambivalence may stem from in part from his failure to analyze his own concept of the West" (30). Huntington says that in the modern world, there is no rival for the West because all its rivals have collapsed and it has become the most powerful civilization in the world.

The West is now at an extraordinary peak of power in relation to other civilizations. Its superpower opponent has disappeared from the map. Military conflict among Western states is unthinkable, and Western military power is unrivaled. Apart from Japan, the West faces no economic challenge. (Huntington 39)

This statement above is too Eurocentric and biased. It shows that Huntington's article is not objective; it is subjective and it clearly supports the West and, in a way, tries to find some superficial and false excuses for the ongoing wars. I believe that it tries to justify the West and its attacks on Eastern countries. Then, he talks about democracy and how it has

spread in non-Western countries. He claims that the West has spread democracy all over the world via colonization or imposition: “Modern democratic governments originated in the West. When it has developed in non-Western societies it has usually been the product of Western colonialism or imposition” (41). Again, Huntington tries to justify Western civilization’s acts such as colonization or imposition. Then, he talks about the West and its control of armament. He says that the West tries to prevent all the possible dangers and challenges by the imposition of disarmament in non-Western countries although it has the most destructive arms itself.

In the post-Cold War world the primary objective of arms control is to prevent the development by non-Western societies of military capabilities that could threaten Western interests. The West attempts to do this through international agreements, economic pressure and controls on the transfer of arms and weapons technologies.

(Huntington 46)

After talking about Western civilization, Huntington starts talking about the non-Western civilizations and their looking at the Western civilization. In this part, Huntington says that the Western civilization is using a double standard for non-Western countries through its universal institutions: “The West in effect is using international institutions, military power and economic resources to run the world in ways that will maintain Western predominance protect Western interests and promote Western political and economic values” (40). Surprisingly he adds that the West’s usage of double standards is normal in an age when different civilizations clash. He states that in the modern world, civilizational identity will be very important, so countries will help their kin-countries and this will lead to double standards.

Muslims contrasted Western actions against Iraq with the West's failure to protect Bosnians against Serbs and to impose sanctions on Israel for violating U.N. resolutions. The West, they alleged, was using a double standard. A world of clashing civilizations, however, is inevitably a world of double standards: people apply one standard to their kin-countries and a different standard to others. (Huntington 36)

At the end of his essay, after talking about differences, conflicts, clashes, wars, crisis, bloodshed, Islam's bloody borders, religious identities, globalization, Western civilization and its institutions, colonization and imposition, and double standards, Huntington claims that he does not want conflicts, but it is possible that there will be: "This is not to advocate the desirability of conflicts between civilizations. It is to set forth descriptive hypotheses as to what the future may be like (48). Then, he adds that it is very possible that there will be a certain clash between Islamic and Western civilizations: "a central focus of conflict for the immediate future will be between the West and several Islamic-Confucian states" (48). Last of all, he concludes his essay by advising that the West should try to develop an understanding for non-Western civilizations and all civilizations should learn to coexist together in the world, which is very inconsistent and very hard to believe and comprehend after his speeches about violence, wars, and bloodsheds.

It will require the West to develop a more profound understanding of the basic religious and philosophical assumptions underlying other civilizations and the ways in which people in those civilizations see their interests. It will require an effort to identify elements of commonality between Western and other civilizations. For the relevant future, there will be no universal civilization, but instead a

world of different civilizations, each of which will have to learn to coexist with the others. (Huntington 49)

In short, Huntington says that there will be a clash between western people and non-western people. He talks about lots of civilizations as categories; however, he focuses particularly on the possibility of clashes between the West and Islam. O'Hagan argues that "there is little consideration given in his essay to any form of interaction other than conflict" (21). Therefore, I do not think that Huntington is objective. He tries to justify Western attacks on the non-Western countries, especially Muslim countries by presenting a thesis that there are great differences between Western and non-Western civilizations, and these difference will cause a clash. This clash will appear as conflicts, wars, crisis and bloodshed.

Civilizations and civilizational fidelities remain. There is to them an astonishing measure of permanence. But let us be clear: civilizations do not control states, states control civilizations. States avert their gaze from blood ties when they need to; they see brotherhood and faith and kin when it is in their interest to do so. (Ajami 9)

I claim that there may be differences between all human beings; not this situation but the response that we will give to this situation is important. The possibilities of clash and also dialogue are equal; if people want clashes they will have it and if they want dialogue they will have it. Seeing cultural differences as a thing to discriminate and clash is also a severe form of racism. It is an invented term, a term invented by the West, so it must not be used as a tool to discriminate. The West and the East should invent new and more positive terms; they should come together under the umbrella of dialogue. The Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the UN Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations, Mr. Picco says: "History does not kill. Religion does not rape women, the purity of blood does not destroy buildings and institutions do not fail. Only individuals do those things". Different civilizations and different

human beings should try to understand each other; they should be aware of their differences but they should respect each other due to these differences. They should communicate.

For one thing, identity can be a source of richness and warmth as well as of violence and terror, and it would make little sense to treat identity as a general evil. Rather, we have to draw on the understanding that the force of a bellicose identity can be challenged by the power of competing identities. These can, of course, include the broad commonality of our shared humanity, but also many other identities that everyone simultaneously has. This leads to other ways of classifying people, which can restrain the exploitation of a specifically aggressive use of one particular categorization. (Sen 4)

3.2- Clash of Civilizations in *Brick Lane*

Now I want to examine the clash of civilizations theory in Monica Ali's novel, *Brick Lane*. I believe that *Brick Lane* is a novel that carries traces of the clash theory because when we look at the setting and the characters of the novel, it is clear that Monica Ali has created them in accordance with Huntington's Clash of Civilizations theory. In this novel, the writer shows the reader examples from a Bangladeshi immigrant community living in London in order to say that there is a clash between different cultures and religions in the West. My aim is not to question whether Ali's concept of clashing civilizations is right or wrong; however, I intend to show that in this novel she tries to give evidence for clashes between different civilizations.

First of all, I want to talk about the activist groups in the novel. These activist groups are very important because they show the reader the biggest part of the evidence for the clash.

There is an English activist group called the Lion Hearts, and there is an opposite Bengali activist group called the Bengal Tigers. We learn about these activist groups through one of the main characters of the novel, Karim who is the chairman of the Bengal Tigers. These two activist groups exist in opposition to each other. Karim tells that the Bengal Tigers exists in order to respond to the Lion Hearts and to defend the rights of the Muslim immigrants: “We do not want no trouble. But if they come asking, yeah, we will give them what they want... We are into protecting our local ummah and supporting the global ummah” (Ali 256).

The Lion Hearts give lots of leaflets to the people living in the estates in Brick Lane which is a place mostly known for its Bangladeshi immigrants. In these leaflets, the Lion Hearts claim that Brick Lane and more than that, England does not belong to the immigrants, and these immigrants should leave this country as soon as possible because they are aliens living in this land. In Brick Lane, there are also white people who live there, so the Lion Hearts try to influence these people’s opinions about the Bangladeshi immigrants. Their main objective is to create and incite anger and hatred for the immigrants in Brick Lane, London. Therefore, they struggle to create a confusion and tension there. In one of their leaflets, they talk about a poster in which there is a woman who is nearly naked and very offensive for Muslim people living in the estates. They say that Muslim immigrants have torn the poster and this is an insult to their culture:

The Islamification of our neighborhood had gone too far. A Page 3 calendar and poster have been removed from the walls of our community hall. How long before the extremists are putting veils on our women and insulting our daughters for wearing short skirts? Do not tolerate it! Write to the council! This is England! (Ali 275)

