



DISCOURSE OF NOSTALGIA AND HOMESICKNESS IN MONICA ALI'S FICTION

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze Monica Ali's Brick Lane and In the Kitchen as the novels of Diaspora in order to comprehend the predicament of South Asian diaspora women as they deal with nostalgia, homesickness, displacement, discrimination, and establishing their identities in a foreign country. The diaspora writing emphasizes the feelings of being uprooted from one location and settling on another leads to close contact with many cultural contexts. This dispersion puts migrants in the midst of countless challenges and misunderstandings pertaining to their survival in a foreign environment. They are plagued by feelings of being nostalgic and feel homesickness of their native country, and a desire to go back as they fight to survive. They make every effort to avoid these unbearably painful emotions, even if it means jeopardizing their original identity.

Keywords

Nostalgia, Migration and Homesickness, etc.

Full Article

Introduction:

It is common to observe migrants hopping between the past and the present. They are frequently forced to choose between the two due to the mental conundrum and being nostalgic about their native land. They can choose to act in opposition and retreat to a mixed culture, reject the newness of the surroundings and demand a full embrace, or abandon the past by embracing the new culture. Jian Lia presents Homi Bhabha's perspective in the article "A Cultural Hybridization Perspective: Emerging Academic Subculture among International Students from East Asia in the U.S." Bhabha claims that "cultural hybridity in the postcolonial perspective can be viewed as a reaction to cultural hegemony" (2219). For the same reason, Monica Ali's books *In the Kitchen* and *The Brick Lane* have been extensively researched. Given that she was born in Dhaka but was raised in England, Monica appears to have a better eye for such subjects. Her father is Bangladeshi, while her mother is English. The married couple first resided in Dhaka with their two small children. At that time, Dhaka was striving to become the capital of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and to gain independence from Pakistan. In 1971, Ali's father had to relocate the family to a safer location, so they were transferred to England. Later on, Ali's father, Hatem, became a member of his family. He had always wanted to return to Bangladesh.

The author has specifically addressed this emotion in her works, and some of the fictitious characters in *Brick Lane* will also portray such a circumstance. The difficult road of displacement, homesickness, and nostalgia is highlighted in the book. The sensation of isolation and identity problems has a strong hold on the protagonists. In a postcolonial setting, all of the aforementioned concerns can be evaluated under the prism of migration and multiculturalism. Monica has highlighted the most prevalent aspects of any diasporic work, including oppression and discrimination. Additionally, the author urges readers to focus on the important topic of why immigrants face discrimination abroad. Additionally, Ali's *Brick Lane* questions multicultural cultures.



Migration is a conflictual action committed by those who migrate since it determines not only their own destiny but also the future of their future generations, which gives rise to the identity cohesiveness that arises as a result of the upcoming stages. The ultimate winners are those who rise from the ashes, while others shake, die, rise, or fall. Although migration is a challenging process due to both factors, it is particularly challenging for women who are an integral part of that phallogocentric tradition. Whether they are at home or abroad, they are always a defector. Because they would never be able to leave those heaths where the witches are kept alive, women are like a deluge that would never erupt. The fascinating experiences of the main character, Nazneen, and the themes of identity, self-determination, and the burden of family that permeate all of the characters' lives, particularly Nazneen's. Nazneen's life is completely upended, and gendered migration also affects the other female characters. Chinese Canadian literary scholar Lily Cho states that "diaspora must be understood as a condition of subjectivity and not as an object of analysis," (Cho, 229) taking into account the circumstances of female immigrants.

Nazneen marries Chanu Ahmed, a man her father's age, in an effort to obtain the steadfast support and emotional stability that every wife expects from her husband. She enters a very other world. A culture where "dogs can be expected to diet" and "poor people can be fat." But instead of helping Nazneen come to terms with her new diasporic Bangladeshi identity and as a lady, Chanu treats her in his own manner. He is a product of male hegemony and does not hesitate to voice his conservative, narrow-minded, and obscurantist ideas, which are common among Bangladeshi men, even if he lives in his ideal country, which he also sees as "money land."

As a result, the majority of male diasporians do not hesitate to cling to their preconceived notions of dominating, intimidating, and manipulating their female consort. It is also evident from a close reading of the book that these women are not victims of immigration or relocation, but rather victims of patriarchy inside their own community. The main problem for these diasporic expats is their close ties to their culture, values, traditions, and rituals. Like any other man, Chanu relocated with the intention of becoming "rags to richer," hoping to achieve great success and prosperity so that he could lead an opulent and pleasant life.

