

# Ideas



# Ideas

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It is with great pride, enthusiasm, and anticipation that we invite you to read the seventh issue of **Ideas**. We are very happy to see the journal's gradual recognition in the national as well as in the international realm. The 7th Volume (2021-2022) of Ideas contains articles by a wide range of scholars from different corners of the world writing on topics related to language, literature and cultural studies highlighting the inter- and cross-disciplinary nature of the journal.

**Ideas** strives to attract and engage an international readership that is primarily academic. University libraries and individual academics are the primary target group for the journal. However, the journal seeks to attract professional audiences as well. The journal includes up-to date, high-quality, and original contributions - research papers, reviews, and syntheses as well as book and conference reviews -for disseminating new knowledge. Ideas remains dedicated to providing space for fresh researchers and promising academics.

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We look forward to working with all of you as we continue to make this *Journal of Literature, Arts and Culture* a success and we welcome your submissions, as well as feedback as authors, readers, and reviewers of the journal.

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Best wishes and thank you in advance for your contribution to the Journal of Institute of Advanced Studies.

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- a. Accept without any revision
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# Absurdism as a Continuous Trend: From Greek Theatre to the Theatre of the Absurd

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The Theatre of the Absurd refers to particular plays of Absurdist fiction in the late 1950s written by a number of European playwrights primarily. Their works examined the consequences when man fails to understand the meaning behind his existence and logical reasoning fails to create meaning for his existence. The theatre of absurd revolted against the conventional theatre, the theatre of absurd attempted to create a ritual-like, mythical, allegorical world of bewildered dreams full of confusions, and miscommunications rising from the fundamental existential questions—why do we live, what is the meaning of our existence? The idea of absurd was nothing new in terms of man's existence. The ancient people fought in vain against the fate or cruel interferences of gods-goddesses for immortality. This very consciousness of existence produced such invincible heroes like Achilles, Ulysses or Prometheus who fought against the absurdity with great courage, physical strength or wisdom. The critic Martin Julius Esslin in his essay “Theatre of Absurd” first coined the term “Theatre of Absurd” in 1960 and then he used it as a title of a book published in 1961 followed by two later revised editions with last one appearing in 2004 (unless otherwise stated, all references to Esslin are to this book). In 1961 edition, he presented Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Eugene Ionesco and Jean Genet as the four foremost playwrights of the movement and in succeeding editions, he added Harold Pinter as the fifth playwright. They are connected because of their interest in Theatre of Absurd capturing man's reaction to the apparent meaningless world and therefore making the characters trapped in a situation performing meaningless and recurring works.

The very manner of most absurdist's plays in debts back to the plays of tragicomedies as Esslin informs that William Shakespeare worked as an influence on Absurdist drama. Bertolt Brecht's distancing techniques in his

‘Epic Theatre’ played a crucial role in Theatre of the Absurd since many of the absurd playwrights employed techniques borrowed from these early innovators. Luigi Pirandello is considered as one of the most distinguished predecessors of absurd play. He was highly celebrated as theatrical experimentalist who used Meta theatre, role-playing, and play within play trying to explore the highly theatricalized vision of identity. Dadaism and Surrealism also had great influence on Absurd playwrights.

World War II worked as the catalyst that finally initiated the Theatre of the Absurd. Worldwide war and trauma of nuclear war made human face threatening instability of human life. During that time, one was not meant to be an abstract thinker in order to consider absurdity; it became a part of average person’s daily existence. Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), often considered as one of originators of Theatre of the Absurd, rejected realism in the theatre, asking for a return to myth and magic. He intended a theatre that would provide united models and create a modern mythology. In expressing the deeper conflicts of human mind, he believed traditional art forms and standards have lost their validity. Although he could not survive till its development, the Theatre of the Absurd reflects the new theatre what Artaud was envisioning of, protesting openly against conventional theatre.

Absurdism is a wide-ranging development because of two world wars in both literary and philosophic realms in twentieth century. No doubt, the Theatre of the Absurd was influenced by the appalling experience of frights of World War II, which exposes the impermanence of values and the meaningless aspects of human life. In such plays, “action no longer inherent in a plot, but the unfolding of poetic image. Man finds himself faced with a frightening and illogical universe, in which the means of communication, language, is also suspect” (Hinchliffe, 1967, p.31). According to Esslin, the five notable playwrights of Absurd trend are: Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet and Harold Pinter. However, Esslin himself admits:

[ …] a term like Theatre of Absurd is working hypothesis; a device to make certain fundamental traits which seem to be present in the works of a number of dramatists accessible to discussion by tracing the features they have common, that and no more (Esslin, 2004, p.10).

This term ‘absurd’ is originated from Camus’ *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Sisyphus represents mankind’s absurdity and futility of their existence:

A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity (as quoted in Esslin, 2004, p.23).

As a result, absurdism in theatre is looked upon as the outcomes of the post wars years of Europe due to an accepted study done by Esslin’s in his book *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961). At the same time, the roots of absurdism are also connected with the avant-garde movements of the 1920’s and 1930’s. Nonetheless, the trend of absurdity in theatre must not be limited to plays of post-wars period only. The principle of absurdism can be discovered to Early Greek Theatre. Ancient Greek comedies of Aristophanes’ are abundant with absurd elements. It is noted by Paul Cartledge in his book titled *Aristophanes and his Theatre of the Absurd* (1990). Along with the comedies of Aristophanes, certain plays of other great Greek dramatists like Aeschylus and Sophocles are also found linked with absurdism by some researchers including Jan Kott (1914-2001). Kott mentions:

In the entire history of Drama there are only two works in which the hero cannot leave his plays and must remain motionless from the beginning to the end of the play. The first is *Prometheus Bound*. In the second, Beckett’s *Happy Days*, the heroine Winnie is buried up to her waist in a mound of earth; later she sinks to her neck [...] Winnie goes on laughing. She laughs like Camus’ Sisyphus when the rock at the top of the mountain slips from his hands and falls into the abyss. Winnie in Beckett’s *Happy Days* is happy to the very end (Kott, 1964, p.80).

The observation of Kott is important as it indicates the absurd sense both in a contemporary and in an ancient play to mark the continuous absurd position of mankind. The same, absurd characteristics can also be traced in Elizabethan stage and particularly in the great plays of William Shakespeare, in the comedies of Moliere, in the late nineteenth century as a reaction to the realistic plays of Henrik Ibsen and Bernard Shaw (Shearson, 1973; McGuckin, 1996). Therefore, it is evident that absurdism is a continuous

trend not just a movement ensued around 1950's and aftermath. Martin Esslin himself declares that the playwrights whose work is stated in *The Theatre of the Absurd* "discussed do not from part of any self-proclaimed or self-conscious school or movement" (Esslin, 2004, p.22). Arnold P. Hinchliffe also points it:

Such a label is useful not as 'a blinding classification' but help us gain insight into a work of art. Once defined and understood, such a term helps us to evaluate works of previous epochs and he gives as an example (which not everyone will find felicitous) the work of Jan Kott on Shakespeare which produced Peter Brook's *King Lear* influenced by Beckett's *Endgame* (Hinchliffe, 1969, p.9).

Then, after the publication of Esslin's study, the term 'absurd drama' is turned into a catch phrase, which is "much used and much abused" (Hinchliffe, 1969, p.8). But, according to Shearson (1973), the notion of absurdism in theatre can be read as 'absurdist predicament' due to appearing absurdism in different periods of dramatic literature. Besides, absurdism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is directly related to existentialist thought. We see, absurdist sense is also prevailing in the plays of Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and in the works of Franz Kafka. Correspondingly, it is also related with Symbolism, Surrealism.

Though, elements of absurdity have been continued from the theatre of ancient Greek into the twentieth century; in brief, the term absurd drama chiefly referred to the plays that appear in a time filled with 'chaos in the post 1950's. This expression of chaos is intellectualized as a new metaphor for modern play by William W. Demastes in his text *Theatre of Chaos: Beyond Absurdism into Orderly Disorder* (1998). He has taken the word 'chaos' from quantum physics for interpreting western thought of modern era and absurd plays.

According to Esslin these playwrights share almost a common agenda and this common pulse based on the similar understanding by virtue of instinct and intuition but their philosophical approach is a conscious way indeed.

Primarily, Esslin lists Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet and Harold Pinter as absurdist playwrights. He opines that their plays express meaningless existence and its absurdity in a concrete dramatic picture. They also reject the conventional dramatic conflict, regular theatrical

plot, and classical way of characterization. They expose the incarnation of internal chaos of the characters they undergo at that time. Ultimately, in such plays, all communication breaks down and consequently man falls into incomprehensibility in *Waiting for Godot* and *The Thing*. They characters cannot cope with the situation and accept the absurdity as reality.

For better understanding of the nature of absurd theatre, we must comprehend its relation with the traditional theatre. Esslin himself declares:

[...] however contemporary Theatre of the Absurd may appear it is by no means the revolutionary novelty as which some of its champions, as well as some of its bitterest critics, tend to represent it. In fact, the Theatre of the Absurd can best be understood as a new combination of a number of ancient, even archaic, traditions of literature and drama (Esslin, 2004).

Man is not depicted in historical, cultural or social context in absurd theatre and their situation is different that is based on the basic condition of human. Apparently, he is isolated from everyday events and troubles of life. Man may find himself trapped in a routine or in a metafictional maze (Bradby, 1991), and even in a story itself. The situation described by Arnold P. Hinchliffe as:

[...] the central action of this kind of play, action no longer inherent in a plot (plots in absurd dramas are frequently somewhat static), but in the unfolding of a poetic image. Such images [...] lack clarity but strongly represent the loss of clear and well-defined systems of beliefs. Man finds himself faced with a frightening and illogical universe, in which the means of communication, language, is also suspected (and hence the traditional well-made play with its real conversation is also irregular) (Hinchliffe, 1967, p.31).

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# **Anandamoyi's Secular Humanitarian Position : Her Success and Failure as Reflected in Tagore's *Gora***

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[Srabonee Mustafiz passed away on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2016 in Canada. This paper is a section of her thesis entitled *Indeterminacy in Rabindranath Tagore's Representation of Women and Minorities*, University of Alberta, Canada.]

This article focuses on the position of Anandamoyi , one of the main female characters in Rabindranath's *Gora*, written and serialized between 1907 and 1909. Anandamoyi is a paradigmatic, marginalized character held under patriarchal hegemony. Two aspects of her character are commendable: her loving and self-sacrificing motherhood and her exceptional practice of secular humanitarianism in a fanatically religious society. In the opinions of critics, these two elements of Anandamoyi's character are related, as they associate her motherhood with tolerance and dedication to humanity. In spite of being the daughter of a Hindu scholar, she brings up a foreign, Christian foundling with motherly care and unflinching support, revealing her extraordinary philanthropism and individuality. In contrast to the simple way that the critics have seen Anandamoyi, I demonstrate that her presentation in the narrative is more problematic. In some places in the novel, as we will see, the narrator presents Anandamoyi in a way that the exercise of her agency becomes either

destabilized or limited. In the particular diction used in the third-person narrator's descriptions of Anandamoyi, we find an instability that shows her marginalized position, perhaps in spite of the narrator's opposite intention. For example, in Chapter 7, when Anandamoyi shares her meal with Binoy, she "fetching another plate for him [Binoy], helped him from her dish with the greatest solicitude and affection" (*Gora* 31). In using the word "solicitude," the narrator intends to express Anandamoyi's attentiveness in serving a meal to her son. But the word also carries the meaning of "anxiousness." The orthodox Gora reacts violently if Anandamoyi, who

supposedly has turned into an untouchable by abandoning all kinds of religious customs, serves the high-caste Binoy in her room. Gora, to preserve caste purity, prohibits Binoy from taking a meal in Anandamoyi's room. Gora's reaction when Binoy dines in Anandamoyi's room may cause Anandamoyi to feel some disquiet while sharing a meal with Binoy from the same plate and thus breaking Gora's prohibition. Though she might be proving her unorthodoxy by inviting Binoy, who is high-caste, to her "untouchable" room, she cannot forget the orthodoxy of domineering Gora's prohibition of her for serving food to Binoy. When the narrative voice uses the word "solicitude," it is uncertain whether it means to describe Anandamoyi's motherly care for Binoy or the anxiety she feels as she anticipates Gora's indignation. In my view, both senses are implicated here and they help destabilize any settled meaning of the text.

Later, when Gora is imprisoned for his anti-colonial protest, Anandamoyi desires to meet her son in jail. But she is unable to approach either her husband or her elder son to accompany her as both of them are hostile toward Gora. The narration describes her loneliness: "For she also knew that it would be impossible to get any member of this orthodox household to take her, the lady of the house, to the lock-up where Gora was . . ." (Gora 164). Normally the word "lady" refers not only to a respectable woman or a mistress of the house, but also to a woman with authority. While the omniscient narrator is apparently sympathetic to the distressed mistress of the house, who has no one to accompany her to meet her son in jail, he unintentionally creates irony by the use of the word "lady." The mistress of the house actually has no authority over any male member of the family.

The image of Anandamoyi throughout the entire novel is one of a revered, motherly figure. To Gora and Binoy "she had offered the full adoration of a mother's love from their early childhood" (Gora 111). The narration continues describing her affectionate raising of Gora and Binoy: "She had, indeed, shaped them [Gora and Binoy] with her own hands, like the images of Shiva which girls make for their own worship, and they had appropriated to themselves the whole of her devotion" (Gora 177). The narrator thus associates Anandamoyi's love for her sons with the devotion expressed to the god, Shiva. But the mother's position is subordinate to the position of the sons. Here, the mother is compared to the worshipper of her god-like sons. Moreover, the god Shiva, often worshipped as an ideal husband by Hindu virgins, is also an authoritative figure who is supposed to give wholeness to femininity. In comparing Gora and Binoy with Lord Shiva, or with "two

"idols" (Gora 177), the narrator again lowers Anandamoyi's position, presenting her as a worshipper of her divine sons, who grant completeness to her female life.<sup>12</sup> Thus again we return to the theme of Anandamoyi's marginalized position.

The Gora-Anandamoyi relationship is significant in this novel for a special reason: the narrative device shows tension between Hindu nationalism and universal humanism through their relationship. It presents the limitation of Gora's particular religion-based nationalism while indicating that Anandamoyi's liberal humanism is a better philosophy to create a harmonious space. For example, Gora's religious bigotry breaches his friendship with Binoy, but Anandamoyi's humanistic generosity helps to create a loving family. However, contrary to this interpretation, I find another dimension in the son-mother kinship. In the following, we see that Rabindranath's biased gender notion is transparent through his narrative voice in the Gora-Anandamoyi relationship.

The colonial trial sentences Gora to imprisonment and Gora courageously accepts the punishment. Before his trial, Gora sends a letter to Anandamoyi from the police station. In this letter we find the image of male as a combatant in the outside, material world as reflected in Rabindranath's poem "Sonara Bandhana." Gora writes to his mother Anandamoyi in his letter:

But, mother, don't be thinking only of your child. There are many other mother's sons lying in gaol,—through no fault of theirs,—I would stand on the same ground with them and share their hardships. If this wish of mine is fated to be fulfilled this time, pray do not let that distress you.... So to-day I say to myself: 'I am going to gaol voluntarily, of my own accord, without regrets, or anger, simply to take its shelter.' There is a certain amount of inconvenience in its food and other arrangements ... What we accept of our own free will ceases to be a hardship ... I go there, [gaol] willing and content. While in the enjoyment of our comforts at home, we are quite unable to appreciate what an immense privilege it is to have the freedom of the outside air and light—we are all the time forgetful of the multitudes who, with or without fault of their own, are subjected to confinement and insult and deprived of this God-given privilege. We give no thought to these multitudes, nor feel any kinship with them. I now want to be branded with the same stigma as they, not to keep myself clear by hanging on to the goody-goody majority who are dressed up to look respectable. I have learnt much of life, mother, after this experience of the world. (Gora 162-63)

With his chosen "experience of the world" and "certain amount of inconveniences" in prison, Gora emulates Rabindranath's male-striver in "Sonara Bandhana" involved in "sangsar-sangrame" 'material struggle' or "yudhadwandwa" 'conflict' (.Rabindra-racanabali 3: 26).