Chanu, another significant character in the novel, makes a comment on this leaflet and says that white culture consists of just playing soccer and darts, going to pubs and putting

naked women's pictures in their rooms (Ali 275). In response to the leaflet of the Lion Hearts, the Bengal Tigers publish another leaflet in order to tell them that they do not deal with their culture; however, they have a different understanding and different morals about women and their clothing styles. Therefore, they want to be respected in their living areas: "We refer to a leaflet put recently into circulation by those who claim to uphold the native culture. We have a message for them: Keep your breasts to yourself. And we say this. It is not us who like to degrade women by showing their body parts in public places" (Ali 275-6). This war between them goes on with leaflets and speeches. On the following day, the Lion Hearts come to the estate and make a speech and they tell the white people living there that there should be discos, bingo parlors and also the sale of alcohol on the estates (Ali 276). The Lion Hearts organize a march in order to show the Bengal Tigers that they have lots of supporters who do not like immigrants, but later they give up as they do not have enough supporters. They publish another leaflet and say that Islam is a religion that is full of hatred: "All over the country, our children are being taught that Islam is a great religion. But the truth is clear. Islam burns with hatred. It gives birth to evil mass murders abroad. In our town, it spawns vicious rioters" (Ali 444). They organize another march against the Bengal Tigers and warn people about them:

March against the Mullahs! Most of our Muslim neighbors are peaceful men and women. We have nothing against them. But a handful of Mullahs and Militants are throwing their weight around. March with us against the Mullahs. All interested parties, send details to the P.O. Box number below. (Ali 277)

In response to the Lion Hearts' leaflet and marching plan, the Bengal Tigers publish another leaflet and organize a march against them. These groups both try to have more supporters for their action, "Stand up and be counted when the infidels march against us. Very

elderly and infirm only are excused from this duty. The organizers will lead you, in a peaceful rally. Spiritual guidance to be given by our Spiritual Leader” (Ali 277). When we compare the Lion Hearts and the Bengal Tigers by looking at their marching plans and the contents of their leaflets, it is clear to describe the Lion Hearts as the attacking group and the Bengal Tigers as the defending group. The Lion Hearts say that the Muslim immigrants are not a part of England and they create a possible danger for their English culture, so these immigrants should be taught their place in this society and even leave this country. They publish a leaflet and, in it, they claim that Islam should be stopped and they do not want to live with Muslims. This leaflet invokes violence. It is a threat for immigrants. It disturbs them and gives them a feeling of not belonging. It shows them as outsiders.

In our schools, it is multicultural murder. Do you know what they are teaching your children today? In domestic science your daughter will learn how to make a kebab, or fry a bhaji. For history lesson your son will be studying Africa or India or some other dark and distant land. English people, he will learn, are Wicked Colonialists. And in Religious Instruction, what will your child be taught? Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? No. Krishna, Abraham, and Muhammad. Christianity is being gently slaughtered. It is “only one” of the world’s “great religions”. Indeed, in our local schools you could be forgiven for thinking that Islam is the official religion. Should we be forced to put up with this? When the truth is that it is a religion of hate and intolerance. When Muslim extremists are planning to turn Britain into an Islamic Republic, using a combination of immigration, high birth rates, and conversion. We urge you to write to your Head Teacher

and withdraw your child from Religious Instruction. This is your right as a parent under Section 25 of the 1944 Education Act. (Ali 268-9)

In the passage above, it is clear that Ali tries to show the reader that there are some English people who are disturbed by the existence of the immigrants, especially Muslim ones. They are also disturbed with the idea of having a multicultural society in England because English people usually have a very nationalistic view about their identity. For them, homogeneity is very important, so having immigrants and heterogeneity is a threat. They do not like the idea of cultural diversity a lot. In his article called "On Cultural Diversity", British based Guyanese writer David Dabydeen talks about cultural diversity in England and says that although there may be a number of different cultural groups present in one place, each one is confined to its own cell with little communication between different groups taking place. He adds that white Britons do not spend so much time in the areas where mostly immigrants live in order to learn about and communicate with them.

The engagement with cultural diversity becomes purely recreational, like visiting an Indian or Chinese restaurant or spending an afternoon at an annual carnival. Very little happens by way of cultural exchange; people cross back to their cells having had a brief, diversionary encounter with cultural diversity. (228)

In Brick Lane, there are lots of Bangladeshi people living together. They mostly live in this confined area; it is like a small Bangladeshi town for them. They hardly ever go out of this area, so there is limited and nearly no communication between the Bangladeshi people and the London people. Chanu, for example, has been living in London for more than 20 years, but has not seen the most popular places or the historical places of London. When they are on a trip in London, they act as if they were the tourists because they do not know any place. They do not know this London. Similarly, English people do not know them. At the

end of the novel, when on a television program English people learn about the Bangladeshi community and their problems, they are very surprised. Even some of them have not known before that such a community exists in the centre of London. In the novel, *Brick Lane*, the Lion Hearts know that there exists a Bengali community; however, their knowledge is limited and mostly consists of wrong generalizations, misunderstandings and biases. They do not want to communicate or live with the Bangladeshi immigrants.

Cultural diversity can be a cosy term, evolved out of a blend of European post-colonial guilt and enlightenment, to justify tolerance of our presence in the metropolis. A sizeable segment of the British people of a certain generation, those above forty, say, would prefer it if we went away and never came back. (Dabydeen 101)

Karim, the chairman of the Bengal Tigers, says that the attacks of the Lion Hearts stem from their racist opinions. He says that England is his country as well as it their country, so he will defend his and his people's rights against them. He states that the racist people have become more sophisticated in that they do not call their acts as racist, but cultural and religious conflicts. He says that racism has disguised itself and continues to exist under different masks: "Thing is they is getting more sophisticated. They don't say race, they say culture, religion. They put their filthy leaflets through my front door" (Ali 256). Here, it is clear that Monica Ali makes a reference to Huntington's clash theory by telling that there are cultural conflicts in England between Westerners and immigrants. Racism has changed its appearance, and conflicts between different people from different cultures still continue. Then, Karim talks about his experiences in his youth with the white attackers. He says that when he was a student in high school, he and his immigrant friends were chased and beaten as they were Muslim immigrants:

We set it all up for them. When I was at school, we used to be chased home every day. People getting beaten up the whole time. Then we got together, turned the tables. One of us got touched, they all paid for it. We went everywhere together, we started to fight, and we got a reputation. (Ali 279)

When we look at Karim's memories and age, it is clear that only a few years ago racism was very popular in Brick Lane and immigrants were attacked by racist attackers. Under the name of racism or civilizational clash, these conflicts still go on. This is another evidence for Huntington's thesis on the clash of civilizations. Different people are clashing due to their differences. Lion Hearts' specific focus on Islam and the later attacks and insults against Muslim people show clearly that there is a clash between Western people and Muslims as Huntington presumed in his essay in the 1990s. Monica Ali's novel verifies his theory. Monica Ali shows that the new generations of immigrants are more conscious about their place and rights in England, and also they stick to their cultural and religious identities more than their parents: "In most countries and most religions the people active in fundamentalist movements are young, college-educated, middle-class technicians, professionals and business persons" (Huntington 26). Chanu utters the same thing in the following way: "We always kept quiet. The young ones do not want to keep quiet anymore" (Ali 276). This awareness on both sides opens the way for clashes between them. It is clear that these two activist groups, the Lion Hearts and the Bengal Tigers are based on religious identities, Islam and Christianity: "Decreasingly able to mobilize support and form coalitions on the basis of ideology, governments and groups will increasingly attempt to mobilize support by appealing to common religion and civilizational identity" (Huntington 29). In *Brick Lane*, two different religious identities and differences between them clash.

