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**THE FIGHTING WOMEN: AN EXPLORATION OF SOUTH-ASIAN FEMALE
IMMIGRANT LIVES IN MONICA ALI'S *BRICK LANE***

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Abstract:

A child is born in female gender without their will but the price for it is paid by them till their death. It becomes very tough for a female to survive in this male centric world. The female are in constant war against the society for their education, lifestyle, livelihood et cetera. The female's life are captivated in their household. In order to break their chained lives many have sacrificed their lives. The female are denied not only equal rights but their rights as human beings since the beginning of human civilization. They had to fight for every equality they attained like employment, education, outdoor activity, free relationship, voting rights et cetera. The fight of the female is at large scale but the result is limited and the fight is still kinetic.

Keywords: *Female, Gender, Freedom, Immigrant, South-Asian, etc.*

The birth of human being is certain but their gender is very uncertain as it is in the controls of 'Divine Beings' or in scientific aura the chromosomes pair. The gender in this world are three comprised of male, female, and transgender. The transgender or third gender are very meagre in amount thus remains hidden from mainstream societal problems. The birth of male child is taken as great achievements and is celebrated in the society but at the same place the society considers the birth of a female as curse, especially in the eastern societies. This celebration is eventual as the male birth is evidence of strong seed and female the weak seed. The female child soon after their birth is treated as the low gender or the second sex and in extreme cases as the 'other'. It is a thought of the society that female are a liability over the family. They are meant for some other family and thus they are nurtured in very limited way and their several rights are stopped. The female are forced to sacrifice their freedom, lifestyle, education, employment, social & political rights and so forth due to their gender which they didn't decide to take birth in. These conditions of female in the society gets much worse when they move out of their mother's garden to some distant land having very different society protocols, language and culture, this movement mainly arises due to marriage. In these alien societies they are themselves an alien immigrant and are subjected to dual crisis due to their gender and immigrant identity. The immigration of the females to very distant lands make them become manifold subjugated and has to fight longer for their freedom in life. The same issue with a deep story of female immigrants is seen in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2007) through chief protagonist Nazneen and with a bunch of other female character as well.

Fight for Independent Life:



The female gender can be observed in metaphysical chains constantly questing for their freedom. It is very clear that the female from their parental house to in-laws house are not equally free as the males are. In the parental houses they are subjected to household chores from beginning as they are considered for only household work. The females are seen to be limited in decision taking since their childhood to their mature years. The case of Nazneen is such in the novel, she is a kind of meek girl who cannot speak against her father and just follows what he wants her to do. It is observed when Nazneen's father finds a groom for her without any consultation. Nazneen simply accepts the verdict of her father as she is taught not to revert by her mother Rupban since her childhood and that it's their fate to follow the males of the household and society (Father, Brother, Uncles et cetera).

Soon after, when her father asked if she would like to see a photograph of the man she would marry the following month, Nazneen shook her head and replied, 'Abba, it is good that you have chosen my husband. I hope can be a good wife, like Amma (Ali, 16).

Soon after their marriage, females are taught to follow their husband without question. The females are forced to leave their houses and get displaced to their in-laws. This displacement is sometime to a different nation, as it is the case of Nazneen. She after her marriage is taken to the U.K. by her husband. The eastern female upon reaching the western land doesn't seem to get much independence as the males from these societies are dominating in nature which doesn't diminish or change. Nazneen upon reaching the Brick Lane society of the U.K. doesn't find much change in her life. She was subjected to household chores only. She was there to fulfill the desires of Chanu as servant, cook, steward, prostitute, Washer, caretaker et cetera. The life of Nazneen is in metaphysical chains whose world is limited to a flat. The immigrant females who are taken as wife to the U.K. are never let out of their houses, not allowed to work, nor to learn the culture of the host land. These image and condition of the South-Asian immigrants in general is portrayed through the character Nazneen and her circle by Monica Ali (2007). "Nazneen took a tea towel and dried the plates. She wondered if the ice e-skating woman went home and washed and wiped. It was difficult to imagine. But there no servants here. She would have to manage by herself" (Ali, 38).

Fight for Survival:

The lives of South-Asian female immigrant are subjugated at the deep level. It is understood that females are prone to violence from psychological to physical levels. It is very clear that the survival of females depends upon the males. They are not economically free as they are not allowed to work. The females are never able to have 'a room of ones's own' due to societal boundations. The female are easy victim of male's anxiety which makes female's survival tough. It comes out that males for their pleasure practices extra-marital affair and polygamy and if they revert the males, especially by their husbands. The females are forced to marry in the same religion or clan, for this they are forcefully or without knowledge taken to their homelands. The females are prone to physical violence and in cases of run-away and love marriages they are murdered in name of honour or forcefully married.

