

Chanu's Thwarted Dreams and Dislocation in *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali

Monica Ali'nin *Brick Lane* Romanında Chanu'nun Engellenen Hayalleri ve Yerinden Olması

A. Nejat TÖNGÜR*

Abstract

Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* is one of the few novels which sheds light onto the lives of the Bangladeshi community living in the Brick Lane area of the Tower Hamlets borough of London in the 2000s, and the novel mirrors these people's life styles, work patterns, dynamics, faith, reactions, and problems. In the novel, Monica Ali's central focus is on Nazneen and her personal development; however, it is possible to trace other significant issues of the time such as racism, discrimination, poverty, unemployment, underemployment, ghettoisation, linguistic hurdles along with alienation, disillusionment and despair. Particularly Chanu's experience, struggle to survive and to succeed financially, socially and professionally as a first-generation Bangladeshi immigrant in London is very informative about the plight of the other immigrants. Chanu comes to Britain in the early 1970s with great hopes to work, to earn money and to return to Bangladesh as a success. Although he is better educated and more qualified than most immigrants his promotion at work is thwarted, his certificates and diplomas are discredited, he is compelled to take up driving a taxi to make a living, and his illusions about Britain are shattered over the years. His arranged marriage with an 'unspoilt' girl from Bangladesh and the birth of three kids are far from healing his wounds; on the contrary, he has bitter clashes with his daughters and serious disagreements with his wife which result in her infidelity. In addition to all these, he has to endure traumas in his life because of being trapped between two cultures and two allegiances. His daughters and his wife refuse to conform to the familial, moral, religious, and social traditions and rules of the Bangladeshi community and choose to live in harmony with the impositions and conditionings of the hegemonic British culture whereas he can not adapt to or integrate into the British society and culture despite more than 30 years of stay in Britain. In the end, he fails as an employee, as a father, and as a husband

* Asst.Prof.Dr. Maltepe University, Faculty of Education, Department of English Language Teaching, Istanbul, anejatt@yahoo.com

and the only solution he can find is to return to Bangladesh at the cost of separating from his wife and his daughters.

Keywords: Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*, Tower Hamlets, Bangladeshi immigrants, immigrant novel

Öz

Monica Ali'nin *Brick Lane* romanı 2000'li yıllarda Londra'nın Tower Hamlets bölgesinin Brick Lane mahallesinde yaşayan Bangladeş topluluğunun yaşamlarına ışık tutan az sayıdaki romandan biridir ve bu roman bu insanların yaşam biçimleri, çalışma şekilleri, dinamikleri, inançları, tepkileri ve sorunlarına ayna tutar. Romanında, Monica Ali esas olarak Nazneen ve onun kişisel gelişimi üzerine odaklanır ancak yabancılaşma, hayal kırıklığı ve umutsuzluk sorunlarının yanı sıra ırkçılık, ayrımcılık, yoksulluk, işsizlik, uygun işte çalışmama, gettolaşma, dil engelleri gibi zamanın diğer önemli konularını da romanda bulmak mümkündür. Özellikle, Chanu'nun birinci nesil bir göçmen olarak deneyimleri, hayatını idame ettirme ve mali, sosyal ve iş yaşamında başarılı olma çabaları, diğer göçmenlerin sıkıntıları hakkında da çok bilgilendiricidir. Chanu çalışıp, para kazanıp ülkesine başarıyla dönmek yolunda büyük umutlarla 1970'lerin başında İngiltere'ye gelir. Diğer göçmenlerin çoğundan daha iyi eğitilmiş ve daha nitelikli olmasına rağmen iş yerindeki terfisi engellenir, diploma ve sertifikaları dikkate alınmaz, para kazanmak için taksi şoförü olarak çalışmak zorunda kalır ve İngiltere hakkındaki beklentileri yıllar içinde paramparça olur. Bangladeş'ten 'bozulmamış' bir kızla görücü usulü evlenmesi ve üç çocuğunun doğumu yaralarına merhem olmaktan uzaktır. Tam tersine kızları ile tatsız çatışmalar ve karısı ile karısının sadakatsizliği ile sonuçlanan ciddi anlaşmazlıklar yaşar. Bütün bunların yanı sıra iki kültür ve iki kutup arasında kalmaktan dolayı travmalardan muzdarip olur. 30 yıldan fazla İngiltere'de kalmasına rağmen Chanu, İngiliz toplumuna ve kültürüne uyum sağlayıp entegre olmayı başaramazken kızları ve karısı Bangladeş toplumunun ailevi, ahlaki, dini ve sosyal gelenek ve kurallarına boyun etmeyi reddedip egemen İngiliz kültürünün dayatmaları ve şartlandırmaları ile uyum içinde yaşamayı seçerler. Chanu sonunda bir çalışan olarak, bir baba olarak ve bir koca olarak başarısız olur ve tek bulabildiği çözüm karısından ve kızlarından ayrılma pahasına Bangladeş'e dönmektir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*, Tower Hamlets, Bangladeşli göçmenler, göçmen romanı