While most of the countries in the world today officially declare that their citizens enjoy freedom of religion, none of them actually allows the unfettered exercise of that freedom. In fact, all of them seek overtly to control and to restrict that freedom, reinforcing in the process the local hegemony of one religion, a small set of religions, or even a formally atheistic or other national ideology. (Beyer 333)

Karim says that the government knows everything about the problems and difficulties that immigrants live in London; however, he says that the government does not want to help them to solve their problems because they think that the immigrants should be busy with something. One of the most important problems of immigrant communities is drug addiction and gangs; the government is aware of them, but does not do anything because Karim thinks that these problems keep immigrants away from their religious identities and Islam, which is the biggest danger for English society:

The FBI – the government – they got together with the Mafia, and flooded the blacks with drugs and, set them up with all the guns and stuff, so they can just get high and shoot each other. Long as it stays in the ghettos, man, they are not bothered...I am thinking as long as they are on scag, they stay away from religion. And the government – it is more scared of Islam than heroin. (Ali 335)

Questioner, the spokesperson of the Bengal Tigers, makes a comment on the planned Bengali feast, mela and reminds the members and the supporters of the Bengal Tigers that Muslim people in England and living in other parts of the world are not in comfort and suffer from various kinds of problems; therefore, they should cancel this feast as it will not help them to solve any of the problems despite the fact that the Bengal Tigers plan to gather more supporters via this feast. His comment shows the Muslim people's problems and also the

existing conflicts between Muslims and other peoples, which is evidence again that verifies Huntington's clash theory. Clearly, Ali chooses her examples in accordance with the clash theory.

What is the mela supposed to be celebrating? Are our children doing well in the school? Have they come, suddenly, from the bottom of the education tables to the top? Has the drugs problem – that we like to keep our dirty secret – has it vanished? What has changed? Our brothers in Palestine and India and around the world, are they no longer being persecuted? (Ali 383)

In *Brick Lane*, the reader sees more evidence for the clash theory from the novel's most important characters, Chanu. He always talks about English society and says that they discriminate against colored people. He makes lots of speeches about English society and each time adds that they are racist. He gives examples from his own life and adds that although he is well educated he cannot find a good job as he is a Bengali immigrant. He says that he cannot get a promotion in Mr. Dalloway's company as he is a racist employer. He says that English people hate the immigrants. Towards the end of the novel, he decides to return to Bangladesh in order to get rid of the racist English society and the bad attitudes towards immigrants. When the reader reads the passages about Chanu, the received message is that differences cannot coexist. In one of Chanu's statements about the Workers United Found, he clearly utters that there is a clash between Western people and non-Westerners:

What they are doing, you see, is coopting these immigrants into their grand political schemata in which all the oppressed minorities combine in the overthrow of the state and live happily ever after in a communal paradise. This theory fails to take account of culture clash, bourgeois immigrant aspirations, the hatred of the Hindu for the

Muslim, and so on and so forth. In all reality, it is doomed to failure.

(Ali 508)

Another important piece of information that supports the clash theory in the novel is Ali's mentioning of the September 11 attacks. Although the setting of the novel is London, not New York, the September 11 attacks have a very effective place. They become a turning point for the immigrants living in Brick Lane because these events affect all of the non-Western Muslim immigrants in the world. One day Nazneen and Chanu watch the news on television and they learn that there have occurred some events in New York and lots of people have died, and the ones who have committed this crime are Muslim. On that day everything starts changing. It is a very important event for immigrants all around the world because some of the Western people start hating the immigrants in their countries. They abuse the immigrants; they insult them in public and tell them to go back their home.

A pinch of New York dust blew across the ocean and settled on the Dogwood Estate. Sorupa's daughter was the first, but not the only one. Walking in the street, on her way to college, she had her hijab pulled off. Razia wore her Union Jack sweatshirt and it was spat on. "Now you see what will happen," said Chanu. "Backlash." He entangled himself with newspapers and began to mutter and mumble. "It is time to go. Any day, any moment, life can end. There has been enough planning." (Ali 400)

After the September 11 attacks, life changes for the immigrants in Brick Lane. They experience racist attacks and insults as they are Muslim. They are put under the same category with the Afghan attackers that carried out the September 11 attacks just because they are Muslims. They are told to go back to their homes and are seen as enemies. Ali describes everything happening in Brick Lane. She talks about the hatred and enmity for the Muslim

people as Huntington presumed in his essay. Bangladeshi men talk about a possible war that will take place between America and Afghanistan, and are worried that it will affect their lives in London:

“The strike is planned for later next month.” “What can we as shopkeepers do?” “We are at their mercy.” “Yes, if they don’t collect the rubbish the whole of Brick Lane is going to stink like an elephant’s arse.” But Chanu thought nothing of striking binmen. He worked long hours and he spent the rest of his time watching the news or reading in the newspapers of the air strikes planned against Afghanistan. “It is time to go. Any day, any moment, life can end,” he said. (Ali 400)

After the September 11 attacks, the Lion Hearts increase the volume of their attacks. They attack Muslim immigrants by saying that Islam is a violent religion: “Islam burns with hatred. It gives birth to evil mass murders abroad. In our town, it spawns vicious rioters” (Ali 444). They organize other marches and publish other leaflets in order to incite more hatred for the Muslim immigrants in London. Karim gets very angry as the English people and the Lion Hearts stereotype all the Muslim people with the image of terrorists. He objects to this stereotyping and says that Muslims are intentionally labeled with terrorism by the racist people in the West although there are terrorists in the world from all religions: “Islamic terrorists. Islamic terrorists. That is all you hear. You never hear Catholic terrorist, do you? Or Hindu terrorist? What about Jewish terrorist?” (Ali 445). The Lion Hearts organize a march and the Bengal Tigers organize a march too. Karim says that they will show all people that they are peaceful and strong: “When we march, we will show them how wrong they are about Islam. They will see we are strong. And we will show them we are peaceful that Islam is peace” (Ali 451). However, I do not think that marching is a good method for showing

English society that Islam is a peaceful religion as marching in opposition to Lion Hearts' march may cause tension and violence between them. Karim claims that there are lots of people outside full of hatred and they will walk against them although this will not change anything: "Out there, right now, are people who are twisted with hatred for us and for Islam. They are planning to march right on our doorsteps, and we are not going to let them get away with it" (Ali 456). All of these examples given from *Brick Lane* show that the characters of the novel play out a conflict according to the one Huntington describes.

CHAPTER FOUR: A DEEP ANALYSIS OF THE MAJOR CHARACTERS IN *BRICK LANE*

4.1- NAZNEEN

Nazneen, the protagonist of *Brick Lane*, is the most important character in the novel in that she undergoes lots of difficulties and tries to cope with all these difficulties herself with her own methods. She experiences a process of change throughout the novel, and at the end of the novel she becomes very different from the Nazneen who came to London at the age of eighteen from a village in Bangladesh. In addition to the problems and the metamorphosis that she has experienced, she has a colorful and extrovert personality which makes her interesting and loveable to the reader. Although she is described to be a village girl at the beginning of the novel, she is courageous enough to get lost intentionally in Brick Lane in order to experience the same feelings with her sister in Dhaka who has been lost for a short time. She has lots of responsibilities such as being a wife, being a mother, being a sister, being a Muslim and being a member of the Bangladeshi community in London. All these responsibilities and roles influence and contribute to her change and to her identity formation.

Firstly, I want to discuss the place and importance of fate in her life and how it affects her decisions, and how she changes when she gets away from the fate concept that she inherits from her mother. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator suggests the basis for Nazneen's fate concept with the story of 'How You Were Left to Your Fate'. This is the story of Nazneen's birth, and she learns it from her mother who wants to teach her the importance of fate in their lives. According to her mother, Rupban, everything should be left to fate and a person should wait and see what happens. In her understanding of fate, there is no freewill, questioning or action.