Now the question is how Rabindranath's narrative voice reports this correspondence. And how does it present Anandamoyi's reaction? The omniscient narrator praises the letter as "wonderful" (Gora 178), thus validating Rabindranath's definition of male activity and space. Another of Rabindranath's poems "Mother Bengal" (1896) also specifies male-action and domain:

In sin and saintliness, to rise and fall,

in joy and sorrow let your offspring grow.

Do not home-nestle them, O fond Bengal,

eternal infants all - but let them go.

Let them risk all, themselves their only aid,

with good and bad to tussle in the fray.

Take up your ready sons, that pious brigade,

and send them homeless out on a hard way. (1-4, 9-12)

Not surprisingly Gora's self-chosen struggle makes him the son of the nation as desired by Rabindranath and he approves Gora's undertaking through the acclamation of his narrative device.

On the other hand, the omniscient narrator recounts Anandamoyi's emotions in the following manner when she fails to meet her son in jail: "So she forebore to press her request, and returned to her own room with compressed lips and the shadow of suppressed pain in her eyes.... It had always been her habit to adjust all her anxieties silently within herself (Gora 164-65). Anandamoyi's tolerance reminds us of the sacrificing image of Rabindranath's grihalakshml or Sita and Savitri—the mythic characters whom he pays homage in "Woman and Home" for their self-renouncing ideal.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the text separates actions and roles according to gender. The male has public, material, and outside responsibilities in which he is an autonomous decision-maker. In contrast, the woman is confined at home, doing service and sacrifice for the man. Though a woman might seem to be magnanimous for generosity of her heart, the very determination of her space and action is restricting her own choice.

Rabindranath's subjective gender philosophy also gets interwoven with his narrative mechanism and thus the text appears to encourage the home-world dichotomy with emphasis on woman's glorification, which, actually, is ironic. In the colonial battleground, Gora's relationship with his mother is founded on a nationalistic concept that incorporates the cult of motherhood. In the article "Representing Nationalism: Ideology of Motherhood in Colonial Bengal," Jasodhara Bagchi writes that during the late-nineteenth century colonial confrontation, Bengali motherhood—typically identified as the symbol of love, self-sacrifice, and endurance—came to represent native identity and individuality (65). For the Bengali male, the best symbol of national identity was motherhood that they could distinctively call their own (Bagchi 65-66). Likewise, Gora imparts a nationalist message in distinguishing Indian womanhood from Western womanhood: "The scriptures tell us," persisted Gora, "that Woman is deserving of worship because she gives light to the home,—the honor which is given her by English custom, because she sets fire to the hearts of men, had better not be termed worship." ... "I affirm that all the exaggerated language about women that you find in English books has at bottom merely desire. The altar at which Woman may be truly worshipped is her place as Mother, the seat of the pure, right minded Lady of the House." (Gora 9)

Under this seemingly glorified position of motherhood, Gora emphasizes what Bagchi describes as the "social philosophy of deprivation for women" (70). As Bagchi continues, the legitimacy of motherhood ideology ultimately deprived women of exercising their own agency (70). Other than "producing heroic sons" and sacrificing themselves (including their physical and mental health) for the welfare of those sons, women had no choice of self-fulfillment (Bagchi 70).

Gora's letter to Anandamoyi reveals his unconscious expectation that mothers like Anandamoyi should "sacrifice everything for their menfolk" (Bagchi 70). Gora knows he is the only support in his mother's life. Losing him would mean losing "everything" for Anandamoyi. Ironically, Gora

desires to alleviate the "hardships" of imprisoned male nationalists by burdening his mother with emotional hardship. Anandamoyi is left with no choice other than to tolerate the pain caused by Gora's chosen activity (imprisonment). Even while Gora's preoccupation with an all-enduring and self-sacrificing mother places the

woman's image in a noble light, it is disturbing. Anandamoyi's function as presented in the text, can sometimes be interpreted in more than one way. For example, after receiving his custodial sentence, Gora is dejected at sensing the impending breach of his friendship with Binoy. The fruitless enthusiasm of Abinash and his gang also frustrates him. At this juncture, his mother's image revives him with the promise of regeneration: "No matter what happens, I have my mother. And she is calling for me. She will unite me with everyone. She will not permit me to remain at a distance from any one" (Gora 269-70). We can analyze this comment in two ways. First, here, Gora expects that his mother will unify everyone with indiscriminate filial love, just as his motherland shelters the followers of different religions and languages without discrimination. The mother is dynamic in a sense that she is able—as suggested by the verbs "call", "unite," and "permit"—to create a world, emotionally peaceful and morally inspiring. This feminine form of mother creates a nationalistic dimension against the masculine force of colonial oppression.<sup>14</sup> The masculine strength of colonial power creates a wound in Gora's material world; the colonial trial sentences Gora to imprisonment. Moreover, colonial influence is responsible for his separation from his closest friend, Binoy, who intends to marry a Western-educated Brahmo girl. In contrast, the feminine image of the loving mother soothes Gora's emotional injuries. Now, like Gora, Rabindranath's narrative device presents this regenerative vision of the mother in a positive light.

The narrator describes the vision as taking place in the "sunlight of mid-day" (Gora 270), leaving the effect of "complete harmony" (Gora 270) on Gora. The brightness of the time and completeness of the effect of the vision indicate the narrator's positive attitude toward Gora's vision. Interestingly, Rabindranath implicates his own view about women—that they are the reservoirs of hriday sampad, tender virtues of a grlhalakshmi—through his narrative system and the character of Gora.

Second, in this particular example, the narration limits Anandamoyi's activity like Sucharita's. While the presentation of the mother is entirely positive, Gora determines Anandamoyi's only function as that of a healing

encourager. By speaking so approvingly of Gora's vision, Rabindranath's narrative voice or omniscient narrator also restrains the woman's power. Like Sucharita's, Anandamoyi's task is fixed inside the frame of providing emotional service. In fact in this novel most of the time the women actually bear the responsibility to render emotional support. Returning to the issue of the author's connection, I find that here Rabindranath himself is involved in complicity with the omniscient narrator and Gora to ascribe certain virtues only to women and thus to define their boundaries.

The readers are aware of Anandamoyi's suffering through the unidentified narrator's report: Gora had always stood between them [Anandamoyi and Krishnadayal] as the Vindhya mountain range, dividing their married life. On the one side was Krishnadayal [Anandamoyi's husband] with all his paraphernalia of strict orthodoxy, and on the other Anandamoyi alone with her untouchable Gora....Thus Anandamoyi's affection for Gora had become wholly her own treasure. She tried in every way to make his life in that family, where he was merely on sufferance, as easy as possible.... The whole burden of Gora, she felt, rested on herself alone. .... In the midst of this hostile family she had submitted to much revilement and had endured much sorrow, without being able to ask any one else to share it (Gora 163-64).

In my view, Anandamoyi's suffering as presented in the text has a two-fold significance. First, it portrays a liberal and altruistic picture of Anandamoyi. She herself conceals her pain from everyone, and particularly from Gora, so that it will not distress him. Gora's adoption exposes her to conjugal disruption and backbiting from her surroundings. Anandamoyi's hiding of her suffering from Gora indicates the nobility of her mind. But, her sacrifice has a second dimension, which is my concern here, because it is not as innocent as the first. While Anandamoyi conceals her sorrow, the central character Gora is also ignorant of and inattentive to her agony, even from the most noticeable events such as his father's distance from Anandamoyi and the virulent backstabbing to which the society subjects her. This ignorance and inattention mirrors patriarchal society's ignorance of the plight of women, subsumed under the predetermined image of self-sacrificing motherhood projected by the motherhood-ideology of the nationalist era in nineteenth-century India.

However, the implied narrator does not leave Gora's unawareness beyond criticism. Apart from knowing Anandamoyi's sacrifice, here we also sense disapproval of Gora's ignorance through the use of the single word "burden."

Through its use, we perceive the narrator's observation that Gora, who should have noticed and shared his mother's untold pain, is instead carelessly unconcerned about it.

Anandamoyi sometimes marginalizes herself to leave space for Gora's development. As we saw in section 2.1, Anandamoyi receives much attention for her secular and humanitarian philosophy and, in the tug of war between society and the individual, Anandamoyi has chosen her corner of her society in trying events and has exercised her autonomous will. Nevertheless, she cannot help but conform to patriarchal society in certain circumstances. Bagchi and Chattejee have noted that the hegemonic coaxing of becoming a loyal and sacrificing

mother was a patriarchal strategy to limit women's agency in the nationalist era. Anandamoyi is also a victim of this patriarchal trap in some instances, as for example, in her separation from her own society and custom. It is not that she excludes herself from her Hindu surroundings for her own needs. Rather, her self banishment is the result of her wish to give Gora a sense of belonging to a particular family, society, and identity. Viewed in this context, Anandamoyi's claim that her life is not "merely to please husband and children" becomes

questionable (Gora 219).

Anandamoyi's success or failure as a woman with liberal attitudes ultimately depends on Gora's inner development. If, at the end of the novel, Gora did not reject his narrow fundamentalism, Anandamoyi's secular philosophy would have been pushed to the fringes of this vast narrative. Anandamoyi's triumph is not in her influence on Gora because we do not find the narrative device establishing Anandamoyi's principle until the protagonist Gora willingly accepts it for himself. The characters she can affect—such as Binoy and Paresh Babu—are never bigots like Gora and so she cannot claim any extra credit for convincing them. It is Gora's final change into a secular man that validates her philosophy and gives it significance. This is noticeable in Gora's final conversion. In his rejection of "sectarian barriers," he embraces Rabindranath's philosophy of "building of a Mahajati in India on the basis of a broad humanism" (S. Sarkar, The Swadeshi Movement 85). Gora, in the final episode of the novel, comes to symbolize Rabindranath's vision of India as a harmonious whole of all races, castes, and religions that he (the author) has been expressing in his writings during the post-riot

period of the Swadeshi era (S. Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement 85-86*). While it is Anandamoyi who has embodied Rabindranath's vision throughout the novel, ultimately the narrator requires the conversion of the male protagonist (Gora) to establish this philosophy. When Gora recognizes the futility of his narrow sectarianism, he first comes to Paresh Babu to be initiated by mantram or the principle of secular humanism: To-day give me the mantram of that Deity who belongs to all, Hindu, Mussulman, Christian, and Brahmo alike—the doors to whose temple are never closed to any person of any caste whatever—He who is not merely the God of the Hindus, but who is the God of India herself! (Gora 407).

Gora's new ideology has been Anandamoyi's all along, but rather than come to her first, Gora comes to a male guru in order to be a devotee of the "He" God who personifies his new faith. He finally embraces Anandamoyi in the last chapter, and her secular sensibilities are now accorded prominence—but only because the male protagonist has come to prove their dignity through his acceptance.

One may argue that the readers are free to prefer Anandamoyi's viewpoint to Gora's. Even if Gora did not accept Anandamoyi's approach at the end of the novel, it would not lose its importance to the readers. But, as I have already mentioned, in that case, Anandamoyi's perspective would have been left with other ideas in this vast novel—full of contrasting and different opinions. Rabindranath needs to consolidate Anandamoyi's outlook, which is also his, and that is why he needs to show Gora as a follower of Anandamoyi in the terminal point to signal the weight of Anandamoyi's philosophy.

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# **Role of Women in Conservation of Environment**

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## **Abstract**

**E**nvironment refers to those surroundings that surround living beings from all sides and affect their lives in toot. It consists of atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, and biosphere. Its chief components are soil, water, air, organisms and solar energy. This paper tends to examine the complex relation between women and Nature through a study on Bangladeshi, Indian, and Nigerian women . This paper argues that females are very close to nature and finds that women and nature are not two opposite poles rather they are always in an interaction; and treat women nature like their mother or pal or child. The findings of the study show that they want to protect nature to protect their family members as well. This is a qualitative research that involves cross- checking multiple data sources and collection procedures to evaluate the secondary sources of data.

**Keywords:** Nature, women, sustainable development

## **Introduction :**

According to Plato, if the appetites, which are tokens of the soul's materiality, are not carefully restrained, a soul, specially a man's soul will be a woman, and then as a beast. Many years later, Mary Wollstonecraft asserts that women's ability to reason was at par with that of men and that male and female biological differences were not important as regards the granting of political rights. Women appeared to be intellectually inferior due to their low-level education and, therefore, were due to inequality, rather than a justification for it. So, we can say that women are able to conserve the environment. Environment comes from the French word 'environmer' means

surround. Specially for indigenous women, the earth is closely connected with their culture, they treat it as “Mother” and play a vital role to preserve it.

## **Role of Women in Conservation of Environment in Bangladesh**

### **a) Women and Agriculture:**

Dames in Bangladesh, especially rural wenches play predominant role in agriculture. They usually plant fruits, green vegetables, crops like paddy etc. It is observed that during cultivation they perform a multifarious of tasks like preparing the land for planting, ploughing, sowing seeds, applying fertilizers, mowing, weeding, transplanting, irrigation, harvesting, threshing etc. It is also seen that traditionally chili peeper, tomatoes, green peas, egg plants and tropical fruits like water melon are planted for commercial purpose as well as for family consumption. In most of the cases wenches are responsible for the storing and keeping of the crops and vegetables that have been harvested. They know better than any scientist that what grass, herbs, shrubs, trees are best for them and should be planted to maintain a balanced eco-system and well being of their families, relatives and communities.

### **b) Women and Fishing:**

Though a very small number of dames are found to be involved in fishing but maidens specially Hindu maidens of the hamlets named Baraka, Gundip Para, Bot Tola, Rustam Hat, Parks Bazar of Anwara (in Chittagong) being inhabitants of coastal area are seen to be actively involved in cultivating multifarious types of fishes.

### **c) Women and Home Garden :**

Home garden means a vicinity around the home where vegetables, seasonal fruits, plants, spices, herbs, shrubs are grown throughout the year. It also offers a practical response to the massive degradation and depletion of forest resources, the rural energy crisis, optimum utilization of scarce field and above all environmental improvement. It is remarkable here to state that almost all Hindu wenches plant “Tulsi” tree in their door yard garden as it is

very sacred thing for them for worship purpose and this plant also has a very high medicinal value.

**d) Women in Animal Husbandry and Livestock :**

In animal husbandry and livestock production and management, rural wenches in Bangladesh play significant role. It is also realized that women perform the critical job of taking care of animals during pregnancy, the new born calf's. They even know what type of medicine should be provided and how. They know the feeding behavior of each animal and prepare feed mixtures accordingly. Rural wenches also play predominant role in preparing cooking fuels by mixing dung with twigs and crop residues. Cow dung can be used also as a strong fertilizer which makes the soil of the agricultural field fertile for cultivation and obviously it is a natural fertilizer which can replace the use of chemical.

**e) Women and Water :**

Water is needed to maintain hygiene and sanitation, vegetable gardening, farming, plastering courtyard, washing and cooking. Wenches play key role in carrying water and they are knowledgeable about the location and quality of water. Dames look for best quality water from tube wells within 200 yards to more than a km. During dry season the water level goes down dames use special, useful techniques. (Island and Chowdhury, 2016)

**Women in Local Resource Management in Myanmar:**

An appropriate example of maidens in water resource management was seen in “Ngaputaw” Township. Although it is set between numerous creeks and rivers, there is no fresh water for drinking. When there is a water shortage, maidens more than men are responsible for managing the water.

For example, fresh water is used first to clean the rice for cooking then rice washed water is reused for dish cleaning, and then dish cleaned water is reused for tree planting. Dames have the primary responsibility for meeting household energy needs through fuel collection, preparation (chopping and drying), and use (cooking and tending the fire).

