

Use of Stream of Consciousness in *Brick Lane*: A Psychoanalytical Approach to Study Nazneen's Evolution

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Abstract

This paper attempts to present an interpretive study of Monica Ali's use of stream of consciousness in her first novel *Brick Lane* (2003), examining the connection of human psychology with this technique to comprehend the protagonist Nazneen's evolutionary expedition. *Brick Lane* starts with the stillbirth of Nazneen and by her mother's influence she learns to accept fate without any question. After her marriage with Chanu, she becomes a British immigrant and embarks her journey to adjust in a new place, new life and to form a new identity beyond the patriarchal constraints. Throughout the novel, she undergoes various internal and external dilemma and troubles; but, she establishes her own identity by attaining economic emancipation and by establishing her rational insights. This paper purports to interpret step by step journey of 'a village girl' Nazneen towards her transformation as an independent woman retaining her native cultural values. The study identifies the stream of consciousness used by the author to reveal the mind's workings of Nazneen behind her behaviours and activities. This article attempts to explore the psychological interpretation of Nazneen's thoughts and actions. In this regard, Freud's theory of 'unconscious' and 'conscious' mind is used to explore how her stream of consciousness works for the readers to dive deep into the character to comprehend her predicament and upswing. This paper presents, through a psychoanalytical approach, an in-depth textual interpretation of Nazneen's story with a specific reference to her inner journey or, explicitly, her stream of consciousness.

Keywords: Brick Lane, Nazneen, Stream of Consciousness, Unconscious, Evolution

Introduction

Literature unfolds the mysterious inner world and records the connection of human beings with the outer world. In reality, we can understand the motive of others behind their actions, if we want to, through the information about their intentions, their past or by knowing about their future plan. Literature provides a vast scope to analyse characters very subtly by presenting their thoughts, perceptions and views more closely. The authors have the privileges to depict a character thoroughly. For that purpose, different authors take different techniques to reveal a character or characters deeply. Stream of consciousness is such a technique that engages the readers and enables them to probe deep into the flow of a character's thought process. In this regard, psychoanalytical theory works as a magnifying glass to get clear picture and relatively precise interpretation of a character.

Bangladeshi born British writer Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) revolves round the revelation of its protagonist Nazneen's broadening of mind's horizon who was at the beginning a very docile girl under her father's rule. The novel starts with her immature birth and her mother's (Amma's) accepting fate passively with no prompt action to save the child. Her mother wins in accepting the fate and Nazneen survives. This incident causes Nazneen's accepting faith without question.

The purpose of this study is dealing with Nazneen's stream of consciousness that helps the readers to comprehend the gradual growth of Nazneen from an "unspoilt" village girl to self-assured woman at the end whose aim was to be a "good wife like Amma".

In *Brick Lane*, Monica Ali's "order of telling does not correspond to the order of happening." She has used 'analeptic' or "'flash back' to relate an event which happened in the past", and "proleptic" or "'flash forward' to narrate, or refer to, or anticipate an event which happens later." (Barry 226). Ali has created a fusion of "omniscient narration" or "internal focalization" and epistolary style. Nazneen's sister Hasina's parallel journey in Bangladesh is presented through letters. Among these traditional techniques, Monica Ali has amalgamated stream of consciousness technique to heighten the psychological journey of Nazneen.

Stream of consciousness is such a literary technique that has origin in psychology. Kelley Griffith in his *Writing Essays about Literature: A Guide and Style Sheet* says that some writers have employed structural devices drawn from psychological theories and one of the devices is stream of consciousness, which conforms to William James's ideas about the workings of the conscious mind. (129)

Robert Humphrey in his book *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel* opines that "Stream of consciousness is properly a phrase for psychologists. William James coined it. The phrase is most clearly useful when it is applied to mental processes." (1)

Muslim Mehdy Jassim and Bothaina A.w. Hamid in their article "The Use of Stream of Consciousness in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*" have found that stream of consciousness reveals the mental process. It follows an associative rather than a logical sequence without commentary by the author. When an author uses stream of consciousness he or she directly exposes the character's interior world. The author presents the flux of a character's thoughts and does not tell the readers about what the character is thinking; rather, a character is projected in his own world to move on.