In *Brick Lane*, Monica Ali provides very rich information about the life styles, work patterns, family structure, and cultural, social, economic and religious features of the Bangladeshi immigrants who started coming to Britain in the post-colonial and post-war period along with the other immigrants all over the world. The novel, which was first published in 2003, focuses on Nazneen as central character and presents her personal change. However, it is possible to trace other significant issues of the time such as the role and status of women in the Bangladeshi community, the clash between British culture and Bangladeshi culture, the problems of the first-generation immigrants and second-generation immigrants, the generation gap and subsequent problems between first- and second-generation immigrants, the Race Riots in Britain in 2003 and its impact on the Bangladeshi immigrants, the far-reaching effects of the 9/11 upon the Bangladeshi

community, the rise of religious radicalism among the Moslems in Britain along with the abuse of drugs, alcoholism and street gangs on the Brick Lane area of Tower Hamlets borough. Ali's novel shows that not only the second-generation immigrants but also the first-generation Bangladeshi people living in Britain for a long time, 20 – 40 years, still wrestle with more or less the same problems in Britain. Chanu is one these first-generation immigrants who came to Britain with great hopes to succeed academically, financially, and socially. Despite his linguistic and academic skills, Chanu is unable to overcome cultural, social, financial troubles which culminate in racism, discrimination, poverty, deprivation, unemployment, underemployment, ghettoisation, poverty, disillusionment, depravation, linguistic hurdles and exclusion from the mainstream of the British society. In order to better understand Chanu's motives, decisions, and feelings as an immigrant, as a father and as a husband, the general immigration patterns and dynamics of the Bangladeshis should be clarified at first. How he is drifted into alienation, disillusionment, despair and dislocation rather than integration and hybridity is another issue to be explored.

The life styles, experiences, traditions and perspectives of Bangladeshi immigrants in Britain used to be incorporated into the literature in English as part of the literature of the Sub-continent, Indian literature, or (East) Pakistani literature until the last quarter of the 20th century. Only after Bangladesh gained independence in 1971 after the secession from Pakistan, the country's distinct linguistic, ethnic, religious, cultural and geographical features were recognized, and found echo in literary works as a separate body. Although Bangladesh was ethnically, linguistically and geographically separated from Pakistan, the Bangladeshi immigrants were considered first as sub-continentals until the partition of Pakistan from India in 1947, then as East Pakistanis until the secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971 after the Bangladeshi Liberation War led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Political instability, widespread poverty, lack of resources, unemployment, natural disasters and economic problems in the country accelerated the emigration to Britain which was seen as a land of opportunities. The emigration from Bangladesh "reached its height in the 1980s" (Hatton and Price, 1999, p. 6) and the number of people living in Britain from Bangladeshi origin exceeded 450000 in the 2011 census.

In their research about the different aspects of the United Kingdom's international migration experience since the Second World War, Hatton and Price (1999) found out that the percentage of immigrants from the New Commonwealth countries declined to less than 50 percent since the 1940s, but that there was an increase in the number of dependants, husbands, wives, children and other relatives, accepted by the Home Office (p. 8). According to Martin (1996), this is the snowball effect of immigration as the pioneers stayed on in Britain:

International migration occurs because of demand-pull factors that draw migrants into industrial countries, supply factors that push them out of their own countries, and networks of friends and relatives already in industrial societies who serve as anchor communities for newcomers. Once begun for economic or humanitarian reasons, migration often takes on a life of its own, as guest worker and refugee families unify

in industrial countries. If economic gaps or persecution persist, friends and relatives of settled immigrants often seek to join them in industrial countries, so that one migrant can, in snowball fashion, lead to 5 to 10 more. (p. 28)