As Nazneen grew she heard many times this story of How You Were Left to Your Fate. It was because of her mother's wise decision that Nazneen lived to become the wide-faced, watchful girl that she was. Fighting against one's Fate can weaken the blood. Sometimes, or perhaps most times, it can be fatal. Not once did Nazneen question the logic of the story of How You Were Left to Your Fate. Indeed, she was grateful for her mother's quiet courage, her tearful stoicism that was almost daily in evidence, Hamid said- he always looked away as he spoke- "Your mother is naturally a saint. She comes from a family of saints." So when Rupban advised Nazneen to be still in her heart and mind, to accept the Grace of God, to treat life with the same indifference with which it would treat her, she listened closely. (Ali 5-6)

For Nazneen, this understanding of fate is very important till her opinions change when her son, Raqib dies in a hospital. She listens to her birth story from her mother nearly every day, and she internalizes it and she relies on it even for the most important decisions in her life such as marriage. After her mother dies, one day her father tells her that she will marry the next month and there is a photo of the man and she can look at it if she wants to see her husband. There are two types of marriages common in most societies; one of them is a love marriage and the other one is an arranged marriage; however, when we look at Nazneen's case, it is clear that hers is not a love marriage or an arranged marriage, but it is forced marriage, the third type which is not approved in most modern societies.

Soon after, when her father asked if she would like to see a photograph of the man she would marry the following month, Nazneen shook her head and replied, "Abba, it is good that you have

chosen my husband. I hope that I can be a good wife, like Amma”.

But as she turned to go she noticed, without meaning to, where her father put the photograph...The man she would marry was old. At least forty years old. He had a face like a frog. They would marry and he would take her back to England with him. She looked across the fields, glittering green and gold in the brief evening light. (Ali 7)

Nazneen tries to get used to the man in the picture although he is really older than her. This situation is a sign of patriarchal society. In Bangladesh, patriarchy is effective and dominant. Woman is allowed no chance for deciding about the candidates. They are forced to obey to what they are told. Patriarchy includes father, brother and husband as the protectors of the women. More than protectors, they are the decision-makers. Women are not asked their opinions about anything, especially about the husband candidates. Nazneen will marry the man and he will take her wherever he wants. Neither her father nor the husband candidate asks her if she wants to marry or not. For them, women are like possessions. They consider them as objects.

Kinship and marriage practices are two mechanisms through which patriarchal control is maintained. Bengali kinship is patrilineal, with power and authority placed in the hands of males. In her lifetime, a woman is referred to as her father’s daughter, her husband’s wife, and her son’s mother. Her identity and that of her mother take on secondary importance. A woman also has little or no choice in deciding on her marriage partner. Male relatives arrange a suitable match, usually choosing someone from outside their own lineage and village. After marriage, the woman moves to her husband’s family’s home. (Baluja 42)

Nazneen marries Chanu and comes to England in 1985. In fact, she does not come; she is brought to England in that there is no freewill of her. Chanu does not ask her if she wants to live in England or not. After the marriage ceremony, they get on the plane that takes them to London: “Six months now since she had been sent away to London. Every morning before she opened her eyes she thought, If I were the wishing type, I know what I would wish. And then she opened her eyes and saw Chanu’s puffy face on the pillow next to her” (Ali 9). In London, life is very new and challenging for her because it is a Western city in England where she is an immigrant and lots of different people live together, and the most important point is that London is a city and Nazneen has lived in a village before and has no experience of urban life. In the preface of his book, *Muslim Women in the United Kingdom and Beyond: Experiences and Images*, Benn Tansin claims that the immigrants in Britain usually face with serious problems of adaptation as they mostly come from villages, “This is quite evident given the fact that the majority of the immigrants particularly in Britain, shared common rural roots” (xxv). Another important problem that Nazneen experiences is language. She does not know to how speak English although she is brought to England to set up her life: “Nazneen could say two things in English: sorry and thank you” (Ali 10). After some time in London, Nazneen tells Chanu that she wants to learn English and in this way she can communicate with other people and also put his files in order. However, he says that she will not need to use any English because she will not need to go out as he provides all her needs: “Two consonants together causes a difficulty. I have conquered this issue after a long time. But you are unlikely to need these words in any case” (Ali 29). Although she wants to improve herself, she is not permitted by her husband:

Brick Lane, in a variety of ways, stages debates about the nature of immigrant subjectivity. The novel is particularly of interest as an

examination of the double bind that female migrants face, treated as alien by their host nation and as commodities by the men in their own communities. The paradoxes of migration are dramatized in the various characters, but especially through the central character Nazneen's relationships with her husband Chanu and her lover Karim. (Cormack 700)

Nazneen thinks that she has married Chanu although he is really older than her, and therefore, Chanu is grateful to her and perhaps loves her; however, one day she hears him talking to someone on the phone. She learns that he does not love her and even criticizes some parts of her body. This annoys her a lot, and she starts questioning her marriage on that day. She thinks that as she is not appreciated by her husband, she will change some of her behaviors for him. She learns that he has married her as she is a good worker and an unspoilt village girl:

He thought she was a good worker (she had overheard him on the telephone). He would be shocked if she lapsed. "She is an unspoilt girl. From the village. Not beautiful, but not so ugly either. The face is broad, big forehead. Eyes are a bit too close together. Not tall. Not short. Around five foot two. Hips are a bit narrow but wide enough, I think, to carry children. All things considered, I am satisfied. Perhaps when she gets older she will grow beard on her chin, but now she is only eighteen. And a blind uncle is better than no uncle. I waited too long to get a wife." (Ali 14)

One day Nazneen comes across with a skating couple on television and this attracts her attention very much because she sees a woman who is independent, free and powerful as the man with whom she skates adores her and dances around her. In a way, the skating

woman is a symbol of the free Western woman. She is self-sufficient and has free-will. This is something amazing and innovative for Nazneen. She gets very curious about ice-skating and asks questions about it to Chanu, and wants to learn to pronounce the word, “ice-skating” (Ali 29). This scene is very important for the novel because at the end of the novel, we see the same scene with a message to the reader. It symbolizes Nazneen’s change.

Nazneen held a pile of the last dirty dishes to take to the kitchen, but the screen held her. A man in a very tight suit and a woman in a skirt that did not even cover her bottom gripped each other as an invisible force hurtled them across an oval arena. The people in the audience clapped their hands together and then stopped. By some magic they all stopped at exactly the same time...She did not slow down. She stopped dead and flung her arms above her head with a look so triumphant that you knew she had conquered everything: her body, the laws of nature, and the heart of the tight suited man who slid over on his knees, vowing to lay down his life for her. (Ali 29)

Nazneen is different from the other female members of the Bengali community in London. Usually Bengali women sit at home, grind spices and make gossip of the other members of the community: “We love to gossip. This is the Bangla sport” (Ali 130). They do not go out often and if they go out, they are with their husbands. They sometimes visit their close neighbors and drink tea in order to cheer themselves but mostly they are in their small flats. However, Nazneen is very disturbed by this situation of sitting at home alone because she has never experienced being alone before in her life. In Bangladesh, women do not go out a lot but they have the company of their relatives, so they do not know what loneliness is. In London, in their small flat, Nazneen feels imprisoned: “She looked and saw that she was trapped inside this body, inside this room, inside this flat, inside this concrete slab of

entombed humanity” (Ali 74). She tells Chanu that she is bored, but Chanu says that if she goes out, their Bangladeshi neighbors will gossip about her and this situation will be very disturbing for them:

She did not often go out. “Why should you go out?” said Chanu. “If you go out, ten people will say, ‘I saw her walking on the street.’ And I will look like a fool. Personally, I don’t mind if you go out, but these people are so ignorant. What can you do?” She never said anything to this. “Besides, I get everything for you that you need from the shops. Anything you want, you only have to ask.” She never said anything to this. “I don’t stop you from doing anything. I am westernized now. It is lucky for you that you married an educated man. That was a stroke of luck.” (Ali 39)