In literature, we see that stream of consciousness chronicles the central character's random thoughts regarding any concerning issue, related past events or future uncertainties, worries or anxieties, reaction to any incident and such other nonspecific thoughts without particular association with each other. Thought pattern does not follow any grammatical sequence. As long as the central character is concerned, these series of random thoughts derived from series of experiences, are vital though these may seem trivial to the outer world.

Use of stream of consciousness technique is widely found in 20th century novels and poems. James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, T.S. Eliot's "The love song of J. Alfred Prufrock", Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*, William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* are the examples of stream of consciousness narration. (Griffith 129).

After reading the novel *Brick Lane*, the researcher feels interest and decides to research on Nazneen's flow of her random thoughts which demonstrates her likings, disgust, confusion, conflict, reminisces, subtlety, meticulous observation, self-control, self-denial and her overall scuffle in a migrated place. But the researcher finds no research work has been done on this specific area of the novel.

So, the researcher collects the idea from some articles concerning the use of this literary technique in some of the abovementioned literary pieces. Besides, the researcher gathers insights on Nazneen's transformation from other articles. This paper is an attempt to associate Nazneen's phase by phase transformation with her mind's thoughts and workings (stream of consciousness). To achieve that goal Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis has been used as a theoretical framework.

Kelley Griffith states that many literary critics find three of Freud's ideas relate to literature. They are the dominance of the unconscious mind over the conscious, the expression of the unconscious mind through symbols (most notably in dreams), and the primacy of sexuality as a motivating force in human behavior. According to Freud, sexual drives reside in the unconscious, the conscious mind represses them, and that unconscious symbols usually represent this repressed sexual energy. (128)

In *Critical Theory Today: A Use-Friendly Guide*, Lois Tyson says that Freud's one of the "most radical insights" is "the notion that human beings are motivated, even driven, by desires, fears, needs, and conflicts of which they are unaware-that is, unconscious" (12).

Freud divides three parts model of the psyche as the ego, the super-ego and the id. These three parts roughly correspond to respectively the consciousness, the conscience and the unconscious. (Barry 93). According to Freudian theory, the superego is the psychological reservoir of our instincts, and our libido or sexual energy. The id is devoted solely to the gratification of prohibited (by social convention) desires of all kinds without an eye to consequences. In this way the superego or cultural taboos determines which desires the id will contain. The ego is the conscious self that experiences the external world through the senses and plays referee between the id and superego. A change in one always involves changes in the other two. Thus the ego is, to a large degree, the product of conflicts between what society says we can't have and what we (therefore) want. (Tyson 25)

Besides, when Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* says about Freud's theory, he says that we may try to cope with by repressing or eliminating some difficult wish, fear, memory, or desire from the conscious mind "But this doesn't make it go away: it remains alive in the unconscious, like radioactive matter buried beneath the ocean, and constantly seeks a way back into the conscious mind, always succeeding eventually." Barry also quotes Freud saying, "There is always a return of the repressed." (96)

In the present study, the aforementioned basic concepts regarding 'stream of consciousness' and 'unconscious' mind are examined to interpret the evolution of Nazneen. Thus, the general objective of this paper is to relate Nazneen's stream of consciousness with her ongoing journey and interpret it through psychoanalytical lens. The specific objectives are:

- i) To identify the stream of consciousness used to present Nazneen
- ii) To evaluate to what extent this specific device works as a basis to comprehend Nazneen's transformation
- iii) To measure Nazneen's step by step evolutionary expedition and
- iv) To explore psychological drive beneath both passive and active actions as well as evolution of Nazneen

To attain the goal, Nazneen's evolutionary journey is interpreted step by step. In every phase of her life what she feels, anticipates and how she scrutinizes and estimates other characters and happenings are presented through her thoughts' flow.