Hatton and Price (1999) also show that “ethnic minority populations remain heavily concentrated in urban centers with 45 percent located in the Greater London area alone ... in the boroughs of Brent, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Ealing and Lambeth, ethnic minorities exceeded 30 per cent of the population in 1991” (p. 20). Particularly the Tower Hamlets is distinct with the Bangladeshi people making up 23 percent of the population in the borough (Hatton and Price, 1999, p. 20). In such areas, ghettoisation and intensification of ethnic ties and camaraderie come to surface as defensive acts most immigrant groups resort to, because besides easing “the psychic costs of leaving a familiar environment and moving to a strange setting” (Massey, 1996, p. 24), the presence of friends, acquaintances, relatives and even fellow countrymen in the host country “reduces the costs of subsequent migration for a set of friends and relatives, and some of these people are thereby induced to migrate, which further expands the set of people with ties abroad and, in turn, reduces costs for a new set of people, causing some of them to migrate, and so on” (Massey, 1996, p. 25).

Hatton and Price (1999) propose education, vocational qualifications and fluency in English

are important for adaptation to the host country environment and for success in the labor market. Lack of these skills can be a key source of disadvantage. Many of the early post-war immigrants had little education and poor language skills. But these deficits relative to the white population have eroded over time because of rising education levels in source countries, because of the changing selectivity in migration and because an increasing proportion of ethnic minorities have been educated in Britain. (p. 21)

According to the data presented by Berthoud and Modood, both the Bangladeshi men and women are at the bottom of ‘Fluency in English’ and ‘Education Qualifications’ criteria among the seven largest ethnic groups living in Britain (as cited in Hatton and Price, 1999, p. 58). It is also evident that along with Africans, Bangladeshis are least likely to find employment in the English labor market (Hatton and Price, 1999, p. 30) because they have “either much poorer quality of schooling and labor market skills, face great difficulties transferring the human capital acquired before migration, be negatively selected in terms of unobserved characteristics or have little knowledge of the English language” (Hatton and Price, 1999, p. 32).

Indeed, the Bangladeshi immigrants fit Chiswick’s description of economic migrants “who move from one place of work and residence to another, either within a country or across international boundaries, primarily because of their own economic opportunities”

(2000, p. 52). Because the main impulse behind the immigration of the Bangladeshis was deprivation, poverty and unemployment in Bangladesh and they were “drawn by the textile mills” in Britain (Harris and Bright, 2001, para. 3). Sandhu (2003) points out that the Bangladeshi immigrants started “settling around Brick Lane by the middle of the 1960s” (para. 9) which was mainly populated by Jewish people. Instead of adapting to the environment and the circumstances, the Bangladeshi immigrants transformed Brick Lane into a predominantly Bangladeshi neighbourhood: “Jewish bakeries had been turned into curry houses, jewellery shops into sari stores, synagogues into dress factories; in 1976 the synagogue on the corner of Fournier Street and Brick Lane (formerly a Huguenot Church, then a Methodist chapel) became the Jamme Masjid Mosque” (Sandhu, 2003, para. 12). In the 2000s, Brick Lane transformed into “home to a sizeable non-white population ... [where] curry festivals and street parties abound ... lamp-posts have been painted red and green for the national flag; street names are also written in Bengali” (Sandhu, 2003, para. 12).

Paradoxically, the decline of the cotton-spinning mills and the collapse of the textile industry in British cities in the 1970s resulted in a serious unemployment problem for people living in the textile cities because “the work once done cheaply by Bangladeshi workers in the north of England could now be done even more cheaply by Bangladeshi workers in Bangladesh” (Kundnani, 2001, para. 5). Sandhu (2003) argues that most immigrants “flew from Dhaka, the Manchester of India, and arrived in Spitalfields only to find that the tailoring and dress trade had collapsed. Unionised factories had closed” (para. 9). As a result of the scarcity of such jobs after recession, “garment manufacturing was outsourced to home-workers, many of them women ... Bengali men toiled away as cooks, waiters and mechanics” (Sandhu, 2003, para. 11). Marsden (2001) agrees with Sandhu as he says these immigrants who were working in the textile mills were the first to be ousted when the mills closed and “as a result of the urban deprivation that afflicts the area, along with continuing racial discrimination, unemployment is as high as 25 percent amongst Bangladeshis” (para. 6).