Fight for Education:

The South-Asian parents are inherent with certain orthodoxical ideologies that they need to marry their daughter in good family with a most eligible bachelor, and in way to fulfill this they will have to make a good fortune. The dowry for the marriage of a female comes out to be the main reason that they are limited in education as the parents see it as an expense which they need to control. The parent of a female are full of ideas about saving money for their future or marriage, and in order to find a good groom they need a good dowry. The other reason for their limited education is the conservative



thought of the society. The society always thinks that there is no outcome of good education in females, as they will be in somebody's houses and will not require outdoor duties and is of opinion "Man for the sword and for the needle She" (The Princess). The society also thinks that if they are educated they may not follow the order of their houses. Education for female is seen to be letting the females out from their controls. In certain cases they are provided only with religious education.

It comes out that the immigrants are very limiting in terms of education compared to the western people. The immigrants stops their wards to get the western education and focus on their regional education denying the fact that they are living and are to spare their life on western lands. Ali (2007) points out this issue as Chanu thinks that the education his daughters get is wrong or not good and thus makes them focus on Bangla education. "For five days he (Chanu) had been teaching his daughter to recite 'Golden Bengal'. This evening they were to perform entire poem" (Ali, 179). Chanu is focusing to teach their daughter a bangla poem by Tagore titled 'Amar Shonar Bangla'.

Fight for Lifestyle:

We live in a society where the lifestyles of females are controlled by the males. The females are taught to follow the male's narratives of lifestyles, concerning their food habit, clothing, linguistics domain, hair style & colouring, habitats et cetera. These limitations are not only with the eastern society but in western it too is practiced but the majority is found in eastern world people. The eastern world people comes out to be hardcore in lifestyle practices may be they are living on a western land. These eastern world people being an immigrant or settler in western world try to follow and make others follow the limited eastern lifestyle. This is the 'forced lifestyle' that immigrants from South-Asia still wears saree, hijab, burqa et cetera in the U.K. This issue is evident in the novel of Monica Ali (2007) as Nazneen is shown to be wearing traditional dresses indoor and outdoor. The female children are also victim of these repercussions as Sahana, the daughter of Nazneen is forced not to wear western attires like jeans and skirts by her father Chanu. The girl is born and being brought up in the U.K. watching and following western culture & ideology, but is forced to limit her western lifestyle. The limiting force is so harsh that the female undergoes much turmoil, as it was not their choice to be in the western society. Sahana in the novel reverts to Chanu, "I didn't ask to be born here" (Ali, 181). The males are seen to be very serious regarding the attires a female wears in the society and it's for the males respect, the female wears their attires. Thus the clothing pattern is dominated by the males in this world. Sahana is seen reverting this decree of her father in the novel, as she preferred jeans to salwar-kameez, Tongur (2013) puts it "Sahana refuses to wear traditional Bangladeshi clothes and insists on wearing jeans and skirts like her British friends at school" (Tongur,563).

The males also control the food habits of females as it comes to be obvious that Chanu stops her daughters from eating western foods. In the novel Ali (2007) writes concerning Sahana "She wanted to wear jeans. She hated her kameez and spoiled her entire wardrobe by pouring paint on them. If she could choose between baked beans and dal it was no contest" (Ali, 180).

In case of lifestyle in the U.K., there is open relationship culture and marriage are performed according to will of the youths or Love marriages are very common. The immigrants are seen stopping their daughters to be in love-relationship culture. The immigrants till present time want their daughters to marry according to their will in arranged marriage. Ali (2007) writes in her novel how the South-Asian immigrants are very intolerant towards love-marriages or run-away marriages. In the novel *Brick Lane* (2007), Razia, a first generation immigrant says about her daughter "But Shefali will make a love marriage over my dead body" (Ali, 51). It is observed that the males control the females about their social gatherings or stops them from going to social-clubs, disco, bar et cetera. They too controls what they watch on the television to stop them from learning about the western lifestyles. Ali (2007)



writes how chanu stops his daughter from watching her show on television, “what is this rubbish you are watching, Sahana? Switch it off now” (Ali, 319).

To conclude, in this live world, we all are born as humans but we created differences on many levels, gender is one of them. This gender, divided the world in two parts, the dominant males and meek females. The females had never been treated equally since the beginning of human civilization to present day. Their struggle for freedom is very long and is still in pace. Today, we live in a modern world, but our thinking is still orthodoxical regarding female equality. We want the females to be below males, as in master-subject relation. The females are the subjects, who are deprived of their certain rights and free life, they are forced to eat, live, cloth, speak et cetera according to the males will. The struggle of the females grows to a drastic levels when they become an immigrant, as they are much more deprived compared to native females. These immigrant females don't get support from the local bodies due to their guest identity, and they also lack family support on the foreign land. It becomes very tough to forecast about the day, till when the two genders will be equally free. It is generally concluded that the subjugation of the females stops only after their death.

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