Nazneen's Still Birth and Amma's (Mother's) Injected Notion about Fate and Patriarchal Dominance
Brick Lane starts with the still birth of Nazneen who is not taken to hospital for treatment. It is Nazneen's mother's decision who believes in the unquestioning will of fate. She injects the same belief in Nazneen while she grows up by hearing her miraculous survival story *How You Were Left to Your Fate* repeatedly. Nazneen, without questioning, conceives Amma's theory, "Just wait and see that's all we can do" (Ali 36).

When Nazneen starts to grow up and questions about her father's frequent disappearance for days, her mother replies with tears, "If God wanted us to ask question, he would have made us men" (64). Thus Nazneen becomes a docile and introvert girl accepting fate passively unlike her sister Hasina who elopes with Malek for her love affair. Nazneen's life is ruled by the principle "what could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne." (11)

When she comes to know about her marriage arranged by her father, we come across her random thoughts with symbolic images; here, Monica Ali only shows what she is thinking and does not comment on her thought process:

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. In the distance a hawk circled and fell like a stone, came up again and flew against the sky until it shrank to nothing. There was a hut in the middle of the paddy. It looked wrong: embarrassed, sliding down at one side, trying to hide. The tornado that had flattened half the neighboring village had selected this hut to be saved, but had relocated it. In the village they

were still burying their dead and looking for bodies. Dark spots moved through the far fields. Men, doing whatever they could in this world. (12)

Here we feel a sigh coming out of her heart. Sigh in the thought of passive submission in the decision of 'men' (her father and subsequently her husband) as they can do anything in this world. Here, she represses a kind of mild aversion to frog-like appearance of Chanu and fear of going far away. The hawk symbolizes her feeling of uncertainty going to face near future after going to a new place leaving all familiar objects in her motherland. Again perhaps the surviving hut from tornado in the middle of paddy field foreshadows her survival at the end independently.

Nazneen's Slow Journey from Desolation of Loneliness towards Consolation of Adjustment

Nazneen comes to Tower Hamlets in London after marriage at the age of 18. She passes her time by cooking, cleaning, washing and with all household works. At her free time she stands by the window and looks through it and observes the tattoo lady sitting on the opposite block. She observes her surroundings very subtly. At the beginning there is no one to talk and she does not know English. When Chanu goes to work she feels terrible loneliness. Even it does not matter if Chanu is at home; because, he always talks about things, recites English literature or talk about any other branches of knowledge most of which Nazneen cannot understand. He continues talking and complaining about his promotion and racial conflict. He continuously demonstrates his learning where Nazneen is of no concern.

It is six months Nazneen is in England and in every morning before opening her eyes, her mental process works and she perceives:

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, his lips parted indignantly even as he slept. She saw the pink dressing table with the curly-sided mirror, and the monstrous black wardrobe that claimed most of the room. Was it cheating? To think, I know what I would wish? Was it not the same as making the wish? If she knew what the wish would be, then somewhere in her heart she had already made it. (13)

She suffers from loneliness in the new place. Her intolerable moments make her unstable, stir her mind to be in contact with people, to go to tattoo lady's house. But from her flow of thoughts we come to know what she thinks about her prime problem in taking the initiative:

She thought of it but she would not go. Strangers would answer if she knocked on the wrong door. The tattoo lady might be angry at an unwanted interruption. It was clear she did not like to leave her chair. And even if she wasn't angry, what would be the point? Nazneen could say two things in English: sorry and thank you. (13-14)

With strong force a long sigh comes out as she continues thinking "She could spend another day alone. It was only another day."(14)

Anxiety is one of the important components of Freud's psychoanalytical theory "Anxiety can tell us a good deal about ourselves because we are anxious in situations in which our core issues are in play." "Low self-esteem" is one of the core issues that makes us feel that we are less worthy than others and therefore, don't deserve attention, love or any other reward. (Tyson 17)

After coming to an alien place Nazneen at the beginning suffers from "low self-esteem". She feels uneasy to talk in front of Dr. Azad. When suddenly she manages to talk, "the back of her neck" burns out of nervousness.