Brick Lane is one of the novels which mirror the experiences of the post-colonial and post-war immigrants in Britain. Although this body of writing is considered to be part of the post-colonial literature, the novels which reflect the lives, experiences and problems of immigrants in the post-colonial and the post-war Britain are named as “Diasporic Writing” by Ramraj (1998), “Postcolonial Migrant Literature” by Boehmer (1995), “Third World Expatriate Fiction” by Kirpal (1989), “Immigrant Writing” by Ash (1995), and “Immigrant Genre” by George (1996). According to George (1996),

...the contemporary literary writing in which the politics and experience of location (or rather ‘dislocation’) are the central narratives should be called the ‘Immigrant Genre’. Distinct from other postcolonial literary writing and even from the literature of exile, it is closely related to the two. For the immigrant genre, like the social phenomenon from which it takes its name, is born of a history of global colonialism and is therefore a participant in decolonising discourses. Like the distance

that exile imposes on a writing subject, writers of the immigrant genre also view the present in terms of its distance from the past and future. This genre is marked by a disregard for national schemes, the use of a multigenerational cast of characters and a narrative tendency toward repetitions and echoes – a feature that is often displayed through plots that cover several generations. (p. 171)

Boehmer (1995) claims that “as well as supplying the enabling conditions for migrant postcolonial literature, cultural clash and metaphysical collision have also become its standard subjects” (p. 233) in postcolonial migrant literature which also handles the process of expatriation which

is a transition from a familiar frame of reference and relationships to an alien set of references and relationships. It is this which makes it a difficult and complex process. It calls for an almost total break from the traditional environment that one is used to from birth, and even before, as it were, an evolving of new relationships and new meaning to the life of the expatriate. It calls for a re-orientation of the entire social being of man until he learns to do without ‘the whole complex of institutions and social patterns which formerly guided (his) actions until he learns to gradually substitute these with a knowledge of the new institutions, values, norms, attitudes and sometimes even the language of the new culture’. (Handlin, 1973, as cited in Kirpal, 1989, pp. 45-46)

All these concerns find echo in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*, and the picture Ali draws in her novel is consistent with the data aforementioned. Along with the second-generation Bangladeshi who are born and grow in Britain, Ali also depicts first-generation characters who left their homeland and traditional environment. Chanu is a first-generation Bangladeshi immigrant who came to Britain in the early 1970s alone. Chanu brings Nazneen 16 years later as his spouse and their three kids are born in Britain. Like the majority of the Bangladeshi immigrants, they are from Dhaka. Kirpal (1989) claims,

Characters in expatriate writing are racial/national types: Negroes, Africans, West Indians, Indians. They are their racial, national identity rather than their provincial selves. This is a very interesting feature of Third World expatriate literature, because in stay-at-home writing, the national/racial identity gets submerged in the regional, tribal, communal identity. Living on at home, novelists tend to depict society through particulars of caste/kin group, tribe, region, etc. But in expatriate writing, the concept of nationality/race is rather strong. (p. 120)

In her novel Ali conforms to the tendency, because the novel is populated with Bangladeshi immigrants who have been living in the Tower Hamlets which is heavily populated by the Bangladeshi people. Apparently, the Bangladeshi immigrants have transformed the area into a Bangladeshi town, and there are hardly any British people in their lives.

Including the only two British mentioned with their names, Wilkie and Mr. Dalloway in Chanu's office, all the other unnamed British people are portrayed rather pejoratively as they are threatening their lives, giving harm to their property, spitting at them, pulling off girls' hijab and discriminating against them. Indeed, Bangladeshi people in the novel have occupations which reflect the features of Bangladeshis living in Britain in the 1990s and 2000s when "a few brothers would pool their savings and set up a shop, a restaurant or a take-away. Otherwise there was minicabbing, with long hours and the risk of violence, often racially motivated. With the end of the textile industry, the largest employers were now the public services but discrimination kept most of these jobs for whites" (Kundnani, 2001, para. 6). In *Brick Lane*, the area is full of such people who take up driving and there are a lot of Bangladeshi shops and restaurants around. Most women in the area are occupied with garment manufacturing at their homes. In addition to the light Ali sheds on the lives of Bangladeshi immigrants in Brick Lane area, she provides a glimpse on the life, society, and customs in Bangladesh as well as on the textile industry in Bangladesh through Hasina's letters.

