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A Woman's Growth

An essay about Nazneen's way to independence in *Brick Lane*

Women's independence is a common theme in feminist literature. As quoted by Zheng, Adrienne Rich defines patriarchy as "a social system in which the male is the head of the household, and men decide the role of women through ceremony, tradition, law, language, culture, etiquette, education and work" (63), which means in such a social system, the male is the dominator in all fields, and women are supposed to be dominated by them. Eagleton argues, "Women find it difficult to give expression to their true selves and can feel invisible or marginal in a male-dominated culture" (189). They are not free to act, write, even speak, which depresses women both physically and mentally.

Muslim women serve as a typical example of being oppressed by men. In the article *Wrong from Head to Toe*, Theodore Dalrymple states that Muslim women (who are virtually enslaved in Britain) "are not allowed out of the house except under escort, and sometimes not even then; they are allowed no mail or use of telephone; they are not allowed to contradict a male member of the household, and are automatically subject to his wishes" (32). In Muslim culture, women are not allowed to contact outside affairs, no matter people or information. They are not permitted to meet males outside of the family, and even when they want to meet females in the same community, they have to get permission from the husbands or fathers. They are not treated as a human. They are just primarily appendages of men, rather than women in their own right.

Thus, oppressed women have been standing up and fighting for their right for hundreds of years. Feminist literature usually shows the readers how women struggle

to fight their sad fate. In Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, she quotes Dorothy Parker's words as "[my] idea is that all of us, men as well as women, should be regarded as human beings" (de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*). Women don't have extravagant hopes, they just want to be treated as the same human beings as men.

Cormack comments on Monica Ali's popular novel *Brick Lane* as "the novel is particularly of interest as an examination of the double bind that female migrants face, treated as alien by their host nation and as commodities by the men in their own communities" (700). In the novel, women are already not treated as normal human beings by men in their society, and moreover, when they go abroad, they may find themselves alien to native people too. They are in a certain extent isolated by both their own community and the host society. Monica Ali has written a stunning script about one woman's quest to find her voice. Going through the story, we follow the life of Nazneen and watch her change to become an independent woman. As a Muslim woman as well as an immigrant in London, life is tough for Nazneen. But unlike many other Muslim immigrant women in London, Nazneen changes from accepting her fate to deciding it. She grows up from a low-status housewife to an independent social woman. The novel starts a new wave of deep consideration of the fate and freedom of women.

This essay will focus on Nazneen's change to become independent and how the people around her and the society contribute to her change. It will analyze how Nazneen becomes an independent social woman, both financially and psychologically.

The theories used to analyze the novel are feminist criticism together with historical criticism. These two theories are closely connected when dealing with a novel like *Brick Lane*, which deals with female issues and immigrant issues. As Trew and Kremer states, “feminism takes as its focus the nature, rights and interests of women” (27). What the essay is going to discuss relates to Nazneen’s daily life and family life, so it is necessary to use feminist criticism to analyze her development. Besides, there are always struggles between the cultures in immigrant identity. As Britain is a multicultural country, culture clashes certainly exist. Thus it is necessary to use feminist criticism and historical criticism to analyze the novel. In addition to the two theories mentioned above, a close reading is also very important for searching for evidence to analyze the novel. Besides the novel itself, a range of secondary sources dealing with the novel, the characters in the novel, the historical background and feminist issues are used.

After introducing the basic background and information of the novel, the essay will follow a certain order. The first part will discuss what Nazneen is at the beginning. The second part will analyze how Hasina, Nazneen’s sister, forms Nazneen’s wish to be independent. The third part will discuss the meaning of Nazneen’s mother and son’s death towards her change. The fourth part will present how Nazneen’s family life promotes her change. The last part will analyze how Nazneen’s love affair finally makes her a psychologically independent woman. This is her growth and how she changes to be independent.

Brick Lane has been the first port of call for many immigrants working in the

docks and shipping from Chittagong port in Bengal. It is the heart of the city's Bangladeshi-Sylheti community, and is known locally as Banglatown in the 20th century. Thousands of Bangladeshi people move to London, look for jobs, and live together in Brick Lane, as if they form a small Bangladesh in London. Brick Lane is the place where Nazneen, a Bangladeshi immigrant woman, lives and the story takes place.

