

FEMALE INDEPENDENCE AS THE THIRD WORLD WOMEN IN MONICA ALI'S *BRICK LANE*

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Abstract

This research aims to describe the portrayals of Nazneen independence as main character in London. Before describing the portrayals of independence, the researcher analyzes Nazneen's life in Bangladesh and London. Descriptive qualitative method was used as the method of this research because the data of this research was presented in the form of dialogue and narration, which the data source was taken from novel *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali. The researcher employed theory in analyzing the data, that feminist from third world country can struggle to get her independence in social or environment, financial, etc. on another county.

The researcher found data which are Nazneen's life in Bangladesh and London which shows the portrayals of Nazneen's independence. Nazneen's life in Bangladesh is contributing her characteristic to know how she struggle with her original culture. Meanwhile, Nazneen's life in London became the struggle in cultural differences between her original culture and the new culture. And portrayals of Nazneen independence are Nazneen independence in suffrage, Nazneen will not copromise on injustice, Nazneen has to be positive and broad minded, Nazneen independence in job.

Key words: Nazneen, independence, third world women, Bangladesh, London.

INTRODUCTION

Brick Lane is novel by Monica Ali was published in 2003. The novel centers on the life of Nazneen as the main character, a Bangladeshi immigrant who has married ChanuAhmed, her senior. She moves to London to start her new married life with her husband. Nazneen meets many people of Bangladeshi origin during her arrival, and learns of new traditions as well as the struggles of maintaining her own old traditions. However, Nazneen has two children's, Raqib and Shahana. After several years, they live in London, Chanu begins to get frightened that his son will be exposed to western corruptions like drugs and alcohol, and he states that the will move back to Bangladesh with his family soon to avoid this from happening. However, the truth of her mother dies which is her father affair with other women, Nazneen's son Raqib dies, and the experience of almost dying at a young age make Nazneen begin to think about fate.

During Nazneen's sewing work and her relationship with Chanu are hang, she meets Karim, who brings her sewing supplies from his uncle's store. At the same time, Mrs. Islam employs her two sons as thugs to pressure Nazneen and Chanu into giving her more money than they owe. The affair and financial difficulties result in Nazneen having a mental breakdown. After she recovers, she regains her independence and ends her affair with Karim. Chanu leaves for Bangladesh alone and Nazneen and her daughters remain in London. Nazneen begins her sewing business and the novel finishes with her finally

fulfilling her dream of going ice-skating. Before Nazneen move in London, she lives in Bangladesh as the third world country.

The Third World country are the country that often used to roughly describe the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The term third world include as well capitalist (Venezuela), communist (North Korea), very rich (Saudi Arabia) and very poor (Mali). The concept of the third world serves to identify countries that suffer from high infant mortality, low economic development, high level of poverty, low utilization of natural resources, and heavy dependence on industrialized nation. Third World Country tend to have economies dependent on the developed countries and are generally characterized as poor with unstable government and having high rates of population growth, illiteracy and disease. Therefore, Nazneen can be called as the third world woman. The third world women focus on women that come from third world countries like Asia, Africa, and so forth. According to Momsen in his book, entitled "*Women and Development in the Third World*":

"For all societies, the common denominator of gender is female subordination. For women of the contemporary Third world the effects of patriarchal attitudes are exacerbated by economic crisis and the legacy of imperialism".

From this quotation the researcher argues that the third world for women came from the effect of patriarchal attitudes by economic crisis and legacy of imperialism. Women become the common denominator in society; they must depend on men in their life (Mertania & Amelia, 2020; Rusliyawati et al., 2021; Samanik & Lianasari, 2018). The researcher argues this statement because nowadays female can also be dominant in their society. Additionally, according to Momsen in his book, entitled "*Women and Development in the Third World*": the third world women also focus on the modernization of agriculture that has altered the division of labor between the sexes, increasing women's dependent status as well as their workload (Karnawan et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020; Sasalia & Sari, 2020). Women often lose control over resources such as land and are generally excluded from access to new technology (Afrianto & Ma'rifah, 2020; Endang Woro Kasih, 2018; Setri & Setiawan, 2020). Male mobility is higher than female, both between places and between jobs, and more women are being left alone to support children (Asia & Samanik, 2018; Fitri & Qodriani, 2016; Kardiansyah & Salam, 2020b). Women in the Third World now carry a double or even triple burden of work as they cope with housework, childcare and subsistence food production, in addition to an expanding involvement in paid employment (Kardiansyah, 2017; Kardiansyah & Salam, 2020b; Pajar & Putra, 2021). Women work longer hours than men (Heaverly & EWK, 2020; Keanu, 2018; Sari & Oktaviani, 2021). How women cope with declining status, heavier work burdens and growing impoverishment is crucial to the success of development policies in the Third World. The researcher focuses on the third world women's struggle to gain their independence over men and patriarchal society, therefore, the researcher applies feminist approach in this research.