It can be observed that dames are main actors in environmental sanitation at homes, vicinities and communities. Dames play a major role in victual production. One of the ways of protecting the environment and reducing hazards such as windstorms and erosion is by planting trees. (Aye T. T, 2018)

### **Women Concern for Nature Around Nigeria**

Among Nigerian Fulbe, maidens were responsible for the direct marketing of milk and milk products, while men were responsible for the indirect marketing of livestock, using professional broker.

In Nigeria, 60% females are involved in farming in Adamawa State Nigeria. Also, maidens in Imo state, Gurei district of Adamawa state and many Igbo part of the country have been reported to contribute to victual production and even undertake some of the conventional male agricultural tasks (Adebayo 1998; Ezumah and Domenico, 1995). As victims of soil degradation, dames have participated actively in soil conservation projects i.e. the project Agroforestry in Yatenga, Burkina Faso. It was also seen that maidens in Liberia and Sierra Leon, through their daily activities such as cooking and washing, add organic matter such as ash, potash and left-over food and stalk onto the soil to form African Dark Earth . The aim is to enrich soil which is solely based on traditional knowledge and is said to improve soil quality. In addition, studies in Kaduna State represent that dames are actively connected in environmental protection by engaging in sprinkling water on the soil before sweeping. This, the maidens say protects topsoil, which in turn helps curb surface erosion.

In rural markets, fermentation techniques adopted by maidens solve the danger of contamination and combat the problem of lactose intolerance common in sub-humid areas .

In Nigeria the situation is the same. Adebayo et al. (2001) reported that 70% of women in Adamawa state, Nigeria have planted trees in the last five years in their compounds and 21% planted trees on their farms. Studies in Plateau State, Nigeria also show that the commonest method employed by the women in soil conservation is mulching. In addition, Oloko studies in

Kaduna state, Nigeria revealed that thirteen percent (13%) of maidens said they engaged in sustainable harvesting so that those plants would be available for next time. However, they admitted being cutting tree branches in ways that would allow for future germination of such tree. The Society for Women and Vulnerable Crops (SWOVUGE) is also assisting communities to regain and sustainably manage mangrove forests in the five villages of the Ukpom Okom District in South East Nigeria. This is to show that dames are actively participating in protection of biodiversity either through planting tree or raising seedling in nursery and flowers to beauty the environment or harvesting resources in a sustainable way for future generation.

In term of waste disposal and management, dames are actively involved because they are closer to the environment. They engage in environmental management by cleaning the environment and keeping it clean especially in terms of garbage disposal. Giving the health hazard of garbage, women see to its regular disposal at the community level by doing it themselves. According to Kwagala in his study in Kampala, Uganda observed that drains are mainly washed by the women on a regular basis or pay to have them clean. In the south western part of the country, women in Pedro Village, Lagos state were seen to be protective and conscious of their environment. They manifest this by engaging in waste management, drainage management, water resource management, flood management and subsistence agriculture; these are all efforts towards protecting their environment. As a coastal community, they often experience flooding and that could be further exacerbated by blocked drainages and improper waste disposal. The study by Chukwu shows that women play a vital role in protecting their community and serve as enforcers of guidelines and penalties. (Olalekan et al. , 2019)

## **Role of Women in Conservation of Environment in India.**

### **i) Chipko Movement (1973)**

It was therefore the females, together with males such as Bahuguna who were persuaded by the women's arguments and logics, who provided the foundation of the Chipko movement. It began in 1972-3 in the Chamoli district of northwest India, when local people successfully organized in order to protest against the sale by auction of 300 ash trees to a sports goods

manufacturer. By contrast, the local cooperative, which wanted to make agricultural implements, was forbidden by the government to cut even a small number of trees. The movement spread to other districts, such as Karnataka, and soon there was widespread rebellion to the felling of forest trees that had been sold to commercial companies. Chipko means 'hugging': the name invoked a method first employed by the Bishnoi community in Rajasthan 300 years before. The Bishnoi, led by Amrita Devi, resisted the felling of their sacred *Khejri* trees by embracing them, and gave up their lives in the struggle. In fact, there have been very few modern incidents where villagers have literally hugged the trees to prevent the axe-men from cutting them down. The name of the movement, however, always works to indicate that in the last instance its activists may resort to hugging, as they have on occasion threatened. The idea of hugging trees also represent powerfully at a symbolic level the relationship of the people to the trees amongst which they live. In the face of increased landslides and flooding, activists in the Chipko movement pushed the campaign to a more radical level inspired by Mira Behn's early work. They agitated for a complete ban on the commercial exploitation of the forests in Uttar Pradesh, and subsequently agitated against central government development projects initiated with little understanding of local demands and the Ideal environment.

These campaigns were constructed and carried out by local grassroot organizations; individuals such as Hima Devi and Sunderlal Bahuguna moved from hamlet to hamlet, spreading the word and advising on methods.

## **ii) Narmada Bachao Andolan (1985)**

The Narmada Bachao Andolan's (NBA) extraordinarily brave and persistent populist campaign against the Sardar Sarovar Dam, part of the vast Narmada Valley Development Project, which has brought much publicized support from the writer-activist Arundhati Roy, clearly operates according to similar principles. Here, vast infrastructural project, costing billions of rupees, is displacing 200,000 Adivasi villagers and nomadic forest dwellers at enormous human and environmental cost. The disregard for the people affected is callous in the extreme. After a long campaign, the NBA

succeeded in getting the World Bank, which was funding the project, to withdraw on the grounds of its adverse human and environmental impact. The state of Gujarat then declared that it would contribute the lost funds. After a ruling in the Supreme Court in October 2000 that dismissed the NBA's attempt to block it through legal challenge, the project resumed its desultory, demented, destructive course. The struggle continues.(Mago, 2000)

## **Environmental Movements Lead by Women Around the World**

### **a. Greenbelt Movement :**

The Amazon rainforest, or the Greenbelt Movement in Kenya inaugurated by Wangari Maathai in 1977 after she had listened to local women expressing their concerns at the degradation of their environment. Their complaints involved issues all too common for peasant people across the world: whereas they had formerly been able to glean firewood locally, they now had to travel for miles to collect it; their seeds no longer produced sufficient crops with the result that their children suffered from malnutrition; their sources of clean water had dried up. Wangari Maathai inaugurated a campaign of planting seedlings to grow trees that would provide firewood, shade, humus for crops, and prevent soil erosion. By 2000, over 15 million trees had been planted. At the same time, she led opposition to the destruction of the forest for construction development and the planting of non-sustaining export crops. The Greenbelt Movement has now spread to other African countries and around the world.

### **b. Kenyan Land Takeover :**

In Kenya, starting in the mid 1980s, women resisted against the elites and giant foreign corporations who were coerced and controlling the production of the land. Rather than allowing victual to be grown for survival, women were pressured by both their husbands and the government to cultivate coffee for foreign profit. The protests continued and achieved strength over the next couple of decades. The rebellions eventually finished in a Kenyan power shift enforcing democratic national elections, which resulted in the redistribution of land possible.(Young, 2003)

## **Role of Women in Conservation of Environment in Some Different Countries:**

### **a) Armenia : Preserving Threatened Species of Wild Berries:**

Since 2011, the Berd Women's Resource Center Foundation (BWRC) has been working with local women's groups to address environmental degradation in the Tavush region with a particular focus on gender equality and women's unemployment. According to the Women's *Socio-economic Situation Analysis in the Berd Region* by C. Lucas and A. Badalyan, about 60 percent of local women are unemployed and their land plots remain largely uncultivated. The foundation promotes women's empowerment and self-employment opportunities, by engaging local women in the sustainable-harvesting of wild plants. It teaches them how to process the plants and sell them as a means of income-generation. Some of these plants, such as wild mint, thyme, blueberry, barberry and hawthorn, have become very famous in recent years as super victuals.

### **b) China : Saving the Asian Honey Bee while Empowering Women.**

The Asian honey bee pollinates crops. The main objective of a project, is to promote the conservation of the Asian honey bee in Minhe County, Qinghai Province through sustainable bee keeping. However, it has another important aim which is to empower a group of females known locally as *left behind women*, by supporting an alternative source of revenue for them with the conservation activities. *Left behind women* in China are females from rural communities\_whose husbands have relocated to more densely populated areas and cities in search of job opportunities. These females generally have low income, poor education and limited access to healthcare services.

### **c) Morocco: Medicinal and Aromatic Plants are Conserved by Rural Women**

Support from the authority and the Association Marocaine Pour le Developpement des Plantes Aromatiques et Medicinales (ADEPAM) championed the rural women in Tlad Ben Idder in their efforts to protect and

promote the use of medicinal and aromatic plants of Ben Karrich. The project site is affluent in plants such as myrtle, pennyroyal, thyme and bay laurel. However, these plants were exposed to overexploitation by farmers who were not using sustainable harvesting methods, hence preventing regeneration.

**d) Peru: Recovering Native Species of Cotton Using Traditional Knowledge.**

In 2003, authority supported a project by a group of indigenous women in San Pedro in the Morrope District aiming to conserve native varieties of naturally coloured cotton endemic to the region. With financial and technical support the group of women artisans constituted the Asociacion de Artesanas de Arbolsol y Huaca de Barro del distrito de Morrope-Lambayeque (hereafter the association). The objectives of the association were to recover and harvest native cotton species, improve water supply, revive traditional knowledge including the art of weaving on a back-strap loom and improve the overall socio-economic situation of the community. For example, women and men use belts from native coloured cotton and attires were ancestrally woven on a back-strap loom, a weaving technique that was slowly and gradually being forgotten.

**e) Uganda : Promoting Energy Efficient Cookstoves and Sustainable Agriculture**

Authority implemented two projects with the Rural Country Development Organization (RUCODE) and women took a leading role. The first project inaugurated in 2010 and aimed to reduce the encroachment of a 15km wetland in Namasagali in Kamuli district and save it from extinction. However, it was under threat due to unsustainable farming practices that had resulted in land degradation and soil depletion. The local communities had resorted to using the wetland for their agricultural production, as well as fuel collection for cooking.

Another key aspect of the project, was to prevent further deforestation due to the use of fuel wood. To address this issue, RUCODE worked with the women to build clean cookstoves. The project designed clean cookstoves with direct feedback and involvement by the women, and provided training

on their installation, use and maintenance, directly contributing to a reduction in carbon emissions.

The second project aimed at reducing land degradation, promoting sustainable land and forest management activities that augment climate resilience by working primarily with women, but also involved the men, as landowners.

**f) Mauritius : Pioneering Clean Energy and Protecting Biodiversity**

In 2007, the Association Pour l'Education des Enfants Defavorisés (APEDED) received support from the authority, to establish a medicinal plant nursery on the roof of a school to protect endemic and native plant species that women could cultivate and use as a stable source of income. The females were trained by the Government Agricultural Research and Extension Unit in nursery management and cultivation of medicinal plants, harvesting and dehydration techniques, as well as packaging and marketing of the plant products.

**g) Paraguay: Preventing Land Degradation through Agro-Forestry.**

In Paraguay the aim of a project was to establish a forest nursery to reforest the area, while also securing the community's long-term livelihoods. To this end, the association trained 50 dames in agro-forestry production methodologies and taught them best practices in sustainable resource management.

The dames learned techniques to limit soil erosion, became familiar with biological controls for pests, and how to manage the disposal of fertilizers and pesticides to limit contamination of the natural environment and local water sources.

**h) Colombia : Conserving Molluscs and Mangroves**

The Naya river basin is located in southern Buenaventura. It is the largest Colombian sea port on the Pacific coast, and a hub of commercial shipping activity.

*Piangua* is the local name of a mollusc that inhabits the roots of mangroves in the Maya river basin, also known as mangrove cockle.

To address the degradation of the mangroves and its impact on their cockle harvesting, a group of local women from five communities in the Naya River area decided to act and actively protect and sustainably use the natural resource they relied on for their livelihoods— the *piangua*. The women inaugurated a project to implement sustainable harvesting of *piangua* and the conservation of the mangroves it inhabits; establish sustainable use agreements in their communities, including harvesting closures and monitoring of cockle populations; develop alternative sustainable production activities to maintain income during harvesting closures and strengthen their own organizational capacities.

**i) India: Mountain Bounties Prevent Land Degradation in India.**

In the village of Badah, in the Kull district of India, in the western Himalayas, farmers began to plant apple orchards in areas that were formerly used for the farming of mixed crops. Seemingly less valuable native trees were cleared to make way for more profitable fruit trees. This took a toll on the wild apricot trees(*Prunus armeniaca*). So some dames of Jagriti(a community-based organization) were taught how to use the seeds from the wild apricots and other local trees to produce valuable oils, soaps and other products for sale. The women also learned about collecting and grading seeds, how to dry them post-harvest, and how to use cold press oil extraction, as well as how to package the products.

**j) Belize : Conserving Corals, Maintaining Mangroves and Increasing Resilience.**

In November 2014, authority supported a Fragments of Hope project aimed at enhancing mangrove and coral ecosystems of the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System, a World Heritage Site, and promoting its protection and conservation by community groups, community-based organizations and the public.

The research and science field is a traditionally male dominated area, yet by providing access to training in the tourism and marine conservation sectors, the organization has unlocked opportunities for local

women to earn higher daily wages compared to the domestic or service sectors.

**k) Gambia: Oyster Harvesting and Wetland Conservation.**

Oysters are considered a delicacy in the Gambia and play a central role in the national cuisine. Oyster harvesting has been the domain of poor and vulnerable women, who do not make a fair wage for their difficult work.

In 2011, authority received technical and financial support to establish a training programme on mangrove reforestation and aquaculture. Oysters breed on mangrove roots, and traditional oyster harvesting techniques entail cutting the mangrove roots with the oysters attached. The roots with the oysters are then roasted over fire to peel them off for further processing. This is a major factor in mangrove degradation in the Gambia. Innovative methods have been developed in neighboring Senegal, where oysters breed on racks that are planted along river banks. Seven members of the association visited the Sine Saloum Delta in Senegal for three days to learn about the techniques developed there.

**l) Turkey: Empowering Women Fishers in Turkey.**

Small-scale fisheries have historically been active along the Turkish coasts and make up a vital source of livelihood for the local communities living there. However, small-scale fisheries are on the decline due to commercial scale fishing, which frequently puts undue pressure on the maritime environment. The Mediterranean Conservation Society(MCS) has implemented the first SMART-marine software for women marine ranger patrols in the world. Since the no take fish zones were implemented, fish stocks have increased by 800 percent. MCS took initiatives to support women in artisanal fisheries.

**m) Vietnam : Revolutionizing Waste Management in Hoi An City**

The ancient town of Hoi An is located in Vietnam's central Quang Nam Province, near the mouth of the Thu Bon River.

The city's landscape and waterways were increasingly littered, threatening the environment and the health of communities. Eventually the city's waste finds its way to the ocean, with global environmental ramifications. To address this issue, with the support from the authority the Hoi An Women's Union created a long-term waste management plan that fosters the sustainable development of the city while preserving its cultural heritage. (UNDP, 2018)

### **Women Concern for Nature Around the World.**

Females around the world play a vital role in the protection of biological diversity. They have recognized the need not only to protect the bio-diversity, but also to reshape and recreate it. They are-- Rachel Carson, Wangari Maathai, Isatou Ceesay, May Boeve, Marina Silva,

### **Women Concern for Nature Around India**

Some Indian females have vital contribution to preserve the environment.

They are—Amrita Devi, Gaura Devi, Medha Patkar, Sunita Narain, Maneka Gandhi, Vandana Shiva, Sugathakumari, Radha Bhatt.

The researcher has found that majority females, due to lack of access to property get funding for agricultural activities, home gardening activities either from their husbands or sons. Some of them get funding from outside source like NGO, Bank as repayable loan with interest. As they usually financed by other it is obvious that they will rarely take part in decision making despite their significant labor. This mind set should be changed. It should be understood by the male members of the family that as females have deep relationship with all the components of a good eco-system they should be recognized as the best manager of a balanced eco-system.