At the beginning of the story, Nazneen is a very pure fatalist, which is mostly because of her mother. Her mother is “naturally a saint” (6), as her father says. Under the situation of Nazneen's close to death, although their family is the second richest in the village, and the mother can take Nazneen to the hospital, she chooses to wait at home to see what God's will is. Like a saint, she doesn't want to stand in the way of Fate. She accepts whatever happens, and teaches her children in this way as well. Nazneen listens closely to her mother. She hears many times of the story of How You Were Left to Your Fate when growing up, so she believes it is because of her mother's wise decision that she can live. In her belief, what can not be changed must be borne, and since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne. This principle rules Nazneen's life for a long time. She follows her fate and never doubts it.

On the other hand, she believes in Fate for her marriage as well. When her father asks if she would like to see a photograph of the man that she is going to marry, she just shakes her head and replies, “Abba, it is good that you have chosen my husband. I hope I can be a good wife, like Amma”(7). It is the man who she is going to marry, and who will take her to London with him, making her leave her parents and

her homeland. But she appears as if she doesn't care; she just accepts it, without a word, because she always remembers her mother's words, "If God wanted us to ask questions, he would have made us men" (78). What she can do is just follow her Fate.

According to Cormack,

The construction of Nazneen's identity is analogous to the double narrative of pedagogy and performance that Homi K. Bhabha argues is at the heart of the construction of the "people" of a nation. The first element of the narrative is external and official: "the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event" (297). As in the case of a nation, Nazneen's origin is situated in a distant past. A factor that further comments on Bhabha's ideas is that this moment is characterized by pure fatalism, the story being renarrated until it becomes the fundamental "principle" that rules Nazneen's life. She is the object of this discourse, central yet entirely exterior to its enunciation. (701)

In another word, Nazneen is a historical object of the nation. Her identity is given before she is born. It is the Muslim culture that makes identities for women. Women are supposed to be pure fatalists. As a traditional Muslim woman, Nazneen believes that she should listen to her father and husband absolutely. She at all times considers herself a faithful Muslim woman, who should always believe in God and never doubt or fight with God's will. This is who she should be.

The nature of her passage to England is also reflected in this novel. She is the object of a transaction between her father and her husband. And she even does not allow herself to wish for a different life.

However, Nazneen's sister, Hasina, who listens to no one but herself, has a great effect on the formation of Nazneen's wish to be an independent woman. Hasina is very different from Nazneen. She believes she can make her own fate. She is very

beautiful at the age of sixteen, even “almost unbearable to own or to look at” (6) by men. She elopes to Khulna with the nephew of the sawmill owner, which makes her father very angry. She bravely pursues her love and happiness. She writes letters to Nazneen frequently, telling her elder sister about her situation and feelings.

And all these things worry Nazneen very much because Hasina kicks against fate. No good will come out of it. But then, Nazneen has another thought. She wonders whether this is just Hasina’s fate, to run away and marry for love: “If fate cannot be changed, no matter how you struggle against it, then perhaps Hasina was fated to run away with Malek”(13). Nazneen begins to doubt what fate really is. She does not know whether it is Hasina’s heart or if it is just the fate that makes her run away.

Although Hasina runs away from her husband, because he beats her, she doesn’t go back to her hometown. Instead, she stays in Dhaka and at last vanishes with the cook. It seems she isn’t going to give up fighting with her fate. Nazneen knows about Hasina’s life as prostitute and maid, but Hasina still acts and appears as an independent woman, which Nazneen envies very much. Hasina writes in her letter “I am not like her [Amma]. Waiting around. Suffering around. She wrong. So many ways. At the end only she act. She who think all path is closed for her. she take the only one forbidden”(475). This is also Nazneen’s thinking. She doesn’t want to be like her mother either, a woman who only waits, suffers and holds no hope. For several days after receiving Hasina’s letter, Nazneen imagines herself an independent woman too. Her sister’s bravery encourages her very much. So she talks with Chanu about

bringing Hasina to London several times, although she fails. Besides, she saves some money after working and sends it to Hasina to support her. In this way, she helps Hasina fight against Fate. Conversely, it is because of Hasina that Nazneen begins her march towards independence.