She is worried about her sister Hasina who lives in Bangladesh and elopes with Malek. She has shown disobedience to her father and doesn't come back home. As a sister, Nazneen always misses her and feels worried whether Hasina is fine or not. In her lonesome days worries about Hasina provide her room to speculate on the role of fate.

It worried her that Hasina kicked against fate. No good could come of it. Not a single person could say so. But then, if you really looked into it, thought about it more deeply, how could you be sure that Hasina was not simply following her fate? If fate cannot be changed, no matter how you struggle against it, then perhaps Hasina was fated to run away with Malek. Maybe she struggled against that, and that was what she could not alter. Oh, you think it would be simple, having made the decision long, long ago, to be at the beck and call of fate, but how to know which way it is calling you? And there was each and every day to be got through. If Chanu came home this evening and found the place untidy and the spices not even ground, could she put her hands like so and say, "Don't ask me why nothing is prepared, it was not I who decided it, it was fate." A wife could reasonably be beaten for a lesser offense. (16)

From this thought flow Nazneen's analytical capacity is apparent. That she can think with logic is clear from her thought. What is fate and to be fated- these ideas create confusion in her mind. Though consciously she wants to be good wife or passive like Amma believing in unquestionable acceptance of fate, in her unconscious mind she has enough confusion in solely relying in fate.

Awful thoughts sometimes occupy her mind caused by loneliness. When in rush she cuts her finger, she holds it under the tap and her thoughts flow continues as: "How long would it take to empty her finger of blood, drop by drop? How long for the arm? And for the body, an entire body? What she missed most was people. Not any people in particular (apart, of course, from Hasina) but just people." (17)

Sometimes she is so agonized with loneliness that anxiety and fear seize her. She dreams the "monstrous black wardrobe" has fallen on her, crushing her on the mattress. She thinks sometimes she may be locked inside it and she will hammer, hammer; but, nobody will be there to rescue her.

Loneliness bleeds Nazneen's soul. We do not see Nazneen cries. Perhaps if she would have cried, her frustration could have been subsided. She is so introvert that she does not tell Chanu her problems directly. She just gives hints and seeks for his attention. She wants Chanu should show concern why she does not take meal or breakfast with him. She wants him to understand that food is not concern to her, she needs something else. But things do not happen as she anticipates; Chanu never gives anything deep thought.

Nazneen tries to adjust in her life. She has been acquainted with Razia, who becomes the most influential character in her life, and Mrs Islam, who disguises as a good, helpful old woman but later appears as a villain to Nazneen's family. She has got many beautiful and convenient things in her present life. Adjustment appears when she thinks about her village Gouripur:

When she thought about Gouripur now, she thought about inconvenience. To live without a flushing toilet, to abandon her two sinks (kitchen and bathroom), to make fire for the oven instead of turning a knob—would these be trades worth making? She tried 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. (62-63)

By the passage of time her loneliness gradually becomes tolerable "regular prayer, regular housework, regular visits with Razia. She told her mind to be still. She told her heart, do not beat with fear, do no beat with desire." (40). This insight is the product of the "ego" or the "conscious" level of her psyche as it is the source of our decision making and rational thought. (Nayar 65)

Complex Phases of Nazneen's Relationship with Chanu

At the beginning of the novel we see Chanu's self-obsession and talkativeness add salt to the wound of Nazneen's pain caused by loneliness in a new place. Chanu never thinks to give her special time and romantic attention that a young woman needs in married life. He does not pay attention to her mental longings. She appeals to learn English but is rejected with the reply that English will automatically come and there is no need to learn. If she wants to go out for environment change, he replies with non-ending excuses like "why should you go out?" he adds that if she goes out then people will gossip. He is not satisfied with a simple answer and continues adding more: "If you were in Bangladesh you would not go out. Coming here

you are not missing anything, only broadening your horizons.”(35) He constantly reminds her that she has married an educated man and it is her “stroke of luck”.