### **Recommendations :**

a) Mainstream dames and equity in all sustainable development policies.

- b) The protection of females decision-makers, planners, advisers and managers connected to environmental management should be augmented.
- c) Alleviate all harmful cultural, religious and social gender inequalities
- d) Environmental education and awareness creation should be expanded in rural areas. We are poorly aware of our environment and the damages being done to it through multifarious activities like bush burning, littering/open dumping of human waste, polluting rivers with sewage among others. There is a demand to develop an environmentally literate citizenry. Formal and informal environmental education would be effective means to involve creating appropriate awareness of critical environmental issues. Formal education is necessary to augment awareness, improve extension services, sensitize people on environmental issues and create institutional capacities. Non-formal environmental education benefits people outside the formal education system. Communication of environmental information to all stakeholders is still a challenge. Public awareness empowers the public to develop a strong, good sense of responsibility on environmental issues.
- e) Undertake a comprehensive curriculum reviews that integrate environment and development notions in education curricular at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.
- f) Document, disseminate and encourage the use of indigenous knowledge in environmental protection and conservation.
- g) Implement participation of women, girls and boys as agents of development.
- h) Provide incentives that attract underrepresented females and other vulnerable groups.
- i) Support initiatives that ensure financial independence for females.
- j) Females when once mobilized play a vital role in environmental protection.

k) The potential of Science and Technology should be utilized to solve environmental related problems and ease women's workload inside and outside the home and promote the development and utilization of clean technologies in national development. As relationships among science, technology, the environment and society are intricate and delicate. The use of sustainable technologies is critical for environmental sustainability.

l) The central government should develop a strategy to eradicate various obstacles constitutional, legal, administrative, social and economic in nature to women's full participation in sustainable development.

m) The Government, Non-Governmental Organizations, Environmental Conservation agencies and the common man should recognize and mobilize women as active participants to protect and enrich the natural resources that sustain us.

n) Despite all these aspects there must be promotion of disseminating the gender relevant knowledge and valuations of women's role through formal and non-formal education. (Olalekan et al. , 2019)

### **Conclusion :**

Aristotle believed one could not teach philosophy to women and slaves. A sexist society would love it if women continued to see themselves as either saints or slaves, victims guilty of nothing or demons guilty of everything, for none of these roles demands inclusion in the human contract of responsibility and justice. Many women suffer from feelings of imperfection if we see how much destruction women are capable of, then the ability to be a 'good enough' mother or wife or friend is an achievement, rather than a burden of inadequacy. Feminism should not mean being a saint. It should mean owning one's own demonic, angelic soul.

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# A Discussion on How Macbeth Internalizes the Equivocal Language of the Witches

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## **Abstract:**

In early modern England, equivocation became a major area of debate between the reformers and the Jesuits. The reformers were Protestant, and the Jesuits belonged to that order of Catholicism, which upheld the act of equivocation as permissible in a crisis where speaking or maintaining the truth was difficult. In preparing this essay, I have depended substantially on two essays, one by Frank L. Huntley, entitled, “*Macbeth and the Background of Jesuitical Equivocation*” published in 1964, and the other, entitled, “*English Epicures and Scottish Witches*” (2006) by Mary Floyd-Wilson.<sup>1</sup> In the light of these two essays, I have argued in this paper that though Shakespeare used James’s approved resentment of witchcraft, he was tactful enough to portray the witches as uniquely Scottish, thus vengeful and bitter, as opposed to the harmless English witches. Howell V. Calhoun differentiates between the Scottish witches, who like the Continental witches were eviler as opposed to the English witches, who were homely and comical.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, in conformity with James’s low opinion about the Highlands people, whom he thought to be vulnerable to the influences of witches, Shakespeare shows Macbeth, being a Highlander too, to be likewise permeated by their influences.

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<sup>1</sup> Frank L. Huntley, “*Macbeth and the Background of Jesuitical Equivocation*,” in *PMLA*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (Sept., 1964), pp. 390-400. Published by Modern Language Association; Stable URL: <https://www.Jstor.org/stable/460744>. And Mary Floyd-Wilson, “*English Epicures and Scottish witches*,” in Katherine Rowe’s edition of *Macbeth*, CENGAGE Learning, Evans Shakespeare’s Editions (First Indian Reprint, Delhi, 2012)

<sup>2</sup> Howell V. Calhoun, “*James I and the Witch Scenes in ‘Macbeth’*,” in *The Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, October, 1942, Vol. 17, No. 4 (October, 1942), pp. 184-189. Published by Oxford University Press; Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/23675195>.

Lastly, the point I make is that Macbeth internalizes the equivocal quality of the witches to such a degree that he too can produce language in an equivocal sense, thereby becoming an agent free from the witches' clasp, and owning responsibility for his action. Thus, Macbeth becomes a tragic hero according to the Shakespearean code—which is, a character must be responsible for his action.

*Macbeth* was written by the end of 1606, at a time when the anti-Jesuit sentiment was very high because just the year before, on 5 November 1605, the Gunpowder Plot was discovered, in which the plotters, Guy Fawkes and others were all found to be Jesuits. It was a conspiracy that aimed at blowing up the Parliament house when a session was on with the King present as the presiding figure. And the person who was considered the leader of the conspirators was the famous Jesuit superior Father Henry Garnett, who was, thereby, hanged for treason on 3 May 1606.

King James VI was already the king of Scotland, when Elizabeth, Queen of England died in 1603. She died heirless, and in two months' time of her death, her grand-cousin James was invited to ascend the throne of England as James I. James united the two kingdoms—Scotland and England into one country, and of the many things he did in his unionist spirit, one was his move to give the royal patent to the leading London playing company, Lord Chamberlain's Men, which, thereby, became 'The King's Men'. The company, feeling obliged to the new king—as many scholars speculate—engaged their supreme dramatist, Shakespeare, to write a play that would please the king.<sup>3</sup> So, *Macbeth* is largely a gratificationary play highlighting James's preferences. That Shakespeare, the foremost English dramatist of the time, had written a Scottish play was itself a pleasing fact for James. Henry N. Paul insists that the play was performed at the court in July-August 1606, when James's wife Queen Anne's brother King Christian IV of

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<sup>3</sup> Henry N. Paul was the greatest campaigner of this conviction that Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* to please King James. In his book, *The Royal Play of Macbeth* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1950), he said, "The play was a royal play specially written for performance before King James" (p. 1), as quoted in the essay, "King James's Play" by George Walton Williams in *South Atlantic Review*, May 1982, Vol. 47, No. 2 (May, 1982), pp. 12-21; this reference comes as footnote 1 on page 19. Published by South Atlantic Modern Language Association; Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/3199207>. Williams, likewise, says: "I propose rather to examine the play itself in an attempt to argue that its structure exhibits the influence of James upon its composition." P. 12.

Denmark was paying a royal visit to England—a view not evidential, but upheld by such postmodern critics as Greenblatt.<sup>4</sup> And, secondly, Shakespeare included a scene in *Macbeth*, the Porter Scene, 2.3., that closely resonates with the happenings of the Gunpowder Plot. Thirdly, the character of Banquo, who is rather drawn in a positive light than he appears in Shakespeare's sources, Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1577 and 1587) must have pleased James as he claimed Banquo to be the founder of his (James's) Stuart Dynasty.<sup>5</sup> George Walton Williams says that if Shakespeare did not have the idea of writing a play for royal contentment, he would have, by the logic of the play, made Duncan's ghost return rather than that of Banquo: "I repeat the question: why is the ghost not the ghost of Duncan? The immediate answer to this question is that the ghost is the ghost not of Duncan but of Banquo because Banquo is James's ancestor."<sup>6</sup>

The fourth act of pacification was a little dubious as it was both an accommodation of James's unification spirit and a matter of pride for Shakespeare too. Malcolm is being helped militarily by the English King, Edward the Confessor, in his campaign against Macbeth: "Gracious England hath / Lent us good Siward, and ten thousand men" (4.3.190-91). Malcolm, after his victory against Macbeth, as if in a return gesture, awards the Scottish nobility with an English title by which all the thanes turn into earls: "My thanes and kinsmen, / Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland / In such an honour named" (5.9.28-30).

Given this background of an unificationary zeal, we must say that while the resentment of the Jesuitical equivocation as crafted within the structure of the play (as the Porter's speech suggests) had pleased James and Shakespeare's Protestant audience at the time, equivocation, as a speech mode, paradoxically, fertilized the language of the play too. That is, while within the play's religio-political context it is correct to resent the equivocal language of the witches, this very language, however, patterns and formats

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<sup>4</sup> See for the reference to Greenblatt: *Macbeth*, edited by Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason, The Arden Shakespeare, Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare (London: 2015), p. 19, fn 4. All quotations from *Macbeth* in this essay refer to this edition.

<sup>5</sup> A. C. Bradley has, arguably, said that in drawing Banquo's character nobly as was to be expected by the king, Shakespeare yet gives some streaks to his character, which would not have pleased the king: "He has acquiesced in Macbeth's accession, and in the official theory that Duncan's sons had suborned the chamberlains to murder him." A. C.

Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, Third Edition with a new Introduction by John Russell Brown (London: Macmillan, 1992), p. 339.

<sup>6</sup> Williams, p. 18.

the play's central character, Macbeth, and the overall verbal sphere of the play. The celebrated figurative language of the play dramatizes what Macbeth terms as, ". . . nothing is but what is not" (1.3.144). And this very amorphousness of the language is, as we will show, the key for Macbeth to realize his own self. By learning from the witches the potency of the equivocal language, he then unlearns it for himself, and by the time he reaches his life's end, he also reaches the berth where it is not anymore equivocation but rather non-equivocation that establishes his character as a tragic hero.

The resentment of equivocation clearly comes in the Porter Scene (2.3), where the drunken doorkeeper speaks out a passage, which perhaps indirectly refers to Father Garnett's hanging: "(Knock) Knock, knock. Who's there, in th'other devil's name? Faith, here's an equivocator that could swear in both the scales against either scale, who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven. O, come in, equivocator" (7-11).

While this invitation to the equivocator to the Porter's world, that is, Inverness, now metaphorized as hell, is important in fixing the play's time of composition that *Macbeth* must have been written after the death of Father Garnett on 3 May 1606, its main significance lies in how Shakespeare builds both his central character and the atmosphere being intrigued by the contradictoriness of the equivocal utterances.

Father Garnett published a manuscript in 1598, *The Treatise of Equivocation*, in which he explained the scope and function of truth by saying that an oath "must be accompanied by truth, by discretion, and by justice."<sup>7</sup> In short, Garnett's manuscript was a guidebook to know "how and when to use equivocation in a matter of faith, and life, and death."<sup>8</sup>

Robert Parsons, as Huntley reports, was a famous defender of Jesuitical equivocation. He presented a hypothetical situation to clarify the relevance of equivocation when one's life was in crisis. He asked Thomas Morton, Bishop of Durham that when a band of killers was assigned with the task of killing Queen Elizabeth, and they asked him, "Where is the Queen? We are sent to murder her," what his reaction would be. If Morton told a lie, he

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<sup>7</sup> Huntley, p. 392.

<sup>8</sup> Huntley, p. 392.

offended God. If he told the truth, he became an accessory to the murder of his sovereign. So, he should equivocate by saying, “I know not,” keeping the other half unsaid, which is “to the end of telling you.” In this way, Morton deceived the murderers, but not God, who knew what was true. This equivocal utterance, however, rescued the life of the Queen from the murderers, and he could also save his life thereby. Such an utterance, Parsons argued, was not lying but an escape route.<sup>9</sup>

In plain sense, equivocation allowed for double meanings that were only half-said. Religious books tend to speak in equivocal terms, as Huntley writes: “Necessary to an exegesis of many of Christ’s sayings is our perceptions of His hidden meanings.”<sup>10</sup> Though the Jesuits made a clear division between equivocation and lying, the Protestants, for religious and political benefits, termed the doctrine of equivocation as pure lies, and held that its adherents were punishable by law.

In 1584, Queen Elizabeth issued an order that Englishmen following Roman Catholicism should not stay in England for more than forty days if they wanted to escape death. In 1591, she warned people not to fall into the trap of Jesuits’ ‘false pretense of religion’.<sup>11</sup> William Warburton, an eighteenth-century editor of Shakespeare, who was also an Anglican Bishop by profession, stepped aside from his editorial neutrality by annotating the word “equivocator” (2.3.9), as ‘a Jesuit; an order so troublesome in Queen Elizabeth’s and King James the First’s time.’<sup>12</sup> But even the Catholics denounced the Jesuits at one stage. Pope Innocent XI denounced the doctrine of equivocation in 1679.<sup>13</sup>

Sir Edward Coke, who administered the trial of Father Garnett, while acknowledging his great learning in theology, said acrimoniously that Garnett was “a doctor of Jesuits, that is, a doctor of five DD’s, as dissimulation, depositing of princes, disposing of kingdoms, daunting and deterring of subjects, and destruction.”<sup>14</sup>

When Macbeth and Banquo encounter the witches (1.3) on the heath, the Third Witch says to Macbeth that he will be the next king: “All hail

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<sup>9</sup> Huntley, p. 393.

<sup>10</sup> Huntley, p. 392.

<sup>11</sup> Huntley, p. 394.

<sup>12</sup> Huntley, p. 390.

<sup>13</sup> Huntley, p. 390.

<sup>14</sup> Huntley, p. 390.

Macbeth, that shall be king hereafter” (1.3.50). According to Huntley, what remains unsaid is “if you are willing to commit murder”<sup>15</sup>. This unsaid part can also be related to the latent ambition of Macbeth to become the king. On the Third Witch’s saying to Banquo, “Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none” (1.3.67), Huntley states that the unsaid part can be completed by “if Macbeth murders Duncan and you but not Fleance”<sup>16</sup>, which Macbeth will do. The witches volunteered the first meeting with Macbeth, but the second meeting is initiated by Macbeth himself, which is a proof that Macbeth has become their victim. They do not prophecy this time but produce apparitions who make predictions. The Second Apparition says to Macbeth: “laugh to scorn / The power of man, for none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth” (4.1.79-80), which, as Hunley says, can be completed by “not counting a Caesarian section”.<sup>17</sup> But Macbeth only believes what he hears, not paying attention to the possibility of a different meaning. He blithely declares: “Then live, Macduff: what need I fear of thee?” (4.1.81). And next, he hears the Third Apparition uttering, “Macbeth shall never vanquished be, until / Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill / Shall come against him” (4.1.91-93). Macbeth is complacent, and it does not yet dawn on him that a strategic army ploy might make the Birnam forest walk. Huntley explains that the Birnam forest would not walk if only Macbeth omits the possibility of the wartime “exigencies of military camouflage.”<sup>18</sup>

These examples of equivocations show that lies can be embedded in half-uttered lines, which Macbeth only realizes too late in life that he has been cheated by the witches all through: “I pull in resolution, and begin / To doubt th’equivocation of the fiend, / That lies like truth” (5.5.41-3). It can be imagined why both Elizabeth and James feared the equivocal potency of speech, particularly when endorsed by religion. For instance, Macbeth’s realization here of the witches’ equivocations as lying not only justifies the Porter’s welcoming the equivocator to hell, but also comes in agreement with James’s view of the nefarious powers of the witches. In 1590, while James was coming back to Scotland with his newly-married wife, Anne of Denmark, they survived a severe sea storm on the North Sea. James later on attributed the raising of the storm to the witches whose trial is known as the

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<sup>15</sup> Huntley, p. 397.

<sup>16</sup> Huntley, p. 397.

<sup>17</sup> Huntley, p. 398.

<sup>18</sup> Huntley, p. 398.