Kirpal (1989) argues that there are three factors for the adjustment of an expatriate: "the immigrant's reason for emigration; his own ability to adapt to the new environment, and his experience in the host country" (p. 46). As for Chanu, he is "the microcosm of society, embodying its hopes and failures, wisdom and folly, knowingness and naivety, enlightenment and reaction, generosity and meanness, honesty and self-deception" (Lung, 2004, para. 10). Chanu is 40 years old and he had been in Britain for 16 years when he married Nazneen. When Chanu came to Britain, he promised himself that he would go back home successful. His adherence "to the simulacrum of England as the promised land is characteristic of South Asians migrating in hope of financial gain and not being able to return home as a success" (Pataki, 2011, p. 2). To succeed in Britain and to achieve his aim, Chanu tried hard and did his best. He clearly remembers he survived in Britain by eating rice and dal all the time and bloating his stomach with water during his first days (Ali, 2003, p. 113). But he endured poverty and hunger because of his aspirations: "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 Private Secretary to the Prime Minister ... That was my plan (Ali, 2003, p. 34). Karim reminds him of his past ambitions which brought him to Britain once more: "I wanted to be a British civil servant. I was going to sit all the exams and be a High Flyer, Top Earner, Head of Department, Permanent Secretary, Cabinet Secretary, Right-hand Bloody Man of the Bloody Prime Minister" (Ali, 2003, p. 374). As an indication of his aspirations to integrate into the British society, he had his second-degree in Britain in addition to his first degree on English Literature from Dhaka University in Bangladesh. To show that he was a knowledgeable and intellectual man, Chanu "sprinkled English words into his conversation" (Ali, 2003, p. 37). In his conversations with Nazneen, "he liked to quote in English and then give her a translation, phrase by phrase" from English literature and criticized English people for not knowing much about their culture and literature" (Ali,

2003, p. 38). However, these are futile attempts which fail to bring respect, promotion or dignity he needs.

As regards Chanu, throughout the novel, he is portrayed to be undergoing many problems which suppress his social integration, personal integrity and professional development. He has been working in the same office for six years and expecting promotion as he has got two degrees. His hopes of promotion and success at work are "thwarted by his experience of open and subtle forms of racism at work" (Cuevas, 2008, p. 390). Chanu feels implicitly discriminated against in his office and he is barred from managerial positions because of "the embedded, yet often hidden racism in British society" (Bentley, 2008, p. 91). His opinions about why he does not get the promotion he deserves, points out the prevalent frustration among the immigrants: "As long as we are below them, then they are above something. If they see us rise then they are resentful because we have left our proper place" (Ali, 2003, p. 38) as a confirmation of the data that "non-white immigrants never attain the levels of labor market status enjoyed by whites" (Hatton and Price, 1999, p. 32) and "non-white immigrants are the least likely to attain a managerial position" (Hatton and Price, 1999, p. 34). Chanu's initial optimism turns into disillusionment and pessimism in time as he finally comes to believe that there is discrimination in Britain and British people are racists. He believes "if he painted his skin pink and white then there would be no problem ... He had warned [Nazneen] about making friends with 'them', as though that were a possibility. *All the time they are polite. They smile. They say 'please' this and 'thank you' that. Make no mistake about it, they shake your hand with the right, and with the left they stab you in the back*" (Ali, 2003, p. 72, original italics).

As a result of social, professional and discriminatory barriers, he becomes confused and his dreams are shattered. In a desperate attempt to regain his self-esteem, he occasionally behaves unreasonably and irresponsibly. Although he is subjected to racism and discrimination, he exhibits similar attitude to black people and Sylhetis, the other ethnic group from Bangladesh, and despises them mercilessly. He also looks down on Africans who are "So big. So strong ... [They] were bred for it. Slavery ... That's their ancestry ... Only the strong survive that. Only the strong ones were wanted; they fetched the highest price. Commerce and natural selection working hand in hand" (Ali, 2003, p. 99). He frequently brags about his country's past and their roots but he does not like "the Bangladeshis [who] are mixing with the Sylhetis" (Ali, 2003, p. 186). Chanu is angry with his fellow countrymen who write and distribute leaflets. He believes it is foolish to put leaflets at white people's doors because it will infuriate them. He doesn't like them to use Arabic words and he is angry for being classified as brothers with them: "Brothers! These peasants claim to be my brothers. They cannot compose even one proper sentence" (Ali, 2003, p. 274). He always wants to be separated from his fellow countrymen "who stepped off an aeroplane with a degree certificate and the peasants who jumped off the boat only possessing lice on their heads" (Ali, 2003, p. 34).