Hasina has a great effect on the formation of Nazneen's wish to be an independent woman, but on the other hand, it is her mother and son's death that makes her deeply doubt the belief in Fate. Nazneen's mother and son's death strikes her hard. When her mother dies, she is just 14 and does not know the cause of her mother's death. But when she knows how her mother died, her consideration of Fate changes a lot. Nazneen's father betrays her mother and has an affair with another woman, which leads to her mother's breakdown. Although her mother is like a saint, and she always says "Just wait and see, that's all we can do" (40), she cannot bear her husband's treachery. She waits around and suffers. She does not blame her husband or anyone else. Instead, she chooses death as her way to get away—she commits suicide. She has her best Dhaka sari on and carefully chooses the spear. She doesn't even hesitate. This is the way she fights with Fate. In dying, she proves life is unpredictable and beyond control. When Nazneen knows the fact of her mother's death, she thinks a lot about her mother and her words. Her mother always says "wait and see", but now it is just her that stops waiting and seeing and chooses to leave Nazneen and Hasina behind. Nazneen begins to doubt her deep belief in Fate, whether it is right or wrong.

Later, her baby's death also has a great effect on her consideration of Fate. She

knows she should send her son to the hospital when he is ill and she does so, unlike her own mother. And she prays to God reverently day by day, “*Subhanallah*. Glory to God. *Alhamdu lillah*. Thanks be to God. *Allahu Akbar*. God is great” (135). When she kneels and prostrates herself and recites the words, she feels she has never fully engaged in them like this time. But still, the boy died. Nazneen is so confused that her mother does nothing but she lives on while she does everything she can but her son dies. She wonders what God really wants.

The period that Nazneen moves forward a lot in her way to be independent is the time of family life in London. In 1985, Nazneen moves to London to live with Chanu, her husband, who is old, almost of Nazneen’s father’s age, with a face like a frog. When she happens to see the photograph of him before they get married, she thinks it is ugly. But she has nothing to complain about at that time, because it is her fate. From then on, she assumes the role of a wife. Every day, she does the same things, preparing meals, doing housework, cutting her husband’s corns, and living in a house that looks like a big box.

Chanu thinks she is a good worker, rather than a good wife. One night, Nazneen happens to hear Chanu’s telephone conversation with someone, maybe a relative or someone else, and Chanu says “she is a good worker” (15). He appreciates her cooking and washing, but it is actually a work of maid. The reason why he wants Nazneen as his wife is “a blind uncle is better than no uncle. I waited too long to get a wife” (14). It seems as if something is better than nothing, and any wife is better than no wife. Nazneen is just treated as an object, when somebody needs it, he can take

her. According to the introduction of *Women and Development in the Third World* by Momsen, “For all societies, the common denominator of gender is female subordination” (1). Here, man and woman are not in the same position. Chanu marries Nazneen just for a woman to do the housework and give birth to babies. They share no common ideas or interests. Their marriage has nothing to do with love. At that moment, Nazneen realizes that she is such a foolish girl. Before she hears the conversation, she even imagines he is in love with her or he is grateful because she, young and graceful, has accepted him. She feels so stupid. From then on, she begins to feel some dissatisfaction with her marriage.

Everyday, Nazneen just stays in the house, like a bird in a cage. She sometimes thinks of going downstairs, crossing the yard, climbing another building, and knocking on somebody else’s door, because when she comes to London, what she misses most is people. But she never really does the things mentioned above, because she does not know what will happen next. She does not know what she would like to say or what she can say to the man or woman who opens the door. She just shrinks back, although she really wants to do such things, she is just afraid to make the first move.

When Nazneen arrives in London, she knows nothing about the English language besides “sorry” and “thank you”, and then learns the words “pub”, “money”, and “hospital”. Nazneen’s friend Razia is going to college to study English, which makes Nazneen wish to go too. She tells her thought to Chanu. But at first, Chanu does not even listen to her, as if women are not even supposed to speak. Mary

Eagleton refers to Mineke Schipper who has a collection of writing from women in Africa, the Arab world, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America entitled *Unheard Worlds*, in which “one element [in her collection] are lists of traditional proverbs, many of which make clear that women should, indeed, be unheard: Virtuous is the girl who suffers and dies without a sound (Bengal, India)” (19). It seems as if in Muslim culture, women should not be heard. They are even not supposed to speak out, not referring to bring out their wishes.