North Berwick Witch Trials, in which 70 persons, most of them women, were burnt on the stake being suspected as witches, and historical sources say that James himself interviewed many of the suspects. His book, *Daemonology* (1597;1603) was written after his traumatic sea journey to the North Sea, and critic Howell V. Calhoun quotes a sentence from the book, where the king says that the witches, “ought to be put to death according to the Law of God, the ciuill and imperial law, and municipall law of all Christian nations.”<sup>19</sup>

James’s view of the witches, however, has given scope to critics to draw a line of difference between the Scottish concept of witches and that of the English. Like Calhoun, whom we earlier mentioned as having told that the Scottish witches were aligned with the Continental witches,<sup>20</sup> Mary Floyd-Wilson argues that though Shakespeare wrote a Scottish play to gratify King James, he did not deviate from the general opinion held by the English against the Scots. Despite efforts at unification by writers like Bacon, Floyd-Wilson says that “. . . this did not change the fact that the more chauvinistic English writers characterized the Scots—particularly the Highlanders—as stubbornly uncivilized.”<sup>21</sup> Though Shakespeare was aware of the English habit of despising the Scots, yet he was careful enough only to selectively portray King James’s resentment of the Highlanders Scottish, who were held to be “intemperate barbarians, . . . godless, and . . . cannibalistic.”<sup>22</sup> And both the Macbeths were Highlanders. Thus, Shakespeare’s portrayal of the Macbeths could not hurt James’s Scottish sensibility as he was not opposed to a negative portrayal of the Macbeths, who belonged to the Highlands.

Floyd-Wilson borrows a word, “possibility”<sup>23</sup> from Timothy J. Reiss to suggest that the witches were held elemental, that is to say, an inseparable part of the environment, and the Highlanders were susceptible to them: “People were embedded in extended circles of shaping forces that included one’s diet, one’s family, the state, the natural environment, and the

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<sup>19</sup> Calhoun also notes that by 1616 James became disillusioned with witchcraft because in Leister nine witches were hanged when a 12-year-old boy gave testimony on their witchery. “James question[ed] him and, in the words of essayist Francis Osborne, ‘discover’d Fallacy’.” Quoted by Malcolm Gaskill in his essay, “Witchcraft and Evidence in Early Modern England,” published in *Past & Present*, Feb., 2008, No. 198 (Feb., 2008), pp. 33-70. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of The Past and Present Society; Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/25096700>.

<sup>20</sup> Calhoun, p. 184.

<sup>21</sup> Floyd-Wilson, p. 207.

<sup>22</sup> Floyd-Wilson, p. 207.

<sup>23</sup> Floyd-Wilson, p. 197.

cosmological spheres.”<sup>24</sup> She further suggests that “the play’s supernatural ecology rests on analogous conceptions of passibility and influence.”<sup>25</sup> She then adds that “As Highlanders, the Macbeths’ extreme passibility makes them especially susceptible to the elements.”<sup>26</sup> In defining Macbeth’s passibility she explains that even Macbeth’s “resilient or hardened nature” as a soldier does not stop him initially from remaining “exceedingly passible—receptive to the witches’ temptations, to Duncan’s virtues, and to his wife’s spirited rhetoric.”<sup>27</sup>

Following Floyd-Wilson’s argument, we note that the witches’ permeability into weather is evident when Banquo says, “The earth hath bubbles, as the water has, / And these are from them. Whither are they vanished?” (1.3.79-80). A puzzled Macbeth responds: “Into the air; and what seemed corporal, / Melted, as breath into the wind” (1.3.81 -82).<sup>28</sup>

Like “passibility,” another word Floyd-Wilson brings up in her essay is “geohumoralism” that suggests that “variations in topography and climate produced variations in national characteristics.”<sup>29</sup> The witches’ famous choric line “Fair is foul, and foul is fair” is equivocal as it symbolically connects weather with Macbeth. That is to say, like the foul and fair weather, Macbeth too has foul side and fair side in his character. It is to be seen that when he makes his first appearance, his first sentence echoes that of the witches: “So foul and fair a day I have not seen” (1.3.38). On a political level, the oxymoronic line attests to Macbeth’s rise as the king and fall as a “dead butcher” (5.9.35). It also symbolically suggests that Macbeth who fought in the initial battles as “Bellona’s bridegroom” (1.2.55) becomes merely by a distance of a couple of scenes the regicide: “I have done the deed” (2.2.15).

As Macbeth rides the crest of success, King Duncan awards him the title of Cawdor: “No more that Thane of Cawdor shall deceive / Our bosom interest. Go pronounce his present death, / And with his former title greet Macbeth” (1.2.64-66). Duncan’s meaning becomes equivocal as Macbeth will turn out to be the same betrayer as Cawdor was. So, Duncan’s statement that

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<sup>24</sup> Floyd-Wilson, p. 199.

<sup>25</sup> Floyd-Wilson, p. 201.

<sup>26</sup> Floyd-Wilson, p. 201.

<sup>27</sup> Floyd-Wilson, p. 201.

<sup>28</sup> See also Calhoun on the relationship between the witches and weather, p. 187.

<sup>29</sup> Floyd-Wilson, p. 200.

“There’s no art / To find the mind’s construction in the face” (1.4.11-12) is doubly ironical as he is again reposing his trust in the wrong man.

Standing before the castle of Macbeth, Duncan announces: “This castle hath a pleasant seat” (1.6.1), and we can add the hidden part of the equivocal pattern that it will be so “if Duncan were not murdered.” Banquo, the other victim of the pair, too observes that the summer-bird, the martlet has built its nest in this mason, which is a proof that “heaven’s breath smells wooingly here” (1.6.5-6). The devastatingly unuttered clause is that ‘if he were not killed too’.

However, as the play progresses, the equivocal pattern, which so far has been the witches’ property, begins to be owned by Macbeth himself. That is, by geohumorously finding affinity with the witches, he internalizes the language of equivocation in a way as if the witches were successful in permeating “possibility” into him.

Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” dilemma is refocused in Macbeth’s first soliloquy, “If it were done, when ‘tis done” (1.7.1-28), and the equivocal temper persists here in the hidden part now not remaining unstated, but rather stated. That is, speaking no longer like the witches, as because he has internalized the equivocal speech pattern, Macbeth does furnish the hidden part of the statement in this soliloquy. That is to say, the negative side of the mission of killing becomes clear to him, but it does not remain unuttered, but rather uttered. The assassination could be done if it were the only single act that would not have any consequence: “this blow / Might be the be-all and the end-all, here.” (1.7.5) “Here” means the living world where there exists the court of law, where “the even-handed justice” (1.7.10) serves the same “poisoned chalice” (1.7.11) to the offender. So, the equivocal pattern stands thus: Macbeth would have killed King Duncan if the “judgement here” had not stood in the way. When Macbeth has internalized the equivocal system, he knows both the stated part and the unstated part. This realization may pose as a reply to Braunmuller’s great question that if Macbeth had taken all action being influenced by the witches and Lady Macbeth, then how would he be a tragic character as he cannot own responsibility for his action!<sup>30</sup> But

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<sup>30</sup> A. R. Braunmuller, ed. *Macbeth* (The New Cambridge Shakespeare, 1997; 2008), pp. 40-41: “If the prophecies are true before the play begins, or before Macbeth and Banquo hear them, or before Macbeth and Banquo have acted, where is the willed action that allows the audience to discover responsibility and hence to experience guilt? If Macbeth could never act otherwise, could not [sic] choose to murder Duncan, and if, putatively, Banquo could never resist thoughts of usurpation, ‘the cursed thoughts that nature / Gives way to in repose’ (2.1.8-9), where is the

if our argument is valid, we see that Macbeth has not only been permeated by the equivocation of the witches, he has also internalized it so much that he can own responsibility for his action, as he is filling up the unsaid or hidden part of the equivocal utterances. As much as Macbeth internalizes the pattern of equivocation, by so much he is freeing himself from the witches and from Lady Macbeth, and by so much he is becoming an individual to be held responsible for his action. That is, from a person acting under influences, Macbeth becomes an individual with the freedom of the will and makes rather a questionable use of it. In the same speech Macbeth evokes the famous image of the “naked new-born babe,” (1.7.21) which, according to Cleanth Brooks, provides the equivocal metaphor of “pity” (1.7.21) that the loss of Duncan will arouse, and, of the “heaven’s cherubin,” (1.7.22) empowered with the divine power: “is Pity like the human and helpless babe, or powerful as the angel that rides the winds? It is both; and it is strong because of its very weakness.”<sup>31</sup> The naked babe will let everybody know about the murder, and, in reaction, the sea of human tears will submerge the wind. So, from the earlier earthly equation between crime and punishment, Macbeth now connects the crime with the heavenly disclosure. With such an arcane feeling that the murder will somehow be exposed, Macbeth says to his wife, “If we should fail?” (1.7.59). Lady Macbeth in an incredulous voice utters: “We fail?” (1.7.60) and then asking Macbeth to “screw your courage to the sticking place” (1.7.61) elaborates on her very practical plan of overwining the “two chamberlains” (1.7.64) to send them to “swinish sleep” (1.7.68), and then smear them with Duncan’s blood, and lay the knives on them to blame them as the killers (later on Macbeth will spread the fiction that they were suborned by Duncan’s two sons, as they had fled the country), and then daringly confirms: “What not put upon / His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt / Of our great quell?” (1.7.70-2) And then finally, “Who dares receive it other, / As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar, / Upon his death?” (1.7. 78-80)

Though Lady Macbeth has earlier shown her possibility by inviting the evil powers to “unsex” (1.5.41) her “from the crown to the toe” (1.5.42) and turn

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tragedy, the dire consequence of an ignorant or misunderstood act, of these events? If, alternatively, the prophecies only become true when they are enacted by responsible and hence arguably tragic and guilty human agents, how may they be called ‘prophecies’ at all?”

<sup>31</sup> Cleanth Brooks, “The Naked Babe and the Cloak of Manliness,” in *Harold Bloom’s Shakespeare through the Ages: Macbeth*, edited with an introduction by Harold Bloom, Volume Editor: Janyce Marson (New Delhi: Viva Books: 2010), p. 253.

her “milk for gall” ((1.5.49), here, in 1.7., however, she sounds unequivocal, without any trace of passibility. We can see through her equivocal speech, though she does not know that Macbeth has already hinted at the angelic powers that might introduce certain physiognomic traits by which Macbeth himself will advertise the crime.

If Macbeth has internalized the equivocal spirit, Lady Macbeth, after her initial passibility, rather gets over it since Duncan’s killing and Macbeth’s succeeding him on the throne, and remains outside the orbit of equivocation. That is why, from the regicide scene (2.2) onward the distancing between the murderer and his accomplice gets wider and wider with each scene. Apparently, there is no logical connection between committing a murder and hearing a spiritual voice, but Macbeth, after killing Duncan, does “hear a voice cry, ‘Sleep no more / Macbeth does murder sleep’” (2.2.36-7), which with the support of Thomas de Quincey, I would suggest that it is the awakening of his conscience, which oxymoronically expresses the equivocal pattern that if somebody murders and feels bad, it means his conscience is waking up: “the knocking at the gate is heard, and it makes known audibly that the reaction is commenced; the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish.”<sup>32</sup> De Quincy’s ‘reaction’ in terms of this present essay, is the filling up of the other part of equivocation—if a murder is committed, it will not pay. However, this distancing between the equivocally impregnated Macbeth and the unequivocal Lady Macbeth is vividly clear in the following transactions between them. Macbeth’s hands are stained with Duncan’s blood, and he thinks “Neptune’s ocean” (2.2.61) will not wash this blood clean, to which Lady Macbeth bluntly says, “A little water clears us of this deed” (2.2.68). The same kind of reaction that she will show in the Banquet Scene (3.4.), when Macbeth is utterly horrified by the vision of Banquo’s ghost and falls into an extreme paroxysm, Lady Macbeth prescribes his distraught to be the result of fear that has produced “the air-drawn dagger” (3.4.57), and that has now made Macbeth address incoherently at something which is nothing but “a stool” (3.4.65). So, for Lady Macbeth the visionary dagger was Macbeth’s mere hallucination, and Banquo’s macabre ghost is merely objectified as a piece of stage prop. Her interpretation of course is realistically correct, but what is recognized in this expression is her failure

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas De Quincy, “On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*” in Harold Bloom’s *Shakespeare through the Ages: Macbeth*, edited with an introduction by Harold Bloom, Volume Editor: Janyce Marson (New Delhi: Viva Books: 2010), p. 96.

simply to understand the trauma that flesh is heir to or the equivocal inseparability between words and things.

Here again, we find Macbeth's internalizing process of equivocations. Lady Macbeth has failed to identify the source of Macbeth's fear, but Macbeth supplies the reason, that is to say, he is filling up the hidden meaning that was missed by Lady Macbeth. He says that murder had taken place before by the simple logic that when "the brains were out, the man would die" (3.4.77), and it was the final condition. But the equivocal procedure has taken over and changed things as dead people "rise again / With twenty mortal murders on their crowns, / And push us from our stools" (3.4.78-80). Lady Macbeth's unequivocal 'stool' is for Macbeth an equivocated stool that is not merely a piece of furniture but symbolically a terrifying seating spot where the mortal is replaced by a supernatural being (at least Macbeth would think so): "This is more strange / Than such a murder is" (3.4.80-81).

That Macbeth wants to know his future is also prompted by the fact that as he has internalized the pattern of equivocation, therefore, he must wish to have the unknown known to him. On their second meeting, the witches receive their guest with a newly-prepared broth<sup>33</sup> and cajole him into a spirit of bonhomie. Making a slight rearrangement, the witches produce no more predictions by themselves but invite their masters (in fact their subordinates), whom Macbeth, however, cannot ask any question. At the beginning of this paper, we showed how Macbeth missed out on the equivocal meaning of the prophecies, and so we need not repeat them here, but we can add the fact that predictions now are made to cheat Macbeth once again. But he must still inquire as to know the exact shape of his future and whether the prophecy about Banquo's children will come true: "Tell me, if you art / Can tell so much, shall Banquo's issue ever / Reign in this kingdom?" (4.1.100-02). For Macbeth's satisfaction, they present a show of eight kings, the last with a glass in his hand, and then finally appears Banquo's ghost much to his irritation: "Thou crown does sear mine eyeballs" (4.1.112). And this

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<sup>33</sup> Taking note of the ingredients mixed in the broth: "poison'd entrails" (4.1.4), the "liver of blaspheming Jew," (4.1.26), the "nose of Turk and Tartar's lips," (4.1.29), "the finger of birth-strangled baby" (4.1.30), Calhoun states that the witches in *Macbeth* are like the Continental witches, who "continually made use of the bodies of unbaptized babies in their incantations, and a baby strangled at birth obviously could not have received the sacrament of baptism," p. 186. And in both the films of Polansky's (1971) and Justin Kurzel's (2015), Macbeth is offered the broth to drink, which he does, and, thereby, the merger between the mortal and the infernal is complete. In Polansky's film the ingredients of the broth are vividly graphic.

presentation is done without any attempt at equivocation. A long line of kings passes before Macbeth's eyes to his great exasperation: "What, will the line stretch out to th'crack of doom?" (4.1.116) Then Macbeth understands, though cheated he was, that the witches also told him the truth: "Horrible sight. Now I see 'tis true; / For the blood-boltered Banquo smiles upon me / And points at them at his" (4.1.121-23).

In the final act of the play, Macbeth's undoing is equivalent to his losing trust in the witches. But even then, like the phase of his first meeting with the witches, the second meeting again puts a hood on his eyes—he cannot see the truth for the illusion of lasting power is still embedded in his mind. So, the prophecies that led to his murders: regicide and Banquo's killing, the second meeting again feeds him with illusion, and he goes on to kill Lady Macduff and her son<sup>34</sup>. As he confronts Macduff inside his own castle, challenging him for a duel, Macbeth is still under a hangover, and tells Macduff that he could cut the air ("thou the intrenchant air / With thy keen sword impress" (5.8.9-10)), or cut the sea ("Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests" (5.8.11), but would not be able to shed blood from him as "I bear a charmed life: Thou wast born of woman" (5.8.12). But to Macbeth's great horror, Macduff lets him know that he was born of a caesarian section: "Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb / Untimely ripped" (5.8.15-6).