Because it is thought that terms like "familiar" and "homely" have a strong connection to the foreign and the in-homely. Since "exodus seems to be the only alternative for many when the environment of one's native home loses its intimacy." The immigrants find their house similarly unhomely when they are left with no option but to be dispatched. Additionally, discussing the misery of immigration Chanu goes on to say,

I am talking about the clash between the western values and our own. I am talking about the struggle to assimilate and the need to preserve one's identity and heritage. I am talking about children who don't know what their children who don't know what their identity is. I am talking about the feelings of alienation endangered by a society where racism is prevalent. I'm talking about the terrific struggle to preserve one's sanity while striving to achieve the best of one's family". How Nazneen's attempt towards adopting independency was curbed by Chanu at each and every movement is clearly visible in these lines, 'Why should you go out?' said Chanu. 'If you go out, ten people will say, 'I saw her walking on the street'. And I will look like a fool. Personally, I don't mind if you go out but these people are so ignorant. What can you do? (Ali, BK, 45)



She confides in the four walls of the house as a result of this. However, this lines “What's more, she is a good worker” (Ali, BK, 22) clearly illustrate the hypocritical beliefs of a Bangladeshi man. Cooking, cleaning, and so forth. She doesn't speak English, therefore my main grievance is that she can't organize my paperwork. Other than that, I have no complaints. A girl from the village is completely innocent, as I say (Ali, BK, 23). On the one hand, there are ladies like Mrs. Azad who, despite having embraced modernity, never hesitate to highlight her cultural and traditional customs when given the chance. For women like her have decided to overcome the restraints imposed on them inclusive of the societal pressures and the tactics. In the words of Dr Azad's wife,

why do you make it so complicated?’ said the doctor's wife.
‘Assimilation this alienation that! Let me tell you a few simple facts.
Facts: we live in a western society. Fact: our children will all more and
more like westerners. Fact: that's no bad thing. My daughter is free to
come and go. Do I wish I had enjoyed myself like her when I was
young? Yes! (Ali, BK, 113)

However, other women, like Razia, feel exterminated following the death of their spouse because they were subjected to gender discrimination and were strangled by him throughout their lives.

Although *In the Kitchen* and *Brick Lane* are quite different, identity and loneliness are nevertheless major themes in both books. In addition to identity crisis and loneliness, the author explores the theme of mortality, which exacerbates the protagonist's self-consciousness. Nazneen's personality change in *Brick Lane* continues to be the main focus, but Gabe, the main character *In The Kitchen*, struggles to discover who he really is. He reconciles with his family, whom he had alienated himself from for a variety of reasons, in order to discover who, he is.

Monica Ali has attempted to highlight the problem of foreigners in the strange and unfamiliar world by choosing the title of the book. She highlights that migrants face a variety of challenges when they travel to a foreign country for a variety of reasons. However, they give up their dignity, self-worth, etc. in order to survive in the new setting. In her book *In the Kitchen*, Ali also makes an effort to describe the circumstances of immigrants who work in London but reside in Britain illegally. As a result, they face many challenges when they move to a new country without the necessary paperwork and procedures. These immigrants are from remote parts of the world, such as Eastern Europe and Africa.

Ali shows little connection to Bangladesh, but rather to South Asian groups in general. The author draws attention to the life of immigrants, which is full of hardships, agonies, and frustrations that go unnoticed. She draws a comparison between the world of migrants and the kitchen—a part of the house that is rarely seen by others in this book, which features numerous incidents that take place in the Imperial Hotel, a hotel in the heart of London. Thus, despite having different nations, Victor, Nikolai, Suleiman, Benny, Albert, and Damania work at the Imperial Hotel in London. They engage in a variety of activities, but nobody recognizes or appreciates their labor.