Earlier we have noticed Nazneen’s primary and “unconscious” aversion to Chanu’s frog-like appearance and his age. This aversion presents itself to her “conscious” mind when once she hears her husband introducing her to someone over the telephone as a “good worker, a girl from the village: totally unspoilt.” (17). Nazneen feels utterly disappointed and insulted. Her conscious thoughts rebuke her for keeping herself in a high notion about her youth and “self-regard”:

Her husband had a proverb for everything. Any wife is better than no wife. Something is better than nothing. What had she imagined? That he was in love with her? That he was grateful because she, young and graceful, had accepted him? That in sacrificing herself to him, she was owed something? Yes. Yes. She realized in a stinging rush she had imagined all these things. Such a foolish girl. Such high notions. What self-regard. (17)

When Hasina leaves Malek and becomes lost, Nazneen suggests Chanu to find out Hasina from Dhaka. At this, Chanu’s sheer mockery hurts her, because worry for Hasina “was not even a thought. It was a feeling, a stab in the lungs” (16) She starts silent rebellion from repressed resentment by silent actions like placing two fiery red chilies in Chanu’s sandwich, mixing unwashed socks with washed ones, intentionally sliding the razor while cutting Chanu’s corns.

After the birth of Rakib, Nazneen’s first child, gradual irritation, comparison, silent rebellion reach to the peak when she thinks while going to Dr. Azad’s house uninvited:

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 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...! (82)

But this thought does not last long. She admits to her mind that Chanu “was kind and never beat her”. So, she should not be restless in her mind. Moreover there is Rakib. She tries hard to avoid the “shapeless, nameless thing” that disturbs her. She makes “bargains with it”: “No more eating in the middle of the night. No more dreaming of ice, and blades, and spangles. No more missed prayers. No more gossip. No more disrespect to my husband.”(83). She tries to calm down her mind. Actually, Nazneen feels ambivalence in her relationship with Chanu.

We see a transitional phase of Nazneen and Chanu’s relation when Rakib becomes ill and is hospitalized. Chanu manages the household, cooks for her and takes care of her. This time “her irritation with her husband, instead of growing steadily as it had for three year, began to subside.”(98). This time her feeling is,

Abba did not choose so badly. This was not a bad man. There were many bad men in the world, but this was not one of them. She could love him. Perhaps she did already. She thought she did. And if she didn’t, she soon would because now she understood what he was, and why. Love would follow understanding. (98)

Nazneen oscillates between the push of her repressed disgust towards Chanu and pull of her practical reasoning that is the obvious sign of her process of evolution. Now Nazneen psychoanalyses Chanu’s behavior as,

He was looking for the same essential thing. But he thought he could grab it from outside and hold it against his chest like a shield. The degrees, the promotion, the Dhaka house, the library, the chair-restoring business, the import- export plans, the interminable reading. They were his self- fashioned tools. With them he tried to chisel out a special place, where he could have peace of mind. (99)

Nazneen’s flow of conscious thought with reason proves her subtlety, intelligence and sign of mental growth.

Nazneen’s Stages of Gathering Confidence

In the midst of the sheer desolation of Nazneen's lonely life in the flat of Tower Hamlets, she gets pleasure by watching ice-skating in the television. The woman skater's freedom of movement, urgency to win attracts her. Every move seems to her as "urgent, intense, a declaration". Her old anxiety is replaced by "white light, glory" while she watches ice skating. In her mind she always cherishes the desire to be like the skater. Attraction to ice-skating is the first symbolic rise of her confidence. This attraction indicates Nazneen's dream to be free from patriarchal dominance and to build up her own identity.