In *Gender Roles at Home and Abroad: The Adaptation of Bangladeshi Immigrants*, Kaari Flagstad Baluja examines the Bangladeshi society in England. She argues that immigration brings more isolation for Bangladeshi women because they are not allowed to go out, work or educate themselves. They were already restricted and they are restricted once more with the immigration (54). She gives information about them in a specific way and says that Bengali people struggle to protect their Bengali identity and traditions in London: “Despite these weakening ties to their homeland, Bangladeshis in London have maintained a strong ethnic identity based on religion, marriage practices, social networks, language, and return visits” (54). She asserts that although immigration is a shift from one environment to a totally different environment it does not mean that the individuals give up their roles in their society. Bangladeshi immigrants go on carrying out their roles in the new environment. She says that especially women face difficulties while carrying out their roles as new roles are added to them such as helping their children to adapt to the new society:

Women are often responsible for socializing children, for providing ideological linkages between the origin and destination cultures, and for helping the family navigate the adaptation process. However, women must accomplish these tasks as they find themselves living within a potentially different gender stratification system. The changes in the gender stratification system may affect family and household structure, ideas regarding female mobility and household division of labor, and attitudes about the appropriate roles of men and women.

(Baluja 1-2)

Nazneen gets bored but she follows her mother's instructions about fate and life. Her mother always tells her to wait and see, so she starts waiting in order to see. Nazneen's mother, Rupban, is a very interesting character in that she tries to impose her understanding of fate, which makes her very unhappy, to her daughter and tells her that waiting is the only thing that all women can do. She tells her that women cannot question anything: "If God wanted us to ask questions, he would have made us men" (Ali 78). She teaches her daughter to be passive. She educates her daughter in this manner, which is, I believe, a direct result of patriarchal system. In patriarchal societies, men suppress women, and these suppressed women who have got used to be passive suppress other women by teaching them to be passive:

The days passed more easily now than at first. It was just a matter of waiting, as Amma always said. She had waited and now they passed more easily... Just wait and see, that is all we can do. How often she had heard those words. Amma always wiped away her tears with those words. When the harvest was poor, when her own mother was taken

ill, when floods threatened, when Abba disappeared and stayed away for days at a time. (Ali 40)

Nazneen starts changing and relaxing on the day when she gets lost. When she gets lost, she gains the most interesting experience of her life. When she is lost in Brick Lane, she becomes aware of herself and sees that western people do not observe her or stare at her. Her walking among crowds of people is something normal; also, people do not care so much about the other people on the streets. This feeling relaxes Nazneen, because she is not observed and her behaviors are not monitored. In Bangladesh and in the Bangladeshi community, women cannot and should not go out so much. They should not go out alone. If they violate this rule, it is certain that they will be stared at and gossiped and sometimes even excluded from the society.

Nazneen, hobbling and halting, began to be aware of herself. Without a coat, without a suit, without a white face, without a destination. A leafshake of fear- or was it excitement?- passed through her legs. But they were not aware of her. In the next instant she knew it. They could not see her any more than she could see God. They knew that she existed but unless she did something, waved a gun, halted the traffic, they would not see her. She enjoyed this thought. She began to scrutinize. (Ali 52)

On the day she is lost, Nazneen talks to some Bengali men who work in restaurants in order to ask for directions. She also uses the toilet in one of these restaurants. And then, when she collides with a man in the street, she speaks in English and says “sorry” to him. In the evening she comes home very tired and soaked with rain; however, she feels very happy and victorious as she has succeeded something alone in London. This feeling gives her self confidence that she needs and she copes with her idea of loneliness and nothingness with it.

She wants to talk about her success to Chanu in order to show him that she is not a simple village girl, but gives up and hides this as her secret:

And in spite of the rain, and the wind which whipped it into her face, and in spite of the pain in her ankle and arm, and her bladder, and in spite of the fact that she was lost and cold and stupid, she began to feel a little pleased. She had spoken, in English, to a stranger, and she had been understood and acknowledged. It was very little. But it was something. (Ali 57)

After a while, Nazneen begins to explore the good sides of urban life in London. In the beginning she experiences some problems of adaptation, but after she spends some time in this city she starts comparing the life in this city with the life in her village in Bangladesh. She is aware of all of the differences. Although she misses her childhood days with her family and especially with her sister, she realizes that life there is not easy. She thinks that she has good conditions in London and this feeling makes her happy. She gets used to her new environment and sees that changing environment is not necessarily bad:

When she thought about Gouripur now, she thought about inconvenience. To live without a flushing toilet, to abandon her two sinks, to make a fire for the oven instead of turning a knob- would these be trades worth making? She tried to imagine Chanu, marching off to the latrine with a heavy book in his hand. He liked to read, sometimes for half an hour or more, while sitting on the toilet. The flies would see him off the latrine. (Ali 76)

Nazneen learns her husband's features as time passes. She sees that her husband does not pray, does not read the Quran and even drinks beer. She feels very unhappy when she learns these things about him. Chanu is not a religious person. For him, Indian culture is more

important than his Islamic identity. Sometimes when he reads some leaflets by the Lion Hearts and sees some insults at Muslims, he remembers his Muslim identity and speaks fiercely. When Nazneen starts knowing about her husband, she also starts questioning her marriage: “My husband does not say his prayers, thought Nazneen, and now he is drinking alcohol. Tomorrow he may be eating pigs” (Ali 112). She thinks about her marriage with Chanu and about her father’s decision about their match. She questions her father’s choice. She asks why her father made her marry him. She thinks if she knew Chanu before, she would not marry him. Then, she questions herself. She asks herself if she really can tell her father that she does not want to marry Chanu. She remembers that she wept on her wedding day but nothing happened or changed. She did not want to marry Chanu but could not say anything to her father in order to be respectful to him and to fate:

Why did her father marry her off to this man? He just wanted to be rid of me, she thought. He wanted me to go far away, so that I would not be any trouble to him. He did not care who took me off his hands. If I had known what this marriage would be, what this man would be...! What? What, then? I would have run away, like Hasina? I would have eloped with the sweeper? Hah. I would have wept on my wedding day. I did! I did weep. What good did it do? (Ali 102)

For Nazneen, one of the most important events that cause and contribute to her change is her son, Ruku’s illness. Raqib is Nazneen’s first child. He becomes ill when he is only a small baby. One day his illness increases and Nazneen does not know what to do and how to react to this illness because she remembers her own birth story and her mother’s reaction or no reaction. When she is born, she is very ill. Her aunt, Mumtaz tells her mother to take Nazneen to a hospital in the city, but her mother does not accept this offer and adds that she will not stand between Nazneen and fate. She says they should wait and see if the baby lives

or not. Nazneen remembers this famous story and it affects her mind; however, suddenly she decides to get rid of these thoughts and takes Ruku to a hospital to save him. She thinks that she can do something for her son. If she waits, he may die. On that day, Nazneen starts questioning her mother's and her own inherited fate understandings, and starts accusing her mother why she did not take her to hospital when she was born. On that day, she starts believing that a person should do everything that she can do and then wait and see. On that day, she realizes the importance and necessity of free will and action. That day becomes a turning point for Nazneen:

At once she was enraged. A mother who did nothing to save her child!

If Nazneen had not brought the baby to the hospital at once, he would have died. The doctors said it. It was no lie. Did she kick about at home wailing and wringing her hands? Did she draw attention to her plight with long sighs and ostentatiously hidden weeping? Did she call piously for God to take what he would and leave her with nothing?