Then when Chanu realizes what Nazneen’s wish is, he just uses the excuse of the baby to turn her down. It seems men always want to be beyond women, especially in education. According to Spencer, there is “Sophia, A Person of Quality” who in 1739 published *Woman not Inferior to Man: or, short and modest Vindication of the Natural Right of the Fair Sex to a perfect Equality of Power, Dignity and Esteem with the Men*. Although the writing was published more than two hundred years ago, the women’s education issue has been discussed for centuries, and some content still suits the society today. In her pamphlet,

she asserted that education was one of the major means used by men to advance their superiority over women, and she argued that if women were permitted the same educational advantages as men they would soon expose and eliminate the ostensible superiority of men.(8)

Although according to Quran, men and women have equal rights, women rarely get a high education. In many communities, because of their traditions, women are even not supposed to learn anything, which is actually very unfair for women.

So Nazneen has to learn English by herself. She watches TV, talks to friends, and learns some key phrases from her daughters. In this way, Nazneen gets

confidence little by little, and gradually gets involved in the community and society.

Because of the lack of language, in the first days, Nazneen cannot go around the town but just stays at home and watches TV. Then she finds something on TV that interests her very much—the ice skaters. It is the first time she sees a man in a very tight suit and a woman in a short skirt that does not even cover her bottom. This scene would never appear in Bangladesh. As Momsen says, “In many Muslim countries women are not only segregated from men but have seclusion of *purdah* imposed on them and have to wear long, concealing garments and sometimes a veil in public”(30). In Muslim countries, women have to wear saris that almost cover their whole body when they go out. What’s more, they have to wear hijabs around their head to hide their hairs and sometimes faces. They have to wear like this unless with their family members. Nazneen even wears a sari and a hijab in London. So the scene of ice skaters means a lot to Nazneen.

The ice skaters seem as a symbol of freedom of mind for Nazneen. The detailed description of the woman’s movements, of how she “spun around until she would surely fall but didn’t” (30), and “she did not slow down” (30), indicates Nazneen’s wish to be fearless. As Cormack argues, “[the] television is already like a fireplace, pointing out the divergence of this world alien to her, but perhaps not to the reader. The clothes are revealing, and the skaters’ movements and the responses of the crowd appear magical. The female figure represents everything that Nazneen is not: she dominates nature, the opposite sex, and her own body” (709). Although Nazneen is just watching this woman, in fact, she wants to be the woman, who is very brave and

is free in both body and mind. She wants to enter the new culture and find her true self.

When she tries to walk on the street alone, she is excited. She watches the streets, buildings, shops and people on the streets. She can stare at anyone as she wishes. She walks here and there, turns left and right freely. She walks through Brick Lane and finally gets lost. She knocks into someone and gets a cup of hot tea spilled on her arm, but what she does is try to run away, for a reason maybe even she herself does not know. The man says something to her, but she cannot understand and what she can say is just “sorry”. It is very little, but it is definitely something. After that, she goes into a pub to use the toilet and a restaurant to ask directions back home. Now, she has really communicated with people in the community, and she is no more a bird in the cage.

When Chanu gets a metal tubing and canvas chair, “Nazneen [refuses] to sit in it, even when her husband [tells] her not to be a damn fool of a woman and try it. She just [refuses] and that [is] that” (80). Chanu’s arrogant and endless talking has made Nazneen a little crazy although most of the time she chooses to ignore him. But this is the first time that Nazneen expresses her own will by accepting or refusing. She bravely insists on saying “no”. And when she is tired of housework, she does not cut her husband’s corns, puts back the unwashed socks back to the cabinet, and leaves the house untidy. The belief that she should act as a conventional woman has broken down. Now, she does what she wants to do.

As Cormack says, “[Chanu] constructs a mythic Bangladesh to compensate for

his failure to succeed in English culture” (702). Chanu considers the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore as the true father of their nation, and he insists his daughters learn to recite Tagore’s poem “Golden Bengal” in order to fully understand their roots. But his elder daughter disdains to follow his request. She wears jeans and acts just like native girls. When this happens, Nazneen just ignores Chanu’s potential reaction and allows her daughter’s behavior. At this point, Nazneen has already opened her mind to the local culture.