Nazneen goes out after getting Hasina's third letter about her (Hasina's) leaving husband and moving alone. She walks very far and loses the way to come back. A stranger talks to her and she indicates that she cannot understand his language and says, "Sorry". Then a glimpse of confidence rises in her mind, "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." (48) At last she manages to come back home by asking direction in a Bangladeshi restaurant. When Chanu mocks her sarcastically at the request of finding out Hasina in Dhaka, she wishes to shout and inform Chanu that,

Anything is possible.Do you know what I did today? I went inside a pub. To use the toilet. Did you think I could do that? I walked mile upon mile, probably around the whole of London, although I did not see the edge of it. And to get home again I went to a restaurant. I found a Bangladesh restaurant and asked directions. See what I can do! (50)

Monica Ali does not tell directly how she has managed to come back, when the readers wonder and the suspense grow, Nazneen's stream of consciousness works as vital information.

Thus step by step she gathers her strength. She learns English by picking different words she hears. She starts earning money, helping Hasina and contributing to her family in need.

A Short Transition towards Nazneen's Matured Womanhood

At this stage, when Nazneen is trying to be calm, Chanu resigns from his job. It worries her that "what they would do for money. What job he would get now". (111). Anxiety ceases her again. She contemplates on the role of fate again. She is moved by seeing Rakib's chest "rising and falling". Unknown fear resides in her 'unconscious' mind. Sometimes she becomes rebellious in the thought of her Amma's decision:

If Nazneen (her husband's part she did not consider) had not brought the baby to 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? (111)

She tries to ponder on the things logically when things come to her responsibility to decide on. Her confusion about relying on fate passively continues.

At this short transitional period, Raib dies. Before his death she has dreamed Amma's burial. The repressed fear of death in unconscious level of her mind takes the symbol of "dream".

Later Phase of Nazneen's Immigrant Life: Full with Internal and External Turmoil

Over the years Nazneen gives birth to Shahana and Bibi after Rakib's death. Nazneen learns to be accustomed with keeping house and acting as a good mother and a good wife. After resigning from council job, Chanu has never been settled in any earning source. He takes all preparation to go back to Bangladesh with his family; but, their home fund does not increase to materialize the plan. Nazneen wholeheartedly wants to contribute by earning money. She insists on Chanu several times to permit her for working from home.

Nazneen cannot be confident about her love towards Chanu in the sense of romantic love until the novel ends. Once Shahana inquires her "have you ever been in love with him?" Nazneen's replies "Your father is a good man. I was lucky in my marriage."(251)

On the other hand Chanu's beginning indifference and casual concept about Nazneen's being an unspoilt girl from village having only cleaning and cooking skills changes over time. Now Chanu admits freely "When I married her, I said: she is a good worker. Girl from the village. Unspoilt.All the clever-clever girls are not worth one hair on her head." (170)

Constant worrying about Hasina urges Nazneen to earn money and she thinks, "If she had a job, she would be able to save. And if she saved then they would have enough money to go to Dhaka. Or if they didn't go to Dhaka, she would save enough to send money to Hasina" ofcourse without the knowledge of Chanu. (153)

Nazneen's prior concern is to help her family. She is "doing everything possible to facilitate" Chanu's dream of going back to Bangladesh "through the old and honourable craft of tailoring." (171). We see Chanu has started to give her importance, brings a sewing machine for her for sewing job. Several times he declares her credit as a "boss woman" in the house.

Chanu's constant planning to go to Bangladesh without adequate home fund, Shahana's embarrassment, disobedience, chanu's nagging, constant fight of father- daughter seem to Nazneen that she is "walking through a field of snakes" and she is worried at "every step" :

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. (168)

Moreover, Mrs. Islam starts imposing more and more interest on the money Chanu borrowed from her to buy a machine and a computer. It becomes a pressure for the family specially for Nazneen as she has to encounter Mrs. Islam directly.