Then Macbeth comes to his full senses, and produces a speech of self-realization: "And be these juggling fiends no more believed / That palter with us in a double sense, / That keep the word of promise to our ear, / And break it to our hope" (5.8.19-22).

And the very first Macbeth that we heard of in the beginning of the play—"Valour's minion" (1.2.19) makes, as if a circular movement and comes back to his old self: "I'll not yield / To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet, / And to be baited with the rabble's curse" (5.8.27-29). And in the following line he dispenses with the last vestiges of his illusion of the absurd: "Though Birnam Wood be come to Dunsinane, / And thou oppos'd, being of no woman born, / Yet I will try the last" (5.8.30-2).

Finally, to cap our discussion, we wanted to show how Shakespeare used James's approved resentment of witchcraft tactfully so that the witches

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<sup>34</sup> It is only one son mentioned in this scene (4.2), but in the next scene (4.3) Macduff wants to confirm from Ross whether Macbeth has killed all his children: "And all my children?" (4.3.1.78)

remained uniquely a Scottish phenomenon, as opposed to the harmless English witches, and Macbeth was permeated by their equivocal speeches because he belonged to the Highlands of the people of which James had a low opinion. We also referred to the religio-politico context which made the doctrine of equivocation a controversial issue, and then how it got connected with the witches. And we also showed how the witches' equivocal property got transferred to Macbeth, who in his turn internalized it so much that the internalizing process enables him to become independent of the external influences and own responsibility for his action, thus becoming a tragic character according to the Shakespearean code—which is, a character must be responsible for his action.

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# **Maugham's “The Ant and the Grasshopper”: The Concept of Success Revisited**

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## **Abstract**

Economic success that controls most of the modes of our lives is blindly supported by us, but we often ignore the means of that success. W. Somerset Maugham in his story “The Ant and the Grasshopper” depicts the real picture of the materialistic world where economic success is welcomed and praised of without questioning the ethical ground of that success. He tactfully relates the childhood fable *The Ant and the Grasshopper* to his story “The Ant and the Grasshopper” to make an analogy of two successes, one has ethical ground and another one has no ethical ground. Through the subjective narrative of the story, the author addresses capitalism and materialism. The core of the research method is close textual exegesis. Contemporary discourses and existing researches related to the text are taken into consideration though the researcher might have some limitations. This paper offers question to the way of success, not blindly congratulating success.

## **Keywords:** Success; Materialism; Ethical value

The conventional way of moral teaching and adopting moral value is shattered in Somerset Maugham’s short story “The Ant and the Grasshopper” (1992). By reversing the story line, he showcases the paradoxes of life (Chakraborty 2020) where what we think to happen naturally does not happen always, but the opposite takes place (Islam 2020). In the story “The Ant and the Grasshopper” Maugham expresses his realization to the practicality of life that everyone hankers after success, but we often are not careful enough regarding the moral ground of that success as we do not question about the means of it. Through the subjective narrative of the story the author uncovers that he himself as well as his friend George

Ramsay- the most moral, sensible, honest person, do not question of the unethical success of Tom Ramsay rather they unknowingly welcome the materialistic gain of Tom through their attitudes and actions. Maugham tries to make an analogy between the childhood fable *The Ant and the Grasshopper* and his story “The Ant and the Grasshopper” to address the two successes; one has ethical ground where Mr. Ant becomes successful in a fair means through hard labor and another one has no ethical ground where Tom Ramsay becomes successful tactfully in an unfair means. Hence, the paper questions the concept of success and its means.

From the first paragraph of the story, Maugham prepares the reader to the practicality of the world unlike the childhood fable *The Ant and the Grasshopper*: “As with many other genres of storytelling, fables are as much about the socialization of values...the meanings of fables change as they are reinterpreted through time by particular ideologies” (Ballard 2004). The writer referring to his childhood fable unusually supports the Grasshopper instead of supporting the Ant who represents industrious person who becomes successful through hard labor and fair means. Here the Ant’s success is justified enough but the author does not support him. Maugham’s unusual support to Grasshopper (who represents lazy person) indicates that he is away from moral and common sense as mentioned in the text “My sympathies were with the grasshopper and for some time I never saw an ant without putting my foot on it. In this summary (and as I have discovered since, entirely human) fashion I sought to express my disapproval of prudence and common sense.” (Maugham Para. 03). It gives hints to readers to the practicality of life where unusual things are not treated as unusual because of the absence of moral value of the modern capitalist people who are becoming too much materialist.

Gradually Maugham unfolds the story of the two brothers- Tom Ramsay and George Ramsay who are totally two opposite characters. He describes Tom as-

I suppose every family has a black sheep. Tom had been a sore trial to his for twenty years. He had begun life decently enough: he went into business, married, and had two children. The Ramsays were perfectly respectable people and there was every reason to suppose that Tom Ramsay would have a useful and honourable career. But one day, without warning, he announced that he didn't like work

and that he wasn't suited for marriage. He wanted to enjoy himself. He would listen to no expostulations. He left his wife and his office. He had a little money and he spent two happy years in the various capitals of Europe.... He was charming and unscrupulous. I have never met anyone to whom it was more difficult to refuse a loan. He made a steady income from his friends and he made friends easily. But he always said that the money you spent on necessities was boring; the money that was amusing to spend was the money you spent on luxuries.... For twenty years Tom raced and gambled, philandered with the prettiest girls, danced, ate in the most expensive restaurants, and dressed beautifully. He always looked as if he had just stepped out of a bandbox. Though he was forty-six you would never have taken him for more than thirty-five. He was a most amusing companion and though you knew he was perfectly worthless you could not but enjoy his society. ... You could not approve of him, but you could not help liking him. (Maugham Para. 08)

Maugham tries to make aware of the readers that, though Tom is not an appreciable person in an ideal sense, but practically we can't but appreciate him because of his materialistic success in life. As we come to know, through an unethical cunning second marriage with an old lady almost an age of his mother and by her sudden death, he captures a good fortune as she left "Half a million pounds, a yacht, a house in London, and a house in the country." (Maugham Para. 18). By this incident in the story Maugham, ironically, unfolds the value of economic success whether the way is right or wrong.

George is considered as hardworking, decent, respectable, whereas Tom is portrayed as idle, worthless, and dishonorable rogue. We cannot but sympathize with George's character because throughout the story George is seen to be the individual who has worked for everything that he has. To describe George Ramsay the narrator states:

Poor George, only a year older than his scapegrace brother, looked sixty. He had never taken more than a fortnight's holiday in the year for a quarter of a century. He was in his office every morning at nine-thirty and never left it till six. He was honest, industrious, and worthy. He had a good wife, to whom he had never been unfaithful even in thought, and four daughters to whom he was the best of

fathers. He made a point of saving a third of his income and his plan was to retire at fifty-five to a little house in the country. (Maugham Para. 11)

The writer uses the character George to portray the preferred life that we as human try to live each day. By going to work and supporting a family we are much like the ant in the story living each day in order to prepare ourselves for the future. On the other hand, Maugham creates the character of Tom to portray the characteristics of grasshopper as it is found that Tom stopped working and wanted to enjoy himself (Essays24.com).

Both the characters- Tom and George are aware of their success in life. We see the dutiful, honest, generous, and industrious character George, tries his best to be successful in life as he saves money so that he could lead a successful life just after his retirement and he is also happy to think that his brother Tom would not be successful like him as he has no savings of his own. Tom, though a careless life leading person, becomes successful by his unethical calculative second marriage with the wealthy old lady, almost an aged of his mother, who died just after few days of the marriage leaving all the fortune, because of the materialistic value of the lady without concerning her age.

In the materialistic world, success is praised of and everyone hankers after success without concerning the means of it- fair or foul. As we see, the character Tom gets success in life not through hard working and honest way rather he very cunningly and in an unethical way gets success through an imbalanced second marriage. Though George knows the means of his brother's unethical success, he, without hating the means of success through his own lamentation to Tom's success, is supporting the success in life by any means- fair or foul. The narrator also supports the success of Tom through his abnormal behavior to his friend George. He does not console his friend George rather praises Tom's success, as he says, "But Tom often asks me to excellent dinners in his charming house in Mayfair, and if he occasionally borrows a trifle from me, that is merely from force of habit. It is never more than a sovereign." (Maugham Para. 21). The readers also enjoy the success of Tom without concerning the means of success; Tom got success in an unethical way. In an ideal sense, Tom's success would be hated, but none of the characters do that, as they are the part of the materialistic world where success, not the means, is important.

There is no doubt that the happiest character in the story is Tom. Not only because he has inherited half a million pounds but because he has lived his life as he wants to. It is also ironic that though Tom has made no significant contribution to society, he at the end of the story is the most successful of all the characters as success is gauged by monetary worth. And this appears to be how George evaluates success as he calculates how much money he will have when he retires. It suggests that both George and Tom have one thing in common that is a love for money. They are aware of its power and its ability to influence others.

From the very beginning of the story, the writer gives a message to the reader that some abnormality is going to happen through his concept of “an imperfect world” (Maugham Para. 01) and his unusual support and sympathy for Grasshopper. Throughout the development and resolution of the story, he supports and shows the success of the character, Tom Ramsay who has not a single quality to be praised of. He gambled, hypocrite, careless to wife and children, leading a life in such a vagabond way that, there is no hope to be successful in life. But he became the champion in life having materialistic success through his cunning calculation of second marriage as he got married an old lady because of her wealth and she died suddenly leaving back huge property. This is the way of success in the materialistic world where success matters, not the way of it.

Here the writer has a satirical tone to criticize the common religious and ethical values of the society that are learnt from the childhood. In ideal sense, these values are the root to be happy and successful in life, but in practical life we see the opposite as has been presented in the story by the character, George Ramsay, who is an ideal human character having all the good and worthy qualities like an ideal husband and caring father, a future planner as he saves for the future, an ideal brother who is helpful in all the adverse situation faced by his younger brother, Tom, but did not become successful in practical life as like as Tom. George becomes jealous of the materialistic success of Tom. Though this sort lamentation for success is not expected from George Ramsay in ideal sense but he does it as he is also a part of the materialistic world.

In ideal sense, none of the characters is perfect, the role they play in the story is nothing but the role we play as human being in our everyday practical life. The human characters are very much changeable as we see both the character- George and the narrator, both of them behaved

abnormally, which is not acceptable in moral and ideal sense, but they can't but play the role of the materialistic human character as we see, George, the caring, helpful, and dutiful brother of Tom, did not become happy and satisfied with the success of his own brother, Tom. An ideal sense, the attitude showed by the character, George, is not expected and ethical, but as the world is practical and materialistic we observe this sort of attitude played by the character, George. He did not ignore the success of his younger brother as in real world everyone is self-centered and jealous of others' success. And the narrator as well did not behave like an intimate friend of George, as we see the narrator laughed at the sorrow of his friend George's despair without being sympathetic to him while George unfolds the unethical success of Tom. In ideal sense, this sort of behavioral attitude to a friend is not expected and supported, but as the narrator himself is the part of the real materialistic world, he behaves in that way that the humanistic people do being practical in every situation seizing the day.

It might be said that the villain of the story is Tom, the person who has got everything that he desires by taking the easy way. And according to the fable he deserves a bad end or at least any that is not good enough. Nonetheless, this is not a classical story with a traditional ending. The writer wanted to emphasize the fact that Tom had achieved everything and it was out of the blue. In addition, it might be pointed out that the writer is criticizing the coherence between George's principles and the way he acted when his own brother obtained the fortune. Besides, it can be said that he was not happy with his whole life. He always wanted more than he obtained. The moral is clear, life is not unfair. It depends on you, on everyone and on the way people see life's opportunities. There are people who are not firm with their principles and they are not happy due to their vision of living (Free Essays-PhDessay.com).

“Success that matters in life is the status of having achieved and accomplished an aim or objective. Being successful means the achievement of desired visions and planned goals. Furthermore, success can be a certain social status that describes a prosperous person that could also have gained fame for its favorable outcome” (Wusu 2016). We are so obsessed in getting success in life that we often forget to choose the right way of it. As we see in the story “The Ant and the Grasshopper” Tom Ramsay captures economic success in an unethical way and none of the character questions to his that sort of success. Rather their actions unfold their blind support to the

materialistic success of Tom. Materialism makes us blind; we praise capitalistic success blindly without questioning its moral ground.

To conclude, it is a fact that everybody is for him to survive in this modern world. So it is a paradox that a crafty man who is not at all ideal is the most beneficial to survive in the modern world (Islam 2012). Maugham's way of presenting this truth is noteworthy where economic success is praised of and moral values are shattered by the aspiration of getting economic success anyway no matter by fair or foul means.

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# **Toni Morrison's Ill-Treated Black Women and their Emergence as the New-Woman in her Select Novels**

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## **Abstract**

Morrison's black female characters live in a world where racial discrimination, prejudices are prevalent. The life of these Afro-American colored people has been heavily influenced by the injustice and inhuman notions of the ruling class that inwardly make them believe that they are ugly- they are not worthy of this society: ruining their identity, self-respect completely. This paper examines these poor, black, female characters in Toni Morrison's select novels through a thorough scrutinization of their characters; and attempts to find the inner strength of such ladies; and it discovers that Morrison created a new world of new women within her novels that not only resist the social disorder, also fight back against it. They make a bold revelation of their inner robustness, power and prove that they are not invisible, rather belong to the frontline.

**Keywords:** *Black women, racial oppression, new woman, patriarchal society, identity.*

## **Introduction**

1993 Nobel Prize winner for Literature Toni Morrison is widely recognized as one of the “most prominent contemporary American writers” (Chegeni & Chegeni, 2013). She profoundly dedicated her life to the literary and cultural movement specially directed toward black people. She always felt a need for a 'female', a 'black' like herself in the sphere of literature that eventually

shaped the image of Toni Morrison as a writer. She once declared, "There were no books about me, I didn't exist in all the literature I had read... this person, this female, this black did not exist center-self" (Matus, 1998). In *A Mercy* she quoted- "the black people- We never shape the world. . . . The world shapes us" (Morrison, 2008).

As an avid reader, Morrison scrutinized the inhuman conditions of the black women in the available literary texts, which ultimately guided her to create something that did not previously exist. Being a reader, she gathered good amount of knowledge regarding the American literary historians and critics who, through their works, held that "traditional, canonical American literature is free of, uninformed, and unshaped by the four-hundred-year-old presence of, first, Africans and then African Americans in the United States" (Morrison, 1992).

She found herself in a world where black females like herself were trivial to the degree of being almost imperceptible or neglectable; this constructed her identity as a reader. And as a writer, she decided to shape her world of fiction in her own way (*ibid*). Morrison declares that she wants "to construct a fiction of a group of people never taken seriously by anybody - all those peripheral little girls" (qtd. in Duvall, 2000).

Toni Morrison, herself an African American who tried to explore complex experiences in white America, had a tremendous sense of responsibility to resolve the counter-statements rooted in her own identity. She, as a black woman, knows very well about her position in America. She was well aware of the fact that her marginalized existence within the context of the mainstream was already established firmly and she would need to go a long way fighting against it. Morrison was always concerned, above all, with the idea of a 'black community' - what such a community once meant, how it had changed, and how, despite those changes, it was and should be maintained. In a BBC show called the 'Late Show' with Salman Rushdie in 1993, she said that she wasn't sure about the meaning of the word 'Negro', she didn't understand what was actually meant by a black child/woman/friend /mother/person. She also asserted that there are so many that inform blackness and "one of the modern qualities of being an African-American is the flux, the fluidity, the contradictions" (Morrison, 1993).