Regarding to this issue, the researcher applies feminist literary criticism. Feminist literary criticism actively supports women's knowledge in literature and valuing women's experiences (Amelia, 2021; Aminatun & Oktaviani, 2019; Kardiansyah, 2019). This criticism assumes that literature both reflects and shapes stereotypes and other cultural assumptions (Fithratullah, 2019; Ghufroni, 2018; Journal et al., 2021). Thus, feminist

literary criticism examines how works of literature embody patriarchal attitudes or undercut them, sometimes both happening within the same work (Al Falaq & Puspita, 2021; *No Title* 学姐单词, n.d.; Oktavia & Suprayogi, 2021).

In feminist literary criticism there is a term known as feminism. *Feminism: ideas, beliefs, movement*": feminism refers to a diverse variety of beliefs, ideas, movements, and agendas for action (Puspita, 2019; Suprayogi, Puspita, et al., 2021; Yulianti & Sulistiyawati, 2020). The usual and most basic definition of feminism is the belief that women should be equal to men and includes actions, especially organized, that promote women's rights to move towards equality with men. In other words, feminism describes a culture in which women are treated unequally with men, and that, in that difference of treatment, women are at a disadvantage. It assumes that such treatment is cultural and thus possible to change and not simply "the way the world is and must be"; feminism looks to a different culture as possible, and values moving towards that culture. Moreover, feminism consists of activism, individually and in groups, to make personal and social change towards that more desirable culture. In this novel, the researcher can see how Nazneen struggles to get a new life without Chanu.

The definition of independence is independence as freedom from being governed or ruled by another country and the ability to live your life without being held or influenced by other people (Puspita, 2021; Qodriani & Wijana, 2020). From this definition of independence, the researcher wants to analyze the portrayals of women independence.

In *Brick Lane*, Nazneen as the main character experiences some discrimination from her husband. She cannot go outside of their house so that she cannot socialize with people around her, and she cannot learn new culture that is English, because she comes from Bangladesh without any information about English or London so Nazneen cannot communicate with other people. After she got that discrimination, she know the truth of her thought that she can make decision by her, Nazneen think that she must independent. Based on the explanation, the researcher is interested in analyzing the portrayals of Nazneen's independence as the third world women in novel *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali. The researcher chooses this topic discussion because the researcher wants to know and elaborates how women in the third world countries, especially Bangladesh, struggle to get better life London. Based on that explanation, this research is important for people in general and students of English Literature to gain more information about how female or feminist struggle to get equal rights in financial like getting a job and environment they can socialize with other people, so that they can be independent. Additionally, for students of English literature, this research can help them to know how to apply feminist literary criticism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feminist Literary Criticism

Feminist literary criticism is an appropriate approach used to reveal many subordination and oppression of women. Moreover, feminist literary criticism is an effort of women scholars to change the tyranny of androcentric criticism which very male oriented. It tends to influence the women readers to identify themselves with men's character. In order to stand for the position of women's literature into an appropriate place, feminist literary criticism summarizes various approaches whether textual structuralism reception, semiotic

or literature sociology (Adelina & Suprayogi, 2020; Journal & Kiranamita, 2021; Purwaningsih & Gulö, 2021).

Therefore, we are led to identify women's role inside the works of literature in order to uncover the patriarchal system dominated by men. Feminism does not mean a criticism as an alibi for replacing men and literature dominated by women, and does not see sexual distinction in literature as a threat (Samanik, 2019; Suprayogi, 2021; Suprayogi, Pranoto, et al., 2021). On the contrary, to see the criticism as a great dynamic changes the world of literature according to opinions, perceptions, thoughts and ideas which expressed from women's comprehension of their condition in literature.

Women in the Third World Country

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, women achieved significant progress in the economically progressive areas dominated by Western culture. Exploitation and abuse of women, including outright violence are acceptable in countries like Africa, Kenya, Liberia, and so forth, where women have inferior status by customary of formal law. Violence against women and girls is direct corollary of their subordinate status in society (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2020a; Puspita et al., 2021; Puspita & Amelia, 2020). Primitive cultures have belief, norms, and social institution that legitimize and, therefore, perpetuate violence against women, like in Bangladesh.