Nazneen's conscious flow of thought not only reveals her ongoing mental condition and feelings but also analyze other characters, their actions. She subtly analyzes the drive and motives behind Chanu's behavior. During nervous breakdown while Chanu takes very special care of her in front of Dr. Azad she remembers,

Many years ago, when she had first wondered what brought these two men together. Now, what kept them together was clear. The doctor had status and respect and money, the lack of which caused Chanu to suffer. But the doctor had no family; none he could speak of without suffering. Chanu had a proper wife, daughters who behaved themselves. But this clever man, for all his books, was nothing better than a rickshaw wallah. And so they entwined their lives to drink from the pools of each other's sadness. From these special watering holes, each man drew strength. (271)

Affair with Karim: A Transitional Phase between Nazneen's Complex-Self and Re-Awakened Self

Karim comes to Nazneen's life as a "middleman" who brings sewing orders for her. Karim acts as the leader of Bengal Tigers, an organization formed to guard the rights of the Muslim community. Nazneen's affair with Karim becomes the most culminating period of her long repressed desires. Karim's spirited youth, his giving her importance attracts Nazneen slowly. Karim discusses the crisis of the Muslims throughout the world and leaves the Bengali newsletters for her to read. She feels honoured and likes to read and know the world. An automatic comparison between Chanu's conduct with her and that of Karim peeps through her mind, "Chanu had never given her anything to read. And what good were his books anyway? All that ancient history." She tries to bring the newsletters to the attention of Chanu and to show, "you are not the only one who knows things" but she withdraws when he comes. (200)

Before Karim's entrance to her life she used to think her problems are big ones including Hasina's condition. Knowing the destruction of war, people's misery, children being murdered, she is moved and feels the "smallness" of her crisis. Karim says prayer several times at her home. The tips of their fingers come to touch; she smells "the crisp smell of his shirt". (201) This is the symbolical implication of her sexual urge.

What Nazneen has repressed in her unconscious mind for years is romance in love that results in sexuality. She gets sexually involved with Karim. She approaches to Karim by the urge of her "id" level of mind; but

at the same time, her “ego” is in conflict with the “id”: “He was the first man to see her naked. It made her sick with shame. It made her sick with desire. They committed a crime.....in between his arms, she took her pleasure desperately, as if the executioner waited behind the door.” (248)

She manages the thought of eternal fire and sin and “from every touch of flesh on flesh” she preserves the “strength to endure it”. Her “libido” or “sexual energy” appears as more powerful: “Though they began with a gentle embrace, tenderness could not satisfy her, nor could she stand it, and into her recklessness she drew him like a moth to a flame.” (248)

For the time being her conscious mind tries to “displace” the thought of sin by her believe in fate. Her reliance to fate indirectly refreshes her indifference; as if it was to happen:

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. And now she gave herself up to a power greater than these two, and she felt herself helpless before it. When the thought crept into her mind that the power greater than these two, and she felt herself helpless before it. When the thought crept into her mind that the power was inside her, that she was its crator, she dismissed it as conceited. How could such a weak woman unleash a force so strong? She gave in to fate and not to herself. (248)

We see the outburst of Nazneen’s repressed sexual desire or the function of her id. Her “super ego” or conscience becomes aware and stings her soul as the relation goes against “family, duty, everything. Her prime dilemma starts and continues until she restores her inner strength and decides to move forward. Later she admits to Razia that karim has added colour to her black and white life and made her enabled to see things. (358)

Nazneen’s Final Resolution

The leaflet war between the Muslim party and anti-Muslim party goes on. The clash reaches to top excitement after 9/11 attack. Chanu’s resentments become more acute. He does not want his family to fight “racism, ignorance, poverty”. External turmoil makes Nazneen restless. She undergoes through many-sided dilemma at the same time:

It was because of the leaflet war. It was because of Mrs. Islam. It was because she had not told Razia yet. It was because of Hasina. It was because of her Home Fund, which was not growing quickly enough. It was because of the girls, who did not want to go home. (226)