Did she act, in short, like her mother? A saint? (Ali 141)

In one of her letters to Nazneen, Hasina talks about their mother and talks about a secret about her. She reveals that their mother did not die or was not killed by someone else. She committed suicide. Hasina says that everyone in the village knew about it, except them. She learned it from her husband, Malek. In addition, Hasina says that their mother committed suicide because their father cheated on her many times and wanted to marry another woman. Their mother could not do anything to prevent or change their father, so she did it. Nazneen learns that her mother was not a saint. She had problems in her marriage and she did not do anything to change her fate. She accepted everything as it was. She could not prevent her husband's cheating on her. She became an indifferent woman and mother, not a saint. In the end, she committed suicide, which is a very bad and sinful act according to their religion,

Islam. On that day, Nazneen understands that her mother was not a saint and her belief in fate changes totally.

Another important event in Nazneen's life that contributes to her change is that she starts working when Chanu buys her a sewing machine to save more money for the returning plans. This sewing machine changes everything in her life. It brings her work, money, self confidence, independence, action, and a lover. In fact, Chanu does not want Nazneen to work because he says that everyone will think that he cannot feed his family; however, as he has resigned from his job and cannot find a new one, he buys a sewing machine for her and tries to make a compliment to her by saying that she is the boss of her job: "You know, when I married your mother I thought I was getting a simple girl from the village and she would give me no trouble. But she is the boss woman now. Anything she says, your father goes running off and does it. Look. Look inside the box" (Ali 201). Nazneen really becomes her own boss in that she earns enough money to support her family, to save for the returning plan although she does not want to return so much, and to send her sister in Dhaka. She can buy the things that her daughters want but Chanu does not buy. She feels very good when she sees that she can do something herself.

Instead of the young girl taught to "treat life with indifference", the wife performing chores as "life made its pattern around and beneath and through her", or the lover her teenage paramour conceives of as the very essence of Bengali womanhood, Nazneen transforms into the protagonist in a story about self-actualization through work. Nazneen's decision-making leads her to go into the clothing design business with Razia. Work liberates her to dance and sing along with the radio in the novel's final pages, to go ice-skating, and to endorse

the possibilities available to her as an independent contractor. (Marx 18-19)

This sewing business is very important for Nazneen because at the end of the novel, when she realizes that she is a different woman and she does not want to go back to Bangladesh, it helps her to make up her mind and stay in London with her daughters. She challenges Chanu and tells him that she does not want to return with him. Her not going with him can mean that she wants to get divorced from Chanu. Despite everything, she expresses her opinion. She is aware of the fact that being a widow, getting a divorce or living alone is the least desirable thing for a Bengali. Economic freedom gives self confidence to Nazneen and she decides to go on her life with her daughters, not with Chanu or Karim. She does not have to depend on a man.

Often, when divorce is successful, Muslim women find themselves isolated with virtually no support from their family or community. Muslim women facing difficulties generally tend to suffer in silence, perhaps for social, family and financial reasons. (Jawad 6)

Her relationship with Karim is one of the causes that help her change and become another Nazneen who makes her decisions about her life and future. In this relationship, she discovers herself and her hidden emotions, and realizes that she is a woman: “It was as if she had been born deficient and only now been gifted the missing sense” (Ali 324). It is like her awakening from a deep sleep. In her marriage she sleeps and opens her eyes only when she starts this love affair with Karim; although their act is sinful according to their religion, Islam. This love affair makes Nazneen feel different. She is happy, defiant, self-confident and strong. She thinks that she can control her life. Her transformation starts. She starts feeling love, a feeling which is very new and unusual for her: “Out of the bedroom, she was- in starts- afraid and defiant. If ever her life was out of her hands, it was now. She had submitted to her father

and married her husband; she had submitted to her husband” (Ali 322). Nazneen begins to have the feeling that she controls her life now because she did not make any choices in her life before. Her father decided and she obeyed as a daughter. Later, her husband decided and she obeyed as a wife, but none of them asked her opinions. Karim is her only preference.

At the end of the novel, Nazneen decides that she should not be silent anymore. She believes that she should give her decisions herself and in order to do that, she should get rid of her inherited belief in fate which always tells her to wait and see. She decides to get away from her mother’s teachings about women’s weaknesses and hopelessness. She has experienced in her life in London and learnt that a woman is more powerful than she imagines. She has discovered herself and is really satisfied with the new Nazneen that she has found in the hidden depths of her inner world. She has learnt a lot about life and has educated herself with the help of the difficulties that she has met and her struggles to give the best reactions to them.

She reminded herself: she had only to wait for everything to be revealed. Instead of appeasing her as usual, this thought rankled. Why should she wait? She felt as strongly as if someone, standing beside her in the kitchen had taken a piece of paper, written down the answers, and then set light to the page while she watched...Suddenly her entire being lit up with anger. I will decide what to do. I will say what happens to me. I will be the one. A charge ran through her body and she cried out again, this time out of sheer exhilaration. (Ali 442-43)

After Nazneen persuades Chanu that she will not go with him, and tells Karim that she will not go to Bangladesh but also she will not marry him, she starts a new life in London. She starts a new sewing business with Razia. She earns her own money and supports her

daughters. She believes that she has given the best decision for herself and her daughters by staying in London. She starts a life in which there is nothing that she does not like. She throws away the furniture that Chanu liked and bought, but she could not get used to. She decorates her home according to her own taste, and she realizes that she feels that she belongs to this new home. She buys pots and plants flowers in these pots. She wanted to do this before, but she could not because she did not like the life and the home she had at that time: "From the edge of the courtyard she glanced up to see how the window boxes looked from down here. Over the edge of the long white tubs a few dark green leaves were visible" (Ali 530). In the end, she is happy with her daughters in her new home. She has a new home in which there is nothing she hates and no Chanu. Also, she has a new home, England which she prefers by not going to Bangladesh.

4.2- HASINA

Hasina is another significant character in this novel. She is Nazneen's sister who lives in Dhaka. Hasina is a very important character for the whole novel because Nazneen and the reader learn everything about Bangladesh through Hasina's letters. With the help of her letters, Nazneen can compare the two worlds, London and Dhaka. In the end, when Chanu decides to return to Bangladesh, Nazneen tells him that she does not want to go and she will stay with her daughters in London. In fact, in the process of giving this last decision and shaping her opinions, Nazneen has benefitted from the letters from Hasina. Through her letters, Nazneen has seen how life is in Bangladesh and how the women are treated by society in Dhaka. Nazneen learns a lot about Dhaka which is also new to her because she has lived in

one of the villages of Bangladesh before and she does not know much about city life in Bangladesh. She benefits from her sister's experiences there, and believes that if they return, her daughters and also she will suffer there.

Hasina is very different from Nazneen in that she falls in love with a young man and escapes with him in order to make a love marriage. Despite the traditions and the rules of the Bengali society, she elopes with Malek. She is not an obedient character. She does not let her father find a husband for her. Also, she criticizes her mother's understanding of fate and always believes that a woman should not be too weak. She likes giving her own decisions. Throughout the novel, it is seen that although she meets with difficulties and experiences very bad events, she goes on giving her decisions and making her own choices in life. She makes a love marriage but when she is beaten by her husband, she runs away to the city, Dhaka. Although living alone is very difficult and dangerous for women in Bangladesh, she starts a new life there. Sometimes she cannot find food or money, but she does not regret her decisions. After a while, she starts working in a garment factory where she experiences good friendships and also the worst events in her life. Despite the bad experiences she has, Hasina becomes a role model for Nazneen in that she is very determined and likes her independence a lot: "Whenever she got a letter from Hasina, for the next couple of days she imagined herself an independent woman too" (Ali 93). Hasina teaches a lot to Nazneen with her own decisions, attitudes and letters.