Third World Women in England

The 'heartland' of the London Bangladeshi community is to be found in Tower Hamlets, which contained 65,553 Bangladeshi residents or 22.8 per cent of the UK Bangladeshi population". Monica Ali describes the host land very vividly, but here the geographical location of host land is limited up to London and especially, Tower hamlets, London, 1985, and the Brick Lane area. The Tower Hamlets are described as, "Most of the flats, which enclosed three sides of a square, had net curtains, and the life behind was all shapes and shadows. But the tattoo lady had no curtains at all" (8). Activities at various streets of London viz., Commonwealth Street, Bethnal green road, Wentworth Street etc. have been narrated.

The Characteristics of Third World Women in London

Based on the elaboration of feminism and third world feminist, there are characteristics of third world women in London in the article "*Feminism in A Third World Country*":

1. Women is trying to eliminate perceived differences between men and women, so equality of women clearly means no more male dominance in society.
2. Women try to open up opportunities for women, with a focus on suffrage.
3. Women will not compromise on injustice, cruelty, and oppression.
4. Women raise their voice against the injustices subjected to them or other fellow woman.
5. Women have to be positive, moderate, and broad-minded. Why, the third world society considers feminism as negative because of their ignorance and unawareness toward women's right.

Every woman should have a job, so as to avoid being dependent of the men around her.

METHOD

In doing research, it is necessary to execute the planning of research. So the research can be conducted systematically. Research design stands for advance planning of the methods to be adopted for collecting the relevant data and the techniques to be used in the analysis (Febria Lina & Setiyanto, 2021; Putra et al., 2022; Sedyastuti et al., 2021). Besides, the researcher in this research uses qualitative descriptive research. Qualitative descriptive research is the least “theoretical” of all of the qualitative approaches to research (Baker & Edwards, 2012; Pranoto & Suprayogi, 2020; Suwarni & Handayani, 2021). Qualitative descriptive research is the least encumbered studies, compared to other qualitative approaches (Ivana & Suprayogi, 2020; Novanti & Suprayogi, 2021). This research activity include collecting data, analyzing the data, interpreting the data, and ends with conclusion that refers to analyzing the data.”

The researcher uses qualitative descriptive research because the rider not only collecting relevant data, but also interpreting the data before analyzing the data. In addition, the researcher is also uses library research. Library research is a method aiming to gain knowledge and theoretical foundation in analzing the data and issues through sources such as books, dictionaries, journal, documents, and other consideration in research (KUSWOYO et al., 2013; Nur, 2021; Nurmallasari & Samanik, 2018). So, the researcher applies library research as supportive data in completing this research such as book from library or data from web sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nazneen’s life in Bangladesh

In modern era right now, women in third world country still get discrimination in all aspect in their society. Man can control his wife, or his daughter in one family.

“Third world women are considered ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition bound, domestic, family oriented, victimized, etc.” Nazneen grows up in Bangla and is deeply affected by those traditional concepts. It is normal that the third world women are not treating equally with men. She has no consciousness of freedom, so she accepts her life instead of changing it and fighting for her equality with men. However, it seems that their fate is determined by men. Chanu bring her to London after they get married. It is a change in Nazneen’s life and it is the first step for her to be an independent woman.

Bangladesh is one country that women still subordinated from a man. Nazneen as the main character in *Brick Lane*, still controlled both from her father and her husband. She must get married with a man that her father choose and after she got married she must agree with everything that her husband (Chanu) command.

As grow up in Bangladesh Nazneen’s mother teaches Nazneen the importance of following fate and leaves all the issues to God:

“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

From these sentences, we can see that this is the traditional Nazneen, the ignorant Nazneen that had not been stimulated or enlightened. That is to say, being a traditional Bangladeshi and naturally following her mother's conventional philosophy of "not going against fate", Nazneen does not even know that she has a reason to question this philosophy of life. Furthermore, Nazneen's principle of life is that "since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne and fate decides everything in the end, whatever route you follow. Her principle of life makes a good interpretation to women's obedience. However, Nazneen think that the traditional philosophy was wrong when her mother death, she found out the truth of the cause of her mother's death, which is due to Naznee's father having an affair with another woman and conducted domestic violence to his own wife. Thus, Nazneen's mother chose to commit suicide instead of bearing her painful life. This truth shocked Nazneen so much, for it is her mother that told her to "bear everything in life". However, her mother's suicide act greatly contradicts to his conviction, for she does not bear the pain of being beaten by her husband anymore. From this quotation it can be inform that this indeed triggers Nazneen to begin to question whether is it right to bear life, in the end, Nazneen eventually realizes that her mother's choice is a way to fight against fate. That is to say, her mother's death is not decided by fate but buy her. Therefore, the death of Nazneen's mother can be seen as one of the starting point Nazneen become independence.