Evidently the changing structure of his family is another experience which disillusioned and dispirited Chanu. Particularly education of his daughters comes up as

another very important issue which displays Chanu's contradictions and confusion. While his daughters are integrating into the British society and culture, Chanu struggles to minimize the pejorative effects of the British education and culture upon his daughters. Chanu is critical of the education he had in his childhood which glorified the British: "They bequeathed us law and democracy. That's what they think. And never a word of truth – that they beggared us, that they brought Bengal to its knees ... They will never make jobs for us" (Ali, 2003, p. 249). He looks down on British culture which he identifies with "Television, pub, throwing darts, kicking a ball. That is the white working class culture" (Ali, 2003, p. 254). It is obvious that the more Chanu feels thwarted in Britain the more he feels alienated to the British culture. He longs for imbuing his daughters with the Bangladeshi culture, tradition and heritage because he is "unable to fulfill his dreams for his own life in the alien culture of London, he is determined that his daughters will maintain the old culture, the one in which he feels comfortable" (Whipple, 2003, para. 6).

Nevertheless, he does not totally slide to the traditional modes as he does not fully trust that his daughters will be properly educated by "uneducated, illiterate and uncultured" people (Whipple, 2003, para. 1). He does not rely on the way his culture is taught. For this reason, Chanu does not want his daughters to go to madrassa because he believes the students are simply "rocking around like little parrots on a perch, reciting words they do not understand" (Ali, 2003, p. 197). In the end, he finds a solution and decides to teach them himself although "Chanu doesn't say his prayers, ..., and now he is drinking alcohol. Tomorrow he may be eating pigs" (Ali, 2003, p. 110). As a defensive maneuver to maintain his sanity and self-respect, and to make his daughters adopt Bangladeshi culture and values, he glorifies his country's history and culture. In the lectures he delivers to his daughters, Chanu constantly but vainly struggles to teach his daughters colonialism, contributions of Bengalis and Muslims to science, his ideas about Dark Ages, Bangladeshi history, the Qur'an and the Hindu philosophy. Another proof of Chanu's indecision and hesitance is seen about his reactions to his daughters' clothes. He sometimes asks his girls to wear skirts, sometimes he insists on pants. "If he has a Lion Hearts leaflet in his hand, he wanted his daughters covered. He would not be cowed by these Muslim-hating peasants. If he saw some girls go by in hijab he became agitated at this display of peasant ignorance. Then the girls went out in their skirts" (Ali, 2003, p. 265).

Despite his painstaking efforts, Chanu is dismayed to observe that he is losing his control over his daughters. For most first-generation immigrants who had minimal contact with the British people, integration into the British society linguistically and culturally was not a primary concern. Because they regarded themselves as sojourners or economic migrants who would eventually return to their homelands. However, the second- and third-generations who are born and brought up in Britain are more vulnerable to the effects of the hegemonic British society and culture although "significant disadvantages remain, especially for non-whites (whether first or second generation) which are not accounted for by education, experience or assimilation effects" (Hatton and Price, 1999, p. 47). The second- and third-generations are also exposed to racism, ignorance, segregation,

alienation and deprivation in their daily lives but, unlike the first-generation parents, they are obliged to maximize their contact with the British people through schooling, internet, and products of popular culture such as music, fashion, entertainment and food which shape their belief, attitude and behavior. Particularly Shahana, Chanu's elder daughter, grows to be a rebellious teenager who dislikes and despises anything she associates with Bangladeshi culture and society. Like some other immigrant parents, Chanu has some clashes with her, and he does not want to accept that she is en route integration into the British society and culture. His daughters who are born and brought up in Britain veer towards full assimilation to the British society slowly but inevitably, but Chanu is unable to stop it or reverse it.