In actuality, they operate in a secret location that serves a crucial purpose for the establishment but is either unappealing to the naked eye or off-limits to guests. The author also emphasizes the unpleasant fact that migrants are willing to leave their home country in order to work abroad, even for menial and low-paying occupations. Large numbers of immigrants, both legal and illegal, work in the Imperial Hotel's kitchen and are hidden from the outside world, which extols the hotel's virtues. Monica Ali's most recent book is *In the Kitchen* (2009). She is well-known for her book *Brick Lane*, which I really liked and which was subsequently adapted into a movie. The major reason I didn't enjoy her next novel, *Alentejo Blue*, was that there wasn't



much of a main plot and there were too many characters and side storylines. To put it another way, it looked like a book of short stories, and I don't read short stories much since they end too quickly.

I borrowed *In the Kitchen* from a friend who had left the book unfinished. "Too dull," she said. I was glad to give it a shot, keeping Brick Lane in the back of my mind. I also enjoy watching reality shows about restaurants and cuisine. I generally remember to watch the British shows "Master Chef" and "The Restaurant" when they're on. I discovered that the kitchen in question was located in a hotel restaurant while reading the novel, which also reminded me of the television show "Hotel Babylon."

I therefore began reading this book with an optimistic outlook.

The narrative then shifts to the main character's family, including his father, grandmother, and sister, as well as his roommate. I had to lower my expectations a bit, but this was still interesting. Our main character, Gabriel Lightfoot, works as an executive chef at the Imperial Hotel in London, which has lost some of its glitz. He oversees the kitchen and plans to open his own eatery, which he intends to name Lightfoot's. Gabriel first fears that his business partners' decision to fund the new endeavor will be adversely affected by this demise. He will soon have a lot of other concerns to occupy his time. Things get worse and worse.

Ali returns to London and discusses themes of displacement and multiculturalism. Her main character, Gabriel Lightfoot, is the executive chef at the former opulent Imperial Hotel close to Piccadilly. He is originally from the North of England. "Every corner of the earth was represented here," he says, comparing his "brigade" of culinary workers to a UN task force. Asian, African, Baltic, Hispanic, and most regions in between. Ali examines the changes occurring in northern England as well as the secret world of low-wage international labor and human trafficking in London via Gabe's eyes and thoughts. Many years ago, South Asian immigrants moved to northern cities to work in the textile mills. There is now conflict between the indigenous and immigrant groups, and the textile sector has shrunk.

Gabe, 42, has been managing the Imperial's kitchens for five months in Ali's latest book. Unbeknownst to his bosses, however, he intends to open his own restaurant with the support of a businessman and a Labour government minister. In terms of his personal life, Gabe has been seeing Charlie, a red-headed nightclub singer with green eyes, for more than three years. Her biological clock is running out at the age of 38, and getting married and starting a family seems like the next step. The death of Yuri, a Ukrainian kitchen porter whose naked body is discovered in a pool of blood in the hotel's basement—where it is revealed he had been living in secret—shakes Gabe's plan for the future. Lena, one of the females who works in the kitchen, has vanished. When Gabe's sister calls to inform him that his father, Ted, is dying of cancer, it further upends his world. In his hometown of Blantwistle, where the final textile factory is closing, he pays a visit to his father and sister. During the day, he is plagued by memories of his childhood, and at night, he is plagued by nightmares about Yuri's corpse.

Gabe's sister's revelation that their late mother had bipolar disorder and frequently ran off with other men, always returning to the long-suffering Ted, is another factor contributing to his growing uneasiness. Gabe starts to worry about his own sanity. Gabe spontaneously offers Lena to stay at his apartment when she shows up in the hotel basement while he is there because she has nowhere else to go. After being transported to London, Lena sought safety in the basement with Yuri from a man who beat her, prostituted her, and stole her passport. Gabe has an obsessive friendship with this odd, slender Belarusian girl behind Charlie's back. *In the Kitchen*, unfolds the dreadful situation of the migrants who make an entry in the foreign country illegally. They

become prey to the criminal activities. They allow the natives to exploit them with a clear objective to afford their sustenance away from their land. The writer exposes that in the name of employment many migrants especially women are dragged in prostitution network.

Conclusion:

Diasporic Literature has long been fascinated by and explored topics of nostalgia, homesickness, cultural consciousness and identity. Ali's work offers a glimpse into the complex network of human experiences where nostalgia, homesickness, identity, displacement, and a sense of belonging converge. In order to reveal the layers of desire to go back to the past and being cultural conscious the books of well-known author, Monica Ali, portrays these themes and issues in her writing. The author depicts the intricate relationship between identity, culture, and relocation her.

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