At the moment of chili chopping, she unmindfully rubes her eyes and eyes start burning to the highest pain, “the burn was fierce and it unleashed in her an equal ferocity.” This burning symbolizes her inner agony and conflict. Suddenly this external pain’s urgency excites her to make an end to its severity, literally by “the curative powers of cold running water”. Symbolically her spirit rises and she cries “out of sheer exhilaration”, “I will decide what to do. I will say what happens to me. I will be the one” (337)

Mrs. Islam starts violence with her sons for money in Nazneen’s house. But Nazneen faces her dramatically and boldly. She says that they have paid her more than she owed as interest. She adds she is not going to pay “any more riba”. At this Mrs Islam crinkles and leaves. Nazneen has become able to free her family from debt and the clutches of Mrs. Islam. Nazneen’s final realization after facing Mrs Islam is “God provided a way, and I found it”.

Nazneen makes an end with Karim not by rejecting him straightforwardly. Rather she upholds the truth in front of Karim. When Karim asks her whether she is concerned about the sin of their affair or not, Nanzneen replies that they have already done it, “I wasn’t me, and you weren’t you. From the very beginning to the very end, we didn’t see things. What we did- we made each other up.” (380)

The culminating point of Nazneen’s and Chanu’s relation appears in the eve of final decision about going back to Bangladesh on the part of Nazneen. In an emotional moment Chanu says, “All these years I dreamed of going home a Big Man. Only now, when it’s 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.” Nazneen sheds tears

and says, “What is all this Strong Man? Do you think that is why I love you? Is that what there is in you, to be loved?” (400)

Dr. Azad gifts the ticket money to Chanu and Chanu goes back to Bangladesh and Nazneen stays. There is no resolution whether Chanu will come back and start living with his family together or not.

Nazneen has emancipated her soul from all the stifles; she has achieved economic emancipation. Her long cherished desire to be like the ice skater is accomplished both literally and symbolically. Her daughters and best friend Razia take her to ice skating ground and she prepares to “get on the ice physically – it hardly seemed to matter. In her mind she was already there.” (413)

Conclusion

It is not expedient always to unleash the psychological workings of the mind of an introvert character like Nazneen only through description and actions. Monica Ali has not commented directly about her use stream of consciousness. But Nazneen’s plot offers a striking attraction and scope to analyze her flow of thoughts. In an interview with *The Daily Star*, Monica Ali says, “I never start writing until I can hear the voices of the main characters in my head.”

Throughout Nazneen’s journey we see an introvert and fatalist girl climbs up the ladder of transformation slowly and reaches to her destination as an emancipated and self-assured woman. She has overcome the restraints of the patriarchal dominance, chaotic outer circumstances and puzzled psychic crisis. She comes out of the patriarchal constraints through silent, intelligent and matured ways not by force or violent rebellion.

Nazneen is no more the woman from village to “spend ten, twenty years here” and to pass the time “in the kitchen grinding spices all day and learn only two words of English.” (93). Where Chanu cannot assimilate to stay in a foreign land, Nazneen establishes her identity keeping her own cultural values in place.

Nazneen’s evolution process appears to us more clearly through the technique stream of consciousness or by getting the very inner workings of her mind. It is psychoanalysis which justifies her thoughts and actions. We find Nazneen in the strong charge of destruction and preservation. She destroys all the passivity and stereotypical notion of native womanhood that entangles her to rise, to decide the best things for herself and her family; she preserves the welfare of her family, her values and identity.

Monica Ali employs Nazneen’s stream of consciousness to serve manifold purposes. It enables the reader to understand other important characters like Chanu, Razia, Dr. Azad, Mrs, Azad and Karim. Through the help of this narrative device, the readers come to know her questioning about blind belief in faith, information about her past memories belonging to different geographical place (East Pakistan) and time. Stream of consciousness, psychoanalysis and Nazneen’s progressive movement are intricately interwoven in this study. The researcher believes that this paper will add value to the further interpretation of *Brick Lane*.

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