For her, like many other passionate writers, literature is the only medium through which the real poor conditions under which the black people were

living could be brought forward toward the attention of the world. Through her novels, she brings out the inner pain, psychological trauma, alienation, oppression, suppression faced by the Black people in their regular life in front of the world. Toni Morrison's writings focused on the victims of the so-called ordered society, more specifically on the women, poor women, black poor women who received the maximum level of oppression from the society (Bharati and Joshi, 2009).

Toni Morrison, through her novels, highlights how the poor black women are ill-treated in the hands of the ruling whites, also how they suffer inner conflicts within their own boarders that are shaped slowly but steadily throughout the years of oppression, torture, and brutality. She shows, in her writings, how physical beauty, as defined and set by the ruling class, has become the major determiner of love and respect that one receives. White colored, blue-eyed, yellow haired, rosy lipped girls and women are considered beauty princesses and queens, whereas the black girls and women, however cute they are, are treated with hostility. This didn't happen overnight; ages of practice, Economic advantages of the whites and many more factors contributed to this unfortunate establishment. But Toni Morrison made it her goal to do something about it through literature.

Her first novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) provides an extended portrayal of the way in which internalized white beauty standards deform the lives of black girls and black women. The person, who suffered most from white beauty standards, is Pecola, the protagonist of the novel (Suriya, 2021). It narrates how the young girl is attacked from all the sides, due to her supposed ugliness.

In *The Bluest Eye* (1970), a group of females are shown- regardless of their age they symbolize Morrison's vision of liberated women who inherently possess the guts to challenge their status in the male dominated society they live in, and raise voice against the uneven balance of power.

In her other novels, like in *Beloved* (1987) and *Tar Baby* (1981), issues of gender identity complex, the double oppression of black women, racism and social isolation are explored. In *A Mercy* (2008), themes of revenge, more specifically personal revenge that leads to violence, communal outrage, slavery, role of religion, struggle against the conventional norms of the society etc. are carefully portrayed.

Morrison, in her novels, carefully crafted the characters from the real-world surroundings and presented them in an outstanding way so that the voices of those characters are heard beyond the novels' horizon.

This paper is an attempt to explore the 'new women' created by Toni Morrison to fight back against the ruling Whites. It also tries to examine the world the poor black women lived in through an investigation of the characters of the select novels of Morrison: how they react to certain situations, how they fight back against the norms of the society, how they treat people in general in the world they live in and so on.

### **Specific Objectives of the Paper**

The specific objective of this paper is to critically scrutinize the life of the major black female figures in Morrison's select novels and to dig into some characters to see how they achieve the status of a new woman in general.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

The term 'New Woman' can be traced back in the late nineteenth century which heavily influenced the world well into the twentieth century. The term refers to the growth of educated, independent women (Stevens, 2008). It can also refer to the physical changes in activity and dress (Roberts, 2017). In this paper, it is treated as a way to fight back through resistance against a patriarchal and white-skin-dominated American society.

Toni Morrison's novels always put the focus on the necessity and significance of unassailable and sound human relationships in African American society. The pain, agony and humiliation suffered by the black people at the hands of the white masters are common subject matters of her writings. This article focuses on the main female characters of the select novels to show how Morrison depicted a group of new women who do not comply with gender stereotypes. These women call into question the unequal power relations in patriarchal society as a kind of fight back against the established norms of the society. These women can forge a new concept of themselves in the face of sexual discrimination and racism widespread in the African-American society.

Morrison designs her own novels of, for, and about black girls (Roye, 2012). In order to analyse Morrison's Black women characters, this paper examines several novels of Morrison: *Beloved* (1987), *Tar baby* (1981), *A Mercy* (2008) and more specifically *The Bluest Eye* (1970).

## **Toni Morrison's Ill-treated Black Women**

In *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Morrison explores the linear perspective view of the black community about beauty, identity and psychological damages it inflicted upon the black women. The novel portrays a sad story of two black families- Breedlove and MacTeers, who lead their lives in such a condition that exposes the readers to a world of the subordinate status of the Blacks in the racist America.

The novel begins with an ordered, peaceful world of the white Jane in the Dick-and-Jane primer, which clamorously asserts white bourgeois family values, but in contrast, the story of *The Bluest Eye* (1970) exposes, with great details, the little known world of black girls like Pecola, Claudia, and Frieda. It is to be noted that these black girls find themselves locked in such a community where whiteness is the ultimate parameter of beauty, especially for the girls and women (Davis, 1998).

Claudia MacTeer recounts the tragedy of Pecola BreedLove in the novel. Many critics emphasize the fact that the very name "Breedlove" ironically shows the loveless existence of Pecola in a family that engenders pain, hatred, violence and so forth. Even though she is the only daughter in her family, Pecola receives little love and attention (Royer, 2012).

The traces of racial issues begin from the very childhood of the black girls i.e. Pecola, Claudia, and Frieda when they attend a school and find the white girls getting preference from the teachers, as much as the aggrieved society that surrounds them; they, more specifically Claudia, also figure out that the society is tainted by an aversion to darkness and ugliness. Ugliness bears the same weight as being Black. Educators, shopkeepers, or even the socially respectable "colored" people also choose to add to the invisibility of these girls with their undisclosed contempt for them.

Pecola, the central character of *The Bluest Eye* (1970), has a very low sense of self-esteem; she shows an overwhelming, crushing, self-blaming, self-loathing emotion throughout the novel. "Although both black men and women suffer from oppression, women suffer more. Black women are subjected to different sorts of otherness- she is the other of men, and she is the other of White" (Grewal, 1998). It becomes apparent that Pecola suffers from a childhood inferiority complex as she is ugly and black and no one likes her. This results in her isolation. She would spend hours in front of the

mirror, and reflect on the reasons behind the issues that she faces in her society: more specifically the ugliness that she is thought to have- which makes her an invisible being in her surroundings. This instance foreshadows how these personal negativity staff is going to influence her life in the coming future. One of the reactions to such treatment from the society makes her crave for blue eyes, a sign of standard beauty of whiteness, with which she can avert ugliness. She aspires to be liked and embraced in her own community, including the whites, which, in reality, refuses and devalues the members of her own race. She is confident that with blue eyes, her life would be different: "It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes were different...that is to say beautiful, she herself would be different. If she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs Breedlove too. Maybe that'd say, "Why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those eyes" (Morrison, 1970).

Trisnawati claims that the hegemony of white beauty is the underlying factor behind Pecola's wish for blue eyes (Trisnawati, 2008). In the novel, it is narrated thus: "Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she has prayed. Although somewhat Discouraged, she was not without hope. To have something. As wonderful as that happen would take a long, long time" (Morrison, 1970).

Another novel of Morrison, *A Mercy* (2008), is a rich network of interwoven stories of several girls from various hinterlands. Florens, the main narrator, is a teenaged slave who has been passed on to another master by her own mother. Then, there is Sorrow, a deserted daughter of a dead ship captain who is constantly misunderstood and ill-treated by those around her.

Florens is regarded as a mere object to be sold by her owner. When she is sent on an errand, she is given a letter where her mistress notes, "[This girl] is owned by me . . ." (*A Mercy*, 2008). Such declarations of ownership are disgraceful for any human being. Moreover, toward the end of the novel, we also get to know that she is on the verge of sale to the highest bidder. This comes as a tremendous blow for the readers. At this moment it becomes clear how helpless women have been in the society. Morrison creates these scenarios in order to make the readers be critically concerned about the things happening in the community.

On the other hand, Pecola, in *The Bluest Eye* (1970), dwells in the post-enslavement world. But she is looked upon almost like a servant. She works

in a rich white family in the lakeside house, and performs other heavy duties to assist his mother who happens to serve this family. Whereas Florens is owned by her master and mistress, Pecola is disowned by everyone she comes across. Her mother, Polly, has little affection for her; later, when Pecola has gone mad in the wake of a terrible tragedy, her entire community rejects her. Florens is bartered; Pecola is battered. These girls' blackness signifies their otherness and their ugliness.

In another instance, in *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Pecola along with Maureen, Claudia and Frieda, while leaving the school, are confronted by a group of black boys. They especially taunt Pecola for her dark skin. The irony here is that these boys- they themselves represent the same community of blackness and backwardness as well. Claudia explicates that- it was their contempt for their own blackness (Morrison, 1970). Even inside their own black community, these girls don't find themselves comfortable.

In *The Bluest Eye* (1970) the proud neighbor, Geraldine, refuses to see her black self in this black girl and contributes to Pecola's psychological disintegration; Junior blaming Pecola for killing the cat talks about a broader racist problem—blame being placed on the hated other. While Geraldine looks at Pecola, she observes the markers that indicate the darkness and ugliness of Pecola, which separate her from Pecola. Her thoughts represent the absurd misconceptions that ultimately support racist ideologies; she even did not hesitate to call Pecola a "black bitch". She does not even consider inquiring about her own son, or investigating the hatred that she herself has created, which she fails to recognize, in her own son (Powers, 2013).

In *A Mercy* (2008), Florens faces a similar kind of, but more grave attitude from the brown-skinned villagers because of her being different. She finds her body under inspection for whether her organs are in the normal places. Florens observes the situation and says that naked under their examination she watched for what was in their eyes. She found no hate or fear or disgust, but the incident was alone a reminder of her distances without recognition.

This lack of recognition forges Morrison's female characters' identity crisis. Pecola too experiences such an attitude from Mr. Yacobowski shop where she finds herself as if she is invisible, as if she only carries her body and nothing else with her. Pecola's feeling that Mr. Yacobowsky sees right through her demonstrates both the ways the whites perceive blacks as worthless, and also Pecola's sense that she is not even worth being looked at.

She starts to realize that because of her skin color the Whites distance themselves from her. She finds no other suitable interpretation behind this.

Likewise, the beauty norms for Pecola are also judged by their superiors. These black girls live in a society where white-skinned, blond-haired, blue-eyed beauty is deemed ideal (Davis, 1993). The young girls in Morrison's novels are surrounded by dolls, glass-cups and candy which indicates to them that whiteness is the ideal and the standard. Rambo remarks that these dolls are desirable not because they are toys but because they are white, and black girls want access to the whiteness the dolls represent (Rambo, 2015).

The survival of black people in the white society, in the end, depends on themselves. They are required to demonstrate their own identity and individuality. Everyone, in this novel, longs for Whiteness; it goes to such an extent of hating oneself. Women start to hate themselves, and they even hate their children and love only white children. For example, Pauline Breedlove hates her daughter Pecola, and she curses her for her ugliness which shows her alienation in their own land. Such incidents result in complete loss of personal and communal identity and add social vulnerability.

Pecola's social vulnerability is shown when she is raped by her father Cholly. Some adults say, "she carries some of the blame ... how come she didn't fight him" (Morrison, 1970). The community reacts by blaming and questioning Pecola.

Lina, another character from *A Mercy* (2008) becomes pregnant, although we never know for sure who the father is. Lina is also treated in a mean way by a man she liked, and loved, and briefly lived with. She was merely used as a sex tool and then was thrown out.

Another character, Little Florens, is given to Jacob Vaark only because her mother feels that the man might be good; which allows her to believe that her daughter might be treated decently in his household.

The lack of familial geniality is Florens', Lina's and Sorrow's despair, and then the looming presence of a distorted family bond is Pecola's tragedy. The unpalatable truth is that Pecola is victimized by being raped by both her parents: Cholly rapes her physically and Polly, in Furman's words, "ravishe[s] the child's self-worth" (Furman, 1999).

Girls like Lina, Florens, Pecola, Claudia, and Frieda are viewed by white

society as inferior because of their race, gender, and class. But a disillusioned Florens, a culturally transplanted Lina, and an insane Pecola do not constitute Morrison's final word on disrupted girlhood. The other characters, major or minor, they also show traces of discrimination throughout the novels of Morrison.

### **The Emergence of the New Woman**

Toni Morrison, with extreme care, has painted many other characters, in her novels, different from Pecola, Lina or Sorrow who are courageous and mentally strong enough to stand against all kinds of oppressions and injustices. They have discovered the secret to survive, 'punish' or 'protest' against the oppressors (Chegeni & Chegeni, 2013). They are the messengers of Morrison to pass the message of reformation to the readers, and thus to the world, that is: women need to be aware of their current status in the society and at the same time, they must have firm belief in themselves and must know about their strengths. In order for their survival against the male dominant society and the White oppressors, both simultaneously, they have no way other than fighting back. (Johnson, 2009).

Claudia, the nine years adolescent narrator of *The Bluest Eye* (1970) is the first character who conveys Toni Morrison's vision of "emerging consciousness of black women in the U.S.A."to adore and love "black identity and personality and be free from the racist white domination" (Aggarwal, 2012). Claudia has been presented as a sharp contrast to other Afro-American character whom Toni Morrison, the ambassador of feminist movement needed as her mouthpiece to show the ways of being a new woman and to reassert her identity through her will power and inner strength to resist racism, sexism, class exploitation and gender bias while telling the tale of fragility, oppression and marginalization of the black women. Toni Morrison has presented her as the torch-bearer of the feminist movement who shows women's road to regeneration amidst hostile circumstances.

Claudia is against the white standard of beauty of American society and mythical norm. She doesn't seek status in society by physical beauty (Bharati & Joshi, 2009). Morrison believes that the concept of physical beauty as a virtue is one of the most pernicious and destructive things. Claudia embraces who she is, knows that she doesn't fit in and not a part of the "mythical norm" (Lorde, 2007) of beauty according to which norm "power resides," and those "who stand outside that power" are

discriminated against and made “different” from the society (*ibid*). She does not destroy her life emotionally and physically the way Pecola did (Johnson, 2012). The reality of being a girl of complexion never bothered her; rather she “resented the fact that the world needed her to be” (Friedman, 2010) like that (Ferdousy, 2019).

It is evident from Claudia’s hatred of the white doll and Shirley Temple who are representative of the white standard of beauty with blue eyes and golden locks of hair that she hates the stereotypical attitudes of American society. Claudia is against the traditional attitude of American society where women are judged, loved and honored on the basis of their physical charm. Claudia destroys the white baby doll gifted by her parents instead of playing with the doll, thus challenges the conventional beauty standard in the black society. She is therefore represented against the white, blue-eyed doll, together with Shirley Temple (Rubenstein, 1993) to voice Toni Morison’s belief that black women should love and respect themselves and their individuality instead of worshipping white beauty.

Claudia is an embodiment of a confident and revolutionary girl, regardless of her age, who possesses a strong will to stand against remarkable bad practices, like sexism, racism etc., of her society. She is different not only in the eyes of the patriarchal and white dominant society, but also within the borders of her own community, unlike many other realistic characters of Morrison. For instance, when Rosemary, her white neighbor, pulls down the window and says they can’t come in as they are black and then Claudia pictures leaving red patches on the white skin of Rosemary which shows her attempt to fight back against the racial abuses, not only for herself but also for Picola. When Pecola is harassed by black boys Frieda and Claudia refuse to tolerate insults and Claudia Explains their actions: "We had defended ourselves since memory against everything and everybody, considered all speech a code to be broken by us, and all gestures subject to careful analysis; we had become headstrong, devious and arrogant. Nobody paid us any attention, so we paid very good attention to ourselves" (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*). She also protected Pecola against Moureen’s suggestive insult.

Toni Morrison has painted a black feminist through the character of Claudia. She doesn’t fulfill society’s expectation to be silent about sexual oppression and sees the world and herself with her own eyes. She has the courage to depend on her own ideals, on her reasoning faculties to judge the

world; and to prevent all the tyrannical forces that come in her way. When Pecola becomes pregnant everyone criticizes and insults her, but Claudia with her sister step forward to help her and wants Pecola's unborn baby to take its birth 'just to counteract the universal love of white baby dolls, Shirley Temples, and Maureen Peals' (Morrison, 1970).