His relationship with his wife, Nazneen, also turns out to be problematic over time partly as a consequence of his inability to adapt to the circumstances, partly as a result of his hard work. Instead of marrying someone in Britain in the last 16 years, Chanu prefers an arranged marriage with a girl from Bangladesh, Nazneen, simply because "she is an unspoilt girl. From the village" (Ali, 2003, p. 2) who will give him "no trouble" (Ali, 2003, p. 191). Cuevas (2008) considers this marriage as "a male fetishisation of female authenticity ... which apparently bestows on her an 'authentic', 'un-spoiled' nature" (p. 390). In other words, the main reason why Chanu marries Nazneen is her docile, submissive and subservient personality which Chanu equates with Bangladeshi women. When Nazneen comes to Britain, he does not want her to go out as he is very concerned about what his fellow countrymen will say about her if they see her on the street, and Chanu will look like a fool. He believes that he is "westernized" now but she should be grateful to have married such an educated man (Ali, 2003, p. 45). He never takes her demand to go to school with Razia into consideration, and he feels contended as long as she stays indoors and keeps busy with her wifely and motherly duties. Cuevas (2008) claims that "by trying to minimize their wives' contact with British society, Chanu and other Bangladeshi men in the novel are under the delusion that this can somehow preserve their own 'authenticity' – even decades after migration – something they do not find inconsistent with the assimilated life they lead themselves" (p. 390). As an indication of his desire to keep Nazneen indoors Chanu buys a sewing machine and a tangle of wire for Nazneen as a birthday present. Thus, his relationship with his wife shows that he remains a Bangladeshi inside and "In his heart, [Chanu] never left the village" (Ali, 2003, p. 140). What begins with her little acts of disobedience turns into her infidelity and dissolution of their marriage, but Chanu is so much suffocated by and absorbed in his problems that he never feels that his wife is slowly changing.

In order to cope with the problems Chanu faces in Britain, he resorts to many strategies and means he can think of and he is capable of:

Chanu worked his own method. 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
(Ali, 2003, p. 121).

However, the result is usually disheartening, dissatisfying and disturbing because “the act of expatriation is a very painful one... it is the eternal quest of man to seek to put down roots somewhere, to possess some points of space to which he can relate emotionally and psychologically” (Kirpal, 1989, p. 45). Chanu does his best to succeed and adapt to the host society:

[Chanu] started every new job with a freshly spruced suit and a growing collection of pens. His face shone with hope. And then greyed with frustration, with resentment ... but he was slighted. By customers, by suppliers, by superiors and inferiors. He worked hard for respect but he could not find it. There was in the world a great shortage of respect and Chanu was among the famished (Ali, 2003, p. 203).

Chanu feels frustration building up inside him because “the certificates, and knowledge of Shakespeare, that are meant to make Chanu an eligible member of British genteel society not only disqualify him from a promotion at office but also fail to offer him free admittance into the home of Dr. Azad, a well-to-do Bangladeshi physician” (Chattopadhyay and Shrivastava, 2012, p. 117). After acknowledging that his certificates, education and qualifications would not help him achieve his dreams, he “no longer took courses. The number of certificates had stabilized” (Ali, 2003, p. 185). In contrast to Karim who considers Britain as his country, Chanu comes to believe that “it is their country” (Ali, 2003, p. 255), and he loses his hopes to integrate into the British society. He transforms into “a figure who is, tragically, aware of his own shortcomings and of the way his dreams of integration have been thwarted” (Walter, 2003, para. 5), and he finally gives up making new plans for the future after so many failures. He takes up driving a taxi at nights to save more money to achieve his last possible wish of returning home to Bangladesh and to make a fresh start. During his experience as a taxi driver, Chanu is subjected to British people’s ignorance, rudeness, and meanness, which only serves to strengthen his resolve to go back.

Chanu’s sightseeing tour to Buckingham Palace with his family is a significant experience for two reasons. First, despite living in Britain for almost 30 years, this is the second time Chanu makes such a visit to a tourist attraction after seeing the Houses of Parliament in 1979. Chanu and most immigrants do prefer to stay indoors within the safe boundaries of the area they are accustomed to, because their life style conditions them to work, to save, and to go back home without getting familiar with the mainstream of the British society. The ghetto life they find themselves drifted to as a result of psychological and economic reasons severs their links with the rest of the British society. Initially some immigrants never consider staying in Britain in the rest of their lives and for some, poverty, deprivation, unemployment, underemployment, discrimination they face in Britain force them to go back. Chanu bitterly complains that “I’ve spent more than half