Then, it is the burden of the family that makes Nazneen more independent. Usually, Chanu goes out working and Nazneen stays at home doing housework and caring for children: “Women in the Middle East and North Africa have the lowest rates of economic activity and this is linked to Islamic patterns of female control” (Momsen, 30). Muslim women are not allowed to see other men outside of their family or non-Muslim women, so it is impossible for them to work outside of the house. Then, Chanu resigns from his job in the council and has no permanent position, so Nazneen has to do some sewing work to lighten the family’s burden. According to Davies, “Members of a family can use each other’s time to a certain extent, but it is most frequently women’s time which is made use of as regards caring work and housework. The time that she is able to use for paid work is adjusted to other family members’ need of time” (110). So even if Nazneen wants to work, she has to work at home, after taking care of her children and doing housework. But in this way, she learns how to make herself financially independent.

When the family runs into debt, it is Nazneen that bravely stands out to protect

the family. Mrs. Islam is said to be a respectable woman by Chanu, who knows everything in the community. But in the end, it turns out that she is a usurer. After Chanu borrows money from her, every few days, she comes to Nazneen's house to ask for money. She pretends to be a miserable and dying lady, but she takes her two sons with her to threaten Nazneen. At first, Nazneen bears this treatment in silence and pays the money, but in the end she "could have spat, right there and then, on the lilac chiffon. She [swallows]" (330), although she just says she has no more money. The last time Mrs. Islam asks for money, Nazneen explodes: "Nazneen's blood [thickens]. Her heart [strains] to push it around her body" (486). It is the first time Nazneen is so angry with someone. She even says they can break her arms but she can give them no more money. When nice people get angry, it can be very horrible. Nazneen is so firm and fearless that she makes Mrs. Islam go away from their house. Nazneen not only wins over Mrs. Islam, but also wins over the fear in her heart by herself.

When referring to social relationship for Nazneen, Razia is her true friend. Although she is a Muslim woman as well, she appears and acts no more as a Muslim: "She [is] wearing a garment she [calls] a tracksuit. She would never, so she [says], wear a sari again. She [is] tired of taking little bird steps" (95). She no more acts like a Muslim woman. Instead, she prefers western women's way of life. She smokes a lot. But Nazneen likes her. Maybe in her mind, Razia is another Hasina who fights against Fate. She is the first person to ask Nazneen to go to the college to learn English with her. She is also the only one Nazneen can tell everything to.

When Nazneen's son is ill, Razia gives her strength and makes her stronger. When later her own husband dies during working, she still acts as a strong woman in front of Nazneen. She shows Nazneen how strong a woman can be without a husband when her son is immersed in drugs and sells the furniture of the house. Furthermore, it is because of Razia's introduction that Nazneen has sewing work to do. With Razia, Nazneen even dares to give an impolite girl a stare. When Nazneen tells Razia what has been going on between her and Karim, Razia almost says nothing but tells Nazneen that is called love. After Chanu goes back to Bangladesh, it is thanks to Razia's help that Nazneen has work to do to support her daughters and herself and become financially independent. Nazneen "[prays] to God, but He [has] already given her what she needed: Razia" (531). So for Nazneen, Razia is a very important woman that helps her find her social identity.

What makes Nazneen finally psychological independent is the love affair between her and Karim. Karim is the young man who gets sewing work for Nazneen. But Karim acts like a local man, with confidence. He receives "Salaat alerts" on his mobile phone, and when he begins to pray, Nazneen finds herself attracted to him. He has a smell of limes. And "Nazneen [feels] an electric current run from her nipples to her big toes" (280). She even dares to look straight at him when he finds she is looking at himself. They finally cannot help themselves and sleep together. For Nazneen, Karim's certainty, dress, and language are markers that he belongs in the Western world, a characteristic to which Nazneen feels strongly attracted. As Cormack says, "his masculinity is allied in her mind to his hybrid identity: his

comfort, confidence, and sexuality are, at first, a seamless whole. He also represents an alternative, perhaps more Western way for the gender to interact” (705). While Chanu never listens to her, Karim often makes her feel as if she has said a weighty piece. This is very important for her identity to be a woman who is significant to someone.

Nazneen sometimes attends the meetings of Bengal Tigers, whose chairman is Karim. The meetings are made up by Muslim people, in which people discuss social condition and Muslim people’s rights in the society. Since the 20th century, millions of Bangladeshi people have immigrated to Britain, but they always live in the same community, like a Bangladeshi area. Generations live together, protecting their own nation, religion and culture. They just hold meetings to show their inner voices. Although Nazneen goes to the meetings mostly because of Karim, from the meetings, Nazneen knows more about the situation and condition of the community and her people during that period. And now, she can bravely go into an open meeting without being nervous.