4.2. Nazneen's life in London

Nazneen stay loyal with the father's every decision as she would marry the guy her father chooses for her. She believed in one meant, "What could not be change must be born" (Ali: 2003: 9) this quotation is played a big role in her getting married at an early age to man in London. The quotation that describes the first time Nazneen saw her future husbands photograph is important as it shows how much she was dealing in her father and fate, she married Chanu because of her father's approval and she did not raise a question against it is a quality that she gained later in her life.

"As she turned to go she noticed, without meaning to, where her father put the photograph. She just happened to see it. These things happen. **She carried the image around in her min as she walked beneath the bayans with her cousins**" (Ali: 2003: 10)

The quote is can be the first sign of rebellious that triggers her first step in finding independence. Her accidently looking at the picture and thinking about Chanu gives the reader an idea of her rebellious nature. As the later part of the book explains her migration from the place she called home, she moved from her home to her husband's place at England, where she became dependent on her husband to show her ways. Her identity crisis struggle to survive in a foreign land.

4.3 The Portrayals of Nazneen's Independence.

Independence is the ability to live your life without being heeled or influenced by other people. Independence in this novel Brick Lane is represented by the step that first Nazneen get independence in surface (voting) she can vote someone became a leader and make her become representation of two group immigrants.

Nazneen from the start depend on the fate or man to guide her through her life but all of this starts to change when she finds confidence in change. Changing and becoming a new independent individual did not happen overnight, according to Lone the changes come in gradually through action that was taken by Nazneen thought her journey at a new land.

Nazneen's Independence in suffrage

In Bangladesh, most women are excluded from the lives of the community, excluded from all decision making in their community". It can be inferred from the statement that most women are stripped of their rights in many aspect of the society. They are told to believe in fate and have no sense of awareness of their right. One of the examples is when Bangladesh conduct an election to vote someone to become their leader, the women are not allow to vote only man can do it. This situation shows that women are excluded from the lives of the community.

In Brick Lane, when Nazneen wants to become independent she saw Karim, a passionate man, and he grows up in London and speaks fluent English. His language, his character, and the way he treats her all attract Nazneen. Karim shares what he knows with Nazneen. This is the first time she is treated with respect from a man.

Nazneen will not compromise on injustice, cruelty, and oppression.

Nazneen knows that Chanu her husband is good man. She tells herself her father does not choose a bad man for her. "Abba, it is good that you have chosen my husband. I hope I can be good wife, like Amma" (Ali: 2003: 16). Nazneen even does not have the thought of saying no to her father at that time. What is in her mind is "Men, doing whatever they could in this world". (Ali: 2003: 17). It shows that men and women have very unequal status in Bangladesh. From the quotation, show that men still doing whatever they could, for Chanu his discriminated Nazneen in every situation. Nazneen understands what Chanu is after many years of marriage life and begins to love him. Beside Nazneen get discrimination from Chanu, she also gets injustice and oppression because she is Bangladeshi women.

'And when they jump ship and scuttle over here, then in a sense they are home again. And you see, to a white person, we are all the same: dirty little monkeys all in the same monkey clan. But these people are peasants. Uneducated. Illiterate. Close-minded. Without ambition.' (Ali: 2003: 28).

To the white people, Bangladeshis are "dirty little monkeys all in the same monkey clan". Then the whites think that Bangladeshis are not only a race, but also a "dirty" race. The superiority of the white people is obvious here. The white people do not care if they have received education. Even if Bangladeshis are highly educated; they are still the illiterate peasants in the eyes of the whites. Pathetically, the white people are not the only ones who think they are superior. Bangladeshis think so as well.

Nazneen has to be positive, moderate, and broad-minded.

When she does the housework as usual, she is the old Nazneen. When she sits to watch ice-skating on television, she becomes the new Nazneen. Ice-skating lets her feel something special. She feels she is "no longer a collection of the hopes, random thoughts, petty

anxieties and selfish wants that made her” (Ali: 2003: 41) Nazneen watches ice-skating on the television for the first time and then it impresses her very much. She has her own understanding of ice-skating. When she watches ice-skating for the first time on television, she is moved and amazed by it. The beautiful scene makes a deep impression on her and she starts to like watching ice-skating on TV. Man and woman are perfectly matched. The woman.