my life here but I hardly left these few streets ... All this time I have been struggling and struggling, and I barely had time to lift my head and look around" (Ali, 2003, p. 289). So after 30 years, they are still no more different from tourists and they remain foreigners. The second reason which makes their outing remarkable must be attributed to Chanu's final decision to go back to Bangladesh. Chanu says "Now that we are going home, I have become a tourist" (Ali, 2003, p. 290) showing that he definitely gave up struggling to become part of the British society. According to Pataki (2011), "ironically, he applies the perfect mimicry of the tourist, whereas all along it is his Englishness that has been mimicry, and being a tourist his natural identity" (p. 3). The day trip as a tourist is an open manifestation of his refusal to be identified with British society because he succumbs to 'Going Home Syndrome' (Cuevas, 2008, p. 391). He cannot take part in the British society in the manner he desires so as a last resort he wants "to catch a moment of happiness in the face of immigrant adversity, to experience the pleasure of peering at England rather than being interrogated by English people" (Sandhu, 2003, para. 37).

Although he has been living in Britain for more than 30 years, he comes to a conclusion that he is unable to cope with "the clash between Western values and [his] own ... the struggle to assimilate and the need to preserve one's identity and heritage ... the feelings of alienation engendered by a society where racism is prevalent ... the terrific struggle to preserve one's sanity while striving to achieve the best for one's family" (Ali, 2003, p. 113). Despite his struggles, he remains as a "more literate, [but] patchily anglicized" (Wood, 2003, para. 3) man who is "caught between two allegiances, two countries, two landscapes" (Ramraj, 1998, p. 223). Chanu is stranded between two cultures, and he does not belong to either the British culture or the Bangladeshi culture by all means. He suffers from being trapped between two cultures and belonging nowhere, and he remains unsure of his identity and allegiance. Although most of the people "try to turn their fractured psyches to their advantage, coping with their environment by constantly modifying and shifting their identities" with "mutations, transformations, and impersonations" (Ramraj, 1998, p. 223), Chanu is evidently afflicted with identity crisis, disillusionment and isolation because his assumptions, aspirations, cultural beliefs and values frequently clash with those of the British community. His "deluded ambitions" (Walter, 2003, para. 4), contradictory remarks and ambivalent attitude towards the British society and culture show that he is unable to relate to British society or culture. His transition from one cultural identity to another is "too long prolonged or too excruciating to cope with and [he] withdraw[s] to [his] ancestral identity or homeland" (Ramraj, 1998, p. 217). His "subconscious attachment to traditions, customs, values, religions, and languages of the ancestral home" (Ramraj, 1998, p. 215) is another culprit of his dislocation in the end. He cannot find any permanent solutions to his familial, social and financial problems in Britain. After his failure at work, failure in society, failure in family matters, Bangladesh is the only safe heaven he can dream of and the sole place where he can regain his dignity. He focuses his energy on accumulating enough money to make a decent living back home in Dhaka as he resentfully says that he does not want to "rot here with all the skinheads and drunks. [He doesn't] want [his son] to grow up in this racist society. [He doesn't]

want him to talk back to his mother. [He] want[s] him to respect his father ... The only way is to take him back home” (Ali, 2003, p. 111).

In the end, Nazneen slowly but resolutely begins to get out of her isolation at home by challenging the societal, religious, moral and familial pressures. Subsequently, she transforms from a quiet, diffident and passive woman, who conforms to the impositions and conventions of the Bangladeshi community, to a courageous woman who overcomes all the hurdles in front of her preferences. Her daughters totally conform to the standards and rules of the British society and culture. In the end, she and their daughters choose to stay in Britain and refuse to go to Bangladesh with Chanu. Her daughters and her wife, unlike Chanu, veer towards integration, as they are “less concerned with sustaining ancestral ties than coming to terms with their new environment and acquiring a new identity” (Ramraj, 1998, p. 217). Chanu fails at work, fails as a father, fails as a husband and he is a “defeated man” (Wood, 2003, para. 16). He can not achieve his plans to have a good job, and to make a decent life for him and for his family. Dislocation from homeland to another country for political, economic or academic reasons is a painful experience for Chanu and Nazneen; however, the second dislocation from Britain back home is excruciating for Chanu as his plans, aspirations, ambitions are thwarted and he has to leave his family behind in Britain.

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