Through Hasina's letters, Nazneen learns that the education system is not good in Dhaka; Dhaka is the capital of Bangladesh, in a way the most improved city there. Therefore, it means that if Dhaka is like that, the other parts of Bangladesh are in a worse situation. Hasina talks about the university in Dhaka. She tells about students' protests about equal cheating. She says that rich students buy exam questions from the professors. The other students think that this is unjust as they do not have an equal chance with the rich ones. It is

clear that the education system is not proper in Dhaka, and possibly Chanu's degrees are ignored in London due to this reason because Chanu graduated from Dhaka University: "University is also close down. All students hold protest. They rallying for right to cheat. In my heart I support. Some who afford pay the professor for tutoring buy exam paper. To be fair all must have mean for equal cheating" (Ali 155-156). In one of her letters, Hasina talks about her friends in the factory and gives information about the working women in Bangladesh. Aleya is one of her friends. Her husband tells Aleya that she should not work because her working means that he cannot afford to feed her. She asks her husband who will pay the expenses and who will send the children to school. She says that they cannot afford it, so she should work. She is similar to Razia in her decisions about working and education:

Aleya have five children she comes from Noakhali...Money she make she send her boys to school. Husband make problem for her but Aleya thinking of children only and not the husband. They husband say "Why should you work? If you work it looks bad. People will say he cannot feed her." But Aleya keep dropping wishes into the rice. Pinch of salt pinch of what she want and at the end he giving in. He buy burkha for her and every day walking with her to factory. Evening there he is wait at gate. (Ali 157)

Hasina talks about another friend, Shahnaz and her parents. She says that Shahnaz's parents want to marry her so they find candidates for her, but she does not want any of them. The reader learns more about the patriarchal family structure. In addition, the reader learns that in Bangladesh a girl's family gives a dowry to the boy's family so that they can marry. Shahnaz says that giving a dowry is very silly because it means that a girl is a burden, a useless thing so her family gives a dowry. She adds that she will not give it because she is not a burden but a working woman: "Why should we give dowry? I am not a burden. I make

money. I am the dowry” (Ali 158). Hasina talks about Renu, another friend who is a widow and through this character, the reader learns that life is very difficult for the widowed and divorced women. Renu says that everyone insults her and regards her as an indecent woman who can do any kind of wrongs any time. She says that there is no one to protect her and without a protector, life is very difficult for a woman: “She say there is no one to protect me. I must go here and there always alone. Anyone say anything they like because I am woman alone. I put here on earth to suffer. I am waiting and suffering. This is all” (Ali 158). Then, the reader learns more about the women. Hasina tells Nazneen that there are lots of women and children who break bricks in Dhaka. Although it is a man’s job as it requires physical strength, brick breaking is mostly done by women as men make them do it: “All day squatting over red bricks with little stone hammer. So huge pile wait for this little hammers. Like you take teaspoon to empty lake. Most is woman and they look hungry. Children help. Swell belly children and still laughing hitting breaking laughing” (Ali 160-61).

Hasina writes about the insults and the protests that working women face in Dhaka. She tells Nazneen that a mullah and a group of men organize some protests against the women who work in the garment factory. She says that in the factory both men and women work but in different departments, and they do not spend time together. However, the protestors do not want to understand everything in this way. They wait in front of the factory and make insulting speeches with the help of a megaphone: “A mullah organize whole entire thing. Day and night they playing religious message with loudspeaker. They say it sinful for men and women working together. But they the ones sinning take Gods name give insult to us and tell lie” (Ali 159). Hasina tells her sister that this is injustice because the president of Bangladesh commits adultery with one of the ministers’ wives and no one insults them; however, Hasina and some other girls work in a garment factory in order to survive and they are labeled and teased as the bad girls:

Last week President Ershad at Golf Club lying down by swimming pool with girlfriend. This girlfriend is the wife of Minister! They lying like this and President wife come and throw self on girlfriend start catty fight. President try to part these two but he take knock to head. At present time President in hospital girlfriend in foreign land having face stitch together and wife still rage and mad due to girlfriend get given business contract. All these things in actual true fact. No one calling them in the street. How easy to call the garment girls. Zainab say one hundred and fifty girls in one factory getting pregnant. This is kind of thing people say. Who going to stop them? (Ali 162)

The people working in the factory gossip about Hasina and Abdul, a man in the factory. Then, they gossip about Hasina and Mr. Chowdhury who is the landlord of Hasina. They say that Hasina is a bad girl and commits adultery with them. Everyone believes these gossips, even Hasina's best friends. No one speaks to her. One day the boss calls her and tells her that he does not want whores in his factory and fires her with Abdul. Hasina says that all these things happen to her as she does not have anyone to protect her. After getting the sack, Hasina cannot even find anything to eat. She does not want to, but she becomes a whore as she cannot find any other jobs. The gossips have ruined her life: "I thinking this one thing all day. They put me out from the factory for untrue reason and due to they put me out the reason have come now as actual truth" (Ali 177). Hasina talks about her experiences as a whore to her sister and says that there is corruption everywhere in Dhaka. She talks about her pimp, Hussain and adds that he has other younger girls, who are still children, working for him and these girls are the most popular ones: "These he call floating girl. Government office are good for floating girl. Big hotel also good but girl must be younger. Best price for girls eleven twelve. He take good care. Someone not want to pay Hussain deal with them" (Ali 177).

Hasina says that if women do not have protectors, life is full of difficulties and ugliness. Nazneen gets very sad for her sister when she reads the letters from her sister, and she gets sadder when she realizes that she cannot do anything to help her. She talks to Chanu and wants him to bring Hasina to London, but he does not accept her offer.

Later, Hasina accepts a proposal from a man called Ahmed who is an albino. Although he knows that she is a whore, he wants to marry her as he finds her very beautiful. They marry but after a short time, he starts abusing and criticizing her as he has problems with his family due to his marriage with her. Hasina tries to do everything to save her marriage, but when she realizes that he does not love her anymore, she escapes from him and finds a job as a maid in a house. In this house, she looks after two small children and is very peaceful. In one of her letters, she tells Nazneen about the about the chaos and instability in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Elections are close; opposition parties do bad things. Nothing is normal. They threaten people, frighten them, and even rape women. They give guns to students and invoke violence. Also, the robbers are killed and burned in front of everyone. Hasina asks Nazneen if such kind of things happen in London. In fact, this letter depicts Bangladesh to Nazneen in great details. These letters help Nazneen to make up her mind about returning or staying:

I see robbers a time again lie there burn on ground not know if already death or live burning watching I am watching. This is picture I cannot clear from eyes...In England could such thing happen like this? People justice is quick and is terrible. Everyone talk about this thing...What this country need is more stability. How it going to help if government is change? The opposition parties is cause much trouble and go to people house for scare them and even rape of wife. Sometimes they pay police for arrest-and-scare. Also student these day should not have name of student but name of thug. The opposition

party give gun and money and student have not one second for looking at book. Is big problem for business. All boils down is instability. (Ali 287)

Through Hasina's letters, Nazneen also learns about the violence that women can meet in Bangladesh. In one of her letters, Hasina talks about a friend called Monju and her tragic story. Her husband wanted to sell their son in order to earn money; however, when Monju objected to his decision, he, his brother and sister poured acid on the child's face and body. She worked hard and saved some money for her son's operations but this time her husband wanted the money. She refused to give the money to him. This time her husband, his brother and sister poured acid over her head, face and body in order to punish her. She is in hospital. Hasina thinks that this is merciless. This is something that results from patriarchy; however, this is more than patriarchy. This is brutalism. The reader learns about men's hegemony over women. In addition, it is clear that women have no rights and there is violence. Women have no place in this society. Their lives are always full of obscurities and fears. They do not know what will happen to them tomorrow; they do not know what kind of husbands they will have; they do not know what they will do if they are beaten; they do not know that there is the possibility of divorce; they do not know what to do when they are widowed. Their lives are under threat:

I know by right eye alone. Left eye is narrow and stuff come out. Cheek and mouth is melt and ear have gone like dog chew off. I whisper to her but nurse pass by and tell to shout...It is her husband and who have done this with his brother and sister. Brother and sister hold tight and husband pour acid over head face and body. All over is infection on body and smell make it difficult for people to go near. (Ali 289)