Nazneen’s Independence in Job

In this novel, it takes a long time for Nazneen to get independence. Nazneen has thought that, as a woman, she does not need a job. Nevertheless, the burden of life makes her change her mind. Chanu can not feed the family. For this reason, Nazneen has to think about money. Since their marriage, they live in small apartment on Brick Lane. Chanu goes out working to feed the family. He is an educated man, but he cannot find a good position in London even though he has lived in London for decades. In the end, he loses his job and decided to bring his family back to Bangladesh. He cannot find a job for a long time and he even has debts. Under the burden of life, Nazneen begins to think about work and money “Some of the women are doing sewing at home, said Nazneen. Razia can get work for me” (Ali: 2003: 184). Nazneen thinks that she can make money for the family if she has a job. In the end, Chanu shows no sign of getting job and he buys Nazneen a sewing machine. Since then Nazneen works hard at home. She needs money and spends most of her time sewing. She does not only need money to feed the family, but also wants to have her own money to send to Hasina. On the other hand, she has to pay the debts for her husband. Nazneen feed the family and pays the debts through her job. In this way, Nazneen begging her way to independence. For this explanation, can be informing that Nazneen trying to eliminate perceived differences between men and women in job.

“Listen, when I’m in Bangladesh I put on a sari and cover my head and all that. **But here I go out to work. I work with white girls and I’m just one of them.** Some women spend ten, twenty years here and they sit their kitchen gridding spices all day and learn only to words of English” (Ali: 2003: 114)

From this quotation, Razia as Nazneen’s friend tells to Nazneen to get her independence by getting a job and follow the new culture that she already knows it. After move from Bangladesh and stay in London, Nazneen must follow the new culture if she wants to gain her independence and socialize with the society around her.

However, Razia is not eaten by these misfortunes happening in her life: instead she emphasize that every woman should have a job, so as to avoid being dependent of the men around her. Therefore, far from being crashed, Razia has become even tougher after encountering the misfortunes of her life, and her hard life triggers her to become a woman who has a job and brings up all her children by herself. In addition to introducing a job for Nazneen, Razia even encourages Nazneen to go to college and learn English. Such encouragement leads to Nazneen’s eagerness of wanting to read and learn instead of remaining illiterate. Therefore, one cannot deny that Razia affects Nazneen strongly, for she encourages her to seek for the chance to earn money and the right to receive education.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing some data related to Nazneen’s struggle to get her independence in London. Nazneen as main character in Brick Lane novel by Monica Ali as the main data

source to be analyze. In this research, the researcher applied approach from Feminist and theory of women in third world country to find out what the portrayal of women struggle is another country. Where the portrayal are comes first Nazneen's life in Bangladesh, second about Nazneen's life in London and also the portrayal Nazneen's independence.

Finally, the first finding is about the Nazneen's life in Bangladesh. The researcher finds about her life before move to London. How the way she grew up with strong philosophy that her parent teach her. Nazneen's life in Bangladesh is became the portrayal's how she can adopted the original culture that make her can struggle to get her independence.

The second finding is about Nazneen's life in London. The researcher finds information about how she can adapt the cultural differences that make her can struggle to become independence. She must struggle to get her financial by getting a job in house, and she became independence in social or environment by join some forum or organization in London.

The last finding is about the portrayal's Nazneen's independence. The portrayals are Nazneen can find a job, she can Independence in surfrage (voting), she will not compromise on injustice, she raises their voice against the injustices subjected to them or other fellow woman, Nazneen has to be positive, moderated and open minded, Nazneen should have a job to avoid being dependent of the men around her.

After knowing all portrayals of Nazneen's independence, she neither choose to go back to Bangladesh with Chanu nor to marry Karim. Instead, Nazneen becomes so independent and strong-willed that she has decided to stay in London and take care of her daughters. Nazneen and her daughter teaming up together demonstrated the female cooperation against male's dominance and manipulation. In the end of the novel, Nazneen can play freely in the snow with her daughters, which symbolizes the female independence in society. She became a woman of self-realized and transforms into an independent person her husband Chanu refuses to be in a real world and treats the emigrant life as a life of high achievement thus failing to understand his true potential and worth in Britain facing defeat at the end.

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