However when Nazneen asks, “What about me?” Karim replies: “Ah, you. You are the real thing” (419). She realizes she is only an object for him. She is a symbol of Bengali wife, Bengali mother. From her, he can find an idea of home. “For Karim—a young man just as much at sea in the complexities of culture and belonging as his lover—Nazneen represents the imaginary stability of homeland and a receptive femininity to bolster his sense of self” (Cormack 705). For Karim, who is born in Britain and never live in Bangladesh before, Nazneen represents the Bengali culture,

which he misses since he is born. Nazneen finds out Karim does not really love her. He just wants to find his original identity through Nazneen.

Nazneen realizes it is impossible and also wrong to continue the relationship with Karim. She knows it is wrong to betray her husband, and even if she stays together with Karim, her daughters will not accept this relationship. And most importantly, Karim does not love her and will never become the one that shares the rest of her life. So she stands before Karim, and bravely speaks out “I don’t want to marry you” (494). She finally finds out what she really wants and does the deed.

And after the event of September 11th, the conflicts between Muslim people and non-Muslim people are stronger. Britain is experiencing a period of economical depression and low employment. So many native people cannot find a job, not to mention immigrants. Moreover, more and more native people are against Muslim people, and Muslim people think they are disrespected or humiliated. So it is difficult for Muslim people to stay in Britain, and many of them decide to go back to Bangladesh. So does Chanu. Nazneen thinks carefully about what she wants and what the best choice for her family is. Then, she tells Chanu that she and her daughters will not go back to Bangladesh, but they will stay in London instead. She knows Chanu cannot make a living in London, and he must go back to Bangladesh. But although the younger daughter may adapt to Bangladeshi culture quickly, she is sure that the elder daughter definitely cannot adapt to the Bangladesh culture. She is aware that the girls like London city and they already consider themselves British citizens. The more important reason is that Nazneen wants to stay in London, rather than go back to

Bangladesh. By then, she is a woman with an independent mind, knowing what to do and what not to do.

In the end of the novel, the skating scene appears again. But at this time, Nazneen is the protagonist of the ice-skating field. In Marx's book, he quotes Kabeer's note as "In Bangladesh, a country... [with] strong norms of purdah.....in Britain... Bangladeshi women were largely found working from home, in apparent conformity with purdah norms" (17). But this scene is changing. As Razia says, "[t]his is England, you can do whatever you like" (541), people are totally free to do whatever they want here. Nazneen is already an independent woman, in spite of her mother, father, sister, husband, and lover, she is totally free of mind now.

This essay has shown how a Muslim woman in a foreign country changes to become an independent woman and how the people around her and the society contribute to her change. According to *Muslim Women in India Since Independence*, edited by Haseena Hashia, the words of Sir Ahmad Khan, although spoken about a century ago, are still meaningful in Muslim society: "while Islam has given equal status in law and religion to men and women, the position of Muslim women is in fact miserable. Muslims should therefore live up to the standards set by Islam and give women in law as well as in fact, the status accorded to them by Islam"(18). Although Muslim women have equal rights with men when referring to the Quran, for example, they have rights to choose their husbands, and they can freely get married or divorce, in the real world, they are often in an oppressed position in the family and society. The essay shows how Nazneen, an oppressed woman, changes from a faithful, scared

woman relying on her husband, into a brave, financially and psychologically independent woman as an immigrant in the multicultural Britain.

This essay has described in detail what Nazneen's original life and characteristics are, how her family members, her mother, father, sister, husband, children, as well as her friends impact on her change, and at last how her love affair finally promotes her change. Usually, it is difficult for a woman to gain independence, not to mention a woman with strong beliefs, like Nazneen, a Muslim woman. But the background is the multicultural Britain, where people can free their mind and do what they want to do. The culture clashes contribute a great deal to Nazneen's change. Furthermore, people around her are also making great efforts to be independent and find their own identities, which helps promote Nazneen's change to be independent and find her identity. Readers will find that Nazneen has confronted her oppression by gender, race, and religion, and won for herself an independent space.

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