Nazneen learns everything about Dhaka from Hasina's letters. She learns that even small children are made to work at several different jobs such as breaking bricks, cleaning the chimneys, cleaning houses or selling food in the bazaars. She learns that everyone is not happy there. When Chanu talks to her about the newspaper survey on the happiest nation on earth, she says that she does not believe in it as her sister is not happy in Dhaka. She adds that such kind of surveys do not reflect reality. The reality is that most of the people, especially women in Bangladesh are not happy and suffer from various problems. She believes that if they return there, they will not be happy and they will not adapt to the life there. Especially her daughters will suffer most as they were born and have grown in a different culture in a Western country:

A thousand thoughts crushed into Nazneen's skull. Dhaka would be a disaster. Shahana would never forgive her. Chanu would be finished. It was not even going home. She had never been there. Hasina was in Dhaka, but the city of her letters was an ugly place, full of dangers. And there was Karim. If she could leave him so easily, if it was as easy as that, then why did she ever begin it? (Ali 466)

At the end of the novel, the reader sees that Hasina elopes with the cook of the house where she works as a maid. Nazneen hears this piece of information from Chanu who is in Dhaka. She does not get surprised because she knows that her sister will not give up the possibility of falling in love and being happy. In a way, she becomes happy for her sister. She appreciates her determination to make her own decisions even at the cost of new difficulties and obscurities. She will never wait and see her fate to be revealed; she will take the steps for drawing her own fate: "Why did she do it? Why does she do these things?" Nazneen glanced

down and was surprised to see her legs. “Because,” she said, “she is not going to give up” (Ali 538). Nazneen is aware of the fact that Hasina has contributed a lot to her.

4.3- CHANU

Chanu is one of the most important characters in this novel and as it has been pointed out in the previous chapters he is a Bengali immigrant who has come to England with great expectations. He has an English Language and Literature degree from Dhaka University and also has some other certificates in several different fields. Although he tries very hard, he cannot find a good job. He always wants to be respected as he is well educated; however, he is looked down on by his white employer, colleagues and English people as he is an immigrant. He is put under the same category with the other immigrants who are uneducated and ignorant, which makes him very sad and disappointed. At the beginning of the novel, he has some hope still to be successful and gets a respectful position; however, after he loses the promotion that he expects for a long time and the September 11 attacks happen, he decides that he does not have any chance in England as an immigrant no matter how educated and different he is:

I am forty years old. I have been in this country for sixteen years. Nearly half my life. When I came I was a young man. I had ambitions. Big dreams. When I got off the aeroplane, I had my degree certificate in my suitcase and a few pounds in my pocket. I thought there would be a red carpet laid out for me. I was going to join the civil service and become Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. That was my plan. And then I found things were a bit different. These people here didn't know the difference between me, who stepped off an aeroplane with a

degree certificate, and the peasants who jumped off the boat
possessing only the lice on their heads. What can you do? (Ali 27)

Chanu always believes that English society is racist and discriminates against immigrants. In the beginning, he thinks that he can prove that he is different from the other ignorant immigrants. No matter how he tries, he does not become successful. He decides to raise his daughters in Bangladesh where he thinks they will be welcome and feel a sense of belonging. He does not look at the matters from their perspectives and ignores the fact that they were born in England and have got used to the life there. He believes that they can adapt to life in Bangladesh easily as they are children, but he is wrong because he receives very serious reactions from his daughters, especially Shahana who is the older one.

One of the most important problems about Chanu is the fact that he cannot describe himself clearly. He cannot define his identity. As he knows English literature, loves it a lot, and feels that English literature has become a part of it, he believes that he is closer to Western culture than the other immigrants. Besides, he has spent nearly twenty years in London. He feels that he is different from his people. He claims that most of the Bangladeshis are ignorant types. On the other hand, he claims that English society is racist towards minorities and immigrants. He criticizes English people and, in addition, knows that England colonized Bangladesh and his people suffered a lot in the colonization years. He does not feel belonging to England and he does not feel that he belongs to his own people. He is neither English nor Bengali. At the end of the novel, when he thinks that he has lost all his hopes in England, he feels closer to Bangladesh. He plans to return home. Home is Bangladesh for him. He believes that he will be happy there because he remembers the old days in Bangladesh and does not know that Bangladesh changed a lot in those years. He imagines and draws the picture of a peaceful Bangladesh while Nazneen sees another Bangladesh which is dark and full of dangers in Hasina's letters.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that although colonization period came to end, and all of the colonies gained their independence from their colonizers, the remnants of the colonization still continue to be influential on the modern world and world politics. Colonization was declared to be officially over; however, most of the former colonies cannot easily get rid of the psychological effects of the colonization and the identity problems. In *Brick Lane*, we have witnessed that the Bangladeshi people suffered a lot in the colonization years and cannot forget those years even if they want, because this suffrage has been a part of their identity. This suffrage has been a brick in their formation of their local identity after the end of the colonization.

Then, we see that Britain opened its doors to its former colonies especially after the Second World War in order to solve the labor shortage problem, and there came out another important problem that is the adaptation of the immigrants to the new environment. In *Brick Lane* Monica Ali focuses on the problems of the Bangladeshi immigrants living in London. Bengali immigrants, especially the first generation that has experienced the act of immigration suffers the most because they feel to be between these two worlds. They are in-betweens. They do not feel belonging to England and just regards it as a land of opportunities to earn good money and give a comfortable life to their family. Their aim is only to return to Bangladesh when they save enough money. On the other hand, when they make short visits to their homeland they do not feel at home in Bangladesh as their expectations and opinions about living conditions have changed. Therefore, they are strangers in both places. Despite this situation of being in-between, they still desire to return to their imaginary homeland one day. This turns into a going home syndrome for them; it is like an obsession because whenever they experience a racist attack and insult, whenever they feel as the second-class

citizens, and whenever they feel excluded, they stick more to their home concepts in their minds and they exalt their imaginary homelands.

When we look at the second generations in the novel, it is certain that they have a different understanding about home, and as they were mostly born in England they feel a belonging to this country. In England, they feel at home and when their parents tell them about their idea of going home, they are disturbed because it is not possible to go home as they are already at home. When we compare the first and second generations, it is normal that they have some problems in their families about their identity.

Last of all, the Bangladeshi immigrants in the novel experience not only adaptation and identity problems, but also they deal with the cultural differences. As the English society, a society that is mostly fond of the ideas of purity and national identity, does not like the immigrants much, and as they see them as a threat to their national culture, they discriminate them and make some oral, written or physical attacks on them. The characters of the novel from different cultural backgrounds experience a clash of cultures and religions. This clash naturally reminds me Huntington's theory on clash of civilizations; however, I do not want to be pessimistic about the future of the world like him. I do not agree with the clash theory and the scenes of clash in the novel because clash is not the only solution in a place where different people with their all differences live together. Civilizations, cultures, countries, states, nations, ethnic groups, different races, religious groups, and sects all consist of human beings and all human beings have lots of common points such as the belief in a higher power, belief in human rights and equality, belief in the importance of virtue, belief in respect to differences, belief in the holiness of the family institution, and belief in the right of life. In the globalizing world, I believe that the increasing communication brings people closer to each other and gives them the chance to learn about each other. If people know each other, it is easier for them to get on well, to understand each other and to respect to the differences:

“Civilizational pluralism is the only correct, empirically proven sense of globalization as contemporary phenomenon. It really means the opening up of people’s minds in all parts of the world to the existence of differences between human beings and between civilizational worlds” (Segesvary 6). I believe that the common points of sensitivities between all human beings and the increasing awareness about the unknown or misunderstood cultures will pave the way for the global dialogue.

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