With the passage of time, Claudia realizes that to stand against the dominant practice of the society is not that simple or straight-forward, but she keeps resisting the evil forces as much as her capability allows her to do. She never bows down in front of it. And so, after every interaction with this evil thing she starts thinking about it; she analyses and interprets the whole incident from a neutral point of view and then comes to a conclusion. With this, she starts to see the world in front of her naked eyes. Claudia's adjustment to the attitude of the society is from open hatred to the desire to preserve her sense of self; and thus she becomes the 'new woman' that Morrison believes can transform the society and make it a better place for everyone.

The next figure here, through which Morrison portrays the struggle of black women and resistance to oppression, is Pauline, a wife and mother of two; but performs neither the role of a mother nor that of a wife" (Aggarwal, 2012). She is such a character who has a desire to explore the outer world; she wants to go beyond the domestic chores. She is not "marginal, docile and subservient to men's interests and emotional needs and fears" or she doesn't want to accept "subsidiary social roles" in a patriarchal society (Abrams, 2006). The brutal and oppressive behavior of Pauline and her husband towards each other reveals that the two are using each other to drive away their anger against life and racial oppression. Even, Pauline's sexual relations with her husband are not submissive to masculine superiority and sexuality; rather she uses her body to fulfill her physical desire and, simultaneously to assert herself in a male dominant society.

Pauline's beauty, just like her daughter, is unnoticed in the community, yet she never thinks of her as ugly or she does not show any self-hatred, rather she tries to give meaning to her life in her own way (Bharati & Joshi, 2009).

Even the movie theaters, where she loves to go, give her space or allow her to fly away from the oppressive forces around her. Inwardly, during this movie time she becomes someone else, someone she wants to be in her life.

Pauline's work, in the house of white people, allows her to find beauty and dignity which was lacking in her own home which is comparatively ugly; this in the end gives her a new identity that makes her existence worthy to herself (Byerman, 1990).

Toni Morrison is proud of such women and wants a society where women will carry the responsibility of the home, earn bread, and endure her personal pain alone. Inner strength for survival, like Pauline shows, must be strong to become the 'new woman' that Morrison wants.

With *Tar Baby* (1981), Morrison retraces the struggle of an African-American woman to regain and retain her identity and individuality. Jadine Childs, the protagonist of the novel, is a complicated character, who shows unwillingness to her African American identity. Jadine is resolute on being a person of her own, not submitting herself to the established norms of the society. For such an attitude she has to suffer immensely by losing Son, weakening the relationship with Ondine, and then, she flies off alone, determined to make it without anyone's help. This, in fact, is not escapism, or running away from life. This rather shows a fight back from a black woman, by opening up so many possibilities in future, who rejects the notion of submitting herself to the so-called social defeat.

Similarly, another novel of Morrison, in *A Mercy* (2008), Florens and Lina shows resistance. Lina reinvents herself in order to adjust to her new life. She learns new ways of living from the white masters, without losing her sense of identity and thus grows powerful over time; in fact, she becomes almost equal in Jacob's and Rebekka's eyes, in supervising the Vaark farm. This process transformation is what Morrison was looking for inside of the black woman.

Florens, another character from the novel, is comparatively gentle and flexible, yet finds guts to assault the blacksmith she loves when she realizes that she is abandoned by him. She declares without any shame: "the dark is me ... Is my home" (Morrison, 2008). This gets her identity to a newer level.

Like these novels, Morrison's other novels are also concerned with, in one way or another, the poor condition of the black women. In her *Beloved* (1987), she explores gender issues and the double oppression faced by the Black women and how they manage to fight back. This is an unconventional

novel where Sethe, the protagonist, tries to kill her four children and even succeeds in killing one. Apparently, it may sound bizarre, but this black mother takes such an extreme measure in order to show her non-conformity to the society. She does not want her child to live on as a slave, because she has seen things, faced issues that, she believes, are much worse than being dead. It may also be because she believes true freedom and safety lies in the life of the afterworld. Miller points out that "Sethe repeatedly says in justifying her act to herself, to Paul D, and to Beloved, that her children are the best part of her, the only pure and clean part, her 'best thing', her life beyond life. Therefore, she must kill them when their purity and cleanness are endangered, "she just flew" (Miller, 2007).

### **Concluding Remarks**

The War against racism which was fought by Martin Luther King through political movements was continued by Toni Morrison through literature. Though "Say no to racism" is a neo-modern slogan, the reality and experience is utterly bitter. Toni Morrison wanted all the black women of the world to reemerge, reassert and regain their identity. She wanted to create a world where women will love and respect their existence, skin color and being an inseparable part of the society because if they themselves fail to do that then no one else will. In her novels she has drawn some female characters who are the victims of the conventional white American beauty standard, social taboos of class, race, gender and slavery, through the characters, like Pecola, Lina, and Floren, Pauline etc. She has proved that if black women try to achieve the mythical norm, the conventional beauty standard, then they will end up hating their own existence, lose their identity and personality which are represented by Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* (1970), who finally gets her Blue eyes but at the cost of being insane and isolated from everyone. But Toni Morrison doesn't want this for the black women. She dreams of them to be confident, strong, independent and empowered who had enough inner strength to fight for their identity, to strive for visibility in a society where so called blackness signifies invisibility. She wants them to believe that the ways of emancipation of black women are to believe in themselves, to revolt against all the oppression of the ruling class, the demeaning gender conventions and resistance against the suppression of the slave society. Toni Morrison has portrayed some unconventional Black female characters like Claudia, Pauline, Jadine etc. in her novels who are the embodiment of her dream woman who are defiant, brave, soulful, strong, independent, confident and stubborn enough to claim victory in the war

against suppression, insults and harassment of the White American society, who from being under the condition of victims would create a world of autonomy and creativity and act like the pathfinder of emancipation for not only Afro-American women, but also for all women in general. They should no longer be marginalized rather be the center of attention. For that they don't need to be called an American. Toni Morrison herself is the representative of this new empowered woman whom she wanted to create through literature who will establish her own identity against all odds. Toni Morrison admits in a Show that she didn't want to be an American at first, because the word American represents the white Americans (Morrison, 1993). She herself is personally caught in those disturbing conditions but later in life she undergoes the process of self-realization and reclaims and reestablishes her identity. Toni Morrison's characters are her mouthpiece to impart a message to all the women around the world that they should love their own skin color, respect the way they are, fight back against all wrongdoers and be revolutionary to show the world that they are their own masters.

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# **Existential Angst in Ahmed Sofa's Writings: The Individual, Social and Political Crises of Our Time**

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## **Abstract**

Ahmed Sofa, an iconic maestro for his clear and spontaneous stream of thoughts relating to religion, politics, and the formation of a nation and nationhood. He digs his pen into the roots of individual, social and political issues of the nation and finds myriad of problems jeopardized their existence as free entities. Most of his writings reflect the idea of the inner and national agony of our timeless objective existence. He portrays the trivial artificial existence of each character who feels a kind of existential crisis under the suppression of socio-political structure. The researcher presents a detail analysis of ‘existence and existential angst’ and examine the characters of his fictions and non-fictions based on the existential philosophy by analyzing their personality, behavior and activities. This paper focuses on the development of our nationhood and how it fails to create a unique abode for all that lead to the feeling of existential angst.

**Keywords:** Existential crisis, existential angst, secularism, individuality, nationhood

The word “angst” derives from Latin “anguish” and “anxiety,” and conveys a similar meaning. The concept of existential angst was first explored by the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard in his book *Begrebet Angest*, or *The Concept of Anxiety*. Existential angst is a condition of dread or anxiety that is related to the philosophy known as existentialism. Existentialism is the belief that life has no meaning other than what people

bring to it. All people thus have the freedom to choose any action, as well as the responsibility of accepting the consequences of that action. It is precisely this freedom and responsibility that causes existential angst (Rankin, 2). According to the existentialists, existence should be the root question of philosophy. They talk about the individual existence of human being, not his overall existence because the idea of overall existence is absurd, imaginary; there is no other existence except the individual existence. This philosophy renders the very real existence of human being; a way of life, to be alive. Existential angst, an important theme of existentialism, is a universal problem. Existential angst includes feelings of agita, nervousness, trepidation. The causes of the angst are unexplainable, it is not related to any particular condition, and it can be generalized as the fright of meaninglessness in life. The preoccupation with this compelling issue by existential thinkers highlights its magnitude and need to be critically examined to understand it in the right perspective. The ‘error’ of free will, Nietzsche insists, is the belief that choice rather than physiological and cultural forces is the basis of our judgements of moral approval and disapproval (Flynn, 38).

Sartre in his *Being and Nothingness* explains man’s freedom, his self-determination and the responsibility with it (28). We are conscious of our liabilities, the stress, the anxieties, the burdens of family and society but at times refuse to accept it, deny taking up the responsibility. Our actions and reactions are the result of our changing natures, the misery and anguish we experience because of our decisions and the way we fulfill our responsibilities at times, inhibit us from undertaking responsibilities. This further heightens our anguish and existential crisis as Sartre says, “Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does” (553).

Sofa's writings focus on existential angst in a broader sense. In his essays, he talks about it frequently. The most important of all his essays regarding this topic is “Muloto Manus” which focuses on the questions of the existentialists. In this essay, he clarifies his secular existence in a questionable manner. He writes- "To me the thoughts of God and the thoughts of immortality of men are synonymous. I shall raise no objection if you call me a theist. So, I am. Neither shall I object if you call me an atheist.

Whether you are a theist or an atheist, a believer or not; I see no reason of conflict. My ultimate subject is human beings and human beings alone. (274) It is the human being who is the origin of all beliefs, value and scientific intellect." In "Bangali Musalmaner Mon", he introduces the very focal point of the ignorance of the Muslims. In this essay, he clearly states that Muslims don't learn their religious stories from an authentic source of knowledge, all the knowledge they get from myths and tales composed by the Muslim poets to explore the glory and reign of Islam (Khan, 3). They were unmindful about the true knowledge of their own religion. After the birth of Pakistan, watching the discriminating attitude of West Pakistani Muslims, Bangalee Muslims gradually understood their wrong position of Muslim nationalism as they found that religious identity never helped them to establish their rights. However, they didn't take too much time to correct their mistake as they courageously dreamt for a separate secular state named Bangladesh (Roy, 4). So, it is evident that the Muslims of this region are suffering from a lack of rooted religious knowledge. In "Banglar Sahityadarsho", he notoriously indicates that most of our writers in Bangla Literature fail to be the writers of our own. So, we cannot create a unified Bengali Nationalism at all, this idea also reflects in his political essays. Sofa is most probably the first Bangalee intellectual who notices these transformations of Bangalee Muslims. Besides, he is the person who reminds Bangalee Muslims about their liberal attitude and age-old folk culture. In his non-fiction "Sipahi Yuddher Itihas", he asserts that in time and out of time, we are conquered by different races. And we are being converted willingly and in some cases by force to different religions. So, we cannot be grown up according to our own because we are confused by different legislature, education and political systems. Though we have got a new country of our own but we are influenced by those systems. In his scholarly essays, he depicts the overall pictures of our nationhood and introduces the rootless existence in every phase of our lives.

The rootless existence is also dominant in his novels. Shamarokh, one of the major characters of his novel *Ardhek Nari Ardhek Ishvari* represents the agony of this existence. She has no fixed station at all, she doesn't belong to any individual soul, she floats here and there like a water-

hyacinth and falls in the prey of a beast-like man. A highly educated woman like Shamarokh fails to identify herself subjectively in the society. The narrator of this novel tries his best to identify himself as a representative of the lower middle class but he too is bound to be submissive to the bourgeois society. For this, he imagines a godly woman named Sohinee to whom he endures. He says- "I want to follow you with my lone individual soul sweeping away all my past"(my trans, 670). The whole story of the novel *Surjo Tumi Sathi* centres on Hashim, a youth whose father is converted to a Muslim from a Hindu. The religious conflict of our society has been vividly painted in this novel. The grandmother of Hashim Poddar Ginni rises above all orthodox rituals and thoughts of the dark society by taking the responsibility of Hashem's newly born baby in Hashem's house. Living in a society where a hindu does not even take food from a muslim neighbour, Poddar Ginni, an aged and ordinary minded pious woman does not hesitate to come to see the dead body of her grandson's wife and thus humanity takes the upper hand above all other things.(Sofa, 86-87) So, this novel has been acclaimed as a remarkable one in the annals of Bangladeshi novels for its characterization and the sincerity of the novelist to the analysis of social values (Karim, 3). But the other side is that this novel connotes the religious bigotry of our time and its rooted existence in our society.

In his novel, *Pushpa Briksha Ebong Bihanga Puran*, Sofa uses a distinctive approach. The writer takes the trees, flowers, and birds as his children. As the narrator-protagonist, Sofa nourishes and loves them intuitively. He enjoys a different telepathy between himself and the nature. The author feels the existence of a living creature in this plant. All its growing-up amazes him. Once, when the writer was shocked due to the sad news of a kith, "He went near the plant and sat there. Suddenly, he felt that the small plant began to caress him. To make sure, he went to the other side of the little plant, and astonishingly it tilted to that side" (Sofa, 482). He finds a different existence in nature. His understanding of life is much deeper than any viewpoint. Liberation-time helpless Bangladesh in Kolkata is the focal point of his novel *Alatchakra*. The story of the speaker Daniel and his lover-friend Tayeba works as a thread of the loosely related episodes, though in the same scenario. Under the shade of Daniel-Tyeba, the novelist possibly intends to bring out all the political and pseudo-political aspects of people in

then Kolkata, driven off from Bangladesh. Different opinions of different people about the liberation of Bangladesh, its possibility, its way to success have been molded here. On December 3, 1971, when India declared war against Pakistan and the independence of Bangladesh became certain, the cancer patient Tayeba passed away in the blackout night.(Sofa, 356) This death symbolizes the unfulfilled hope of a nation.

Jonathan Webber in his book *The Existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre* comments that we also need a good understanding of character if we are to make properly informed decisions about certain social and political issues (3). Sofa was very keen to portray his characters in his writings. He creates an existentialist character in the novel *Ekjan Aali Kenaner Utthan Pattan* in a very true Bangladeshi context. The political scenes from Ayub Khan to Sheikh Mujib have also been portrayed vividly. Death in *Maranbilas* as a comfort, is on a par with *Aali Kenan*. It is about the spontaneous talks of a minister at his deathbed. From 12:13 in the night to the dawn, the minister opens his mind to his attendant cum political follower Moula Box. In these episodes, the whole life of the minister has been pictured – from his boyhood to his maturity. All the misdeeds of his life as the minister are revealed here one after another. In a society where immorality is the only ladder for a politician to climb the top, gets an exposure in this novel. The hateful activities of the minister include such misdeed like poisoning his younger brother, having sexual relationship with a woman of his mother's age, burning the headmaster in his house with a communal attitude etc. make a clear understanding of the devalued political and social pictures of ours where we exist nothing else but a mere voter.

In *Omkar*, Sofa comes out of the traditional tendencies of a novelist. The novel gives a pen picture of assimilation of an extraordinary theme in a simple story. In the story, due to his father's unwise activities, the narrator is trapped to marry a mute girl. Having no other alternative to save his own family, he has to do it. The mischievous father-in-law arranges for him a job also. In his town house in Dhaka, his sister, who resides with him there, practises songs with a harmonium. Once it is discovered that his speechless wife herself is trying to make sounds with that musical instrument. All these make the narrator-husband more sympathetic to his wife and it inspires the woman more and more to speak. One day after the death of Asad (a

revolutionist) in 1969, while a procession passes by their house, in her natural tendency the housewife comes out to the veranda and assays to voice like the slogans, but alas, it is only blood that flows out of her throat and she dies.(Sofa, 130) Most probably, the writer asserts that like the mute girl we try to raise our voice but the result is the stream of bloody adobe. In the novel, the socio-political condition of the then society as well as the socio-familial environment has been delineated very minutely and skillfully which is in a sense, similar to post-independence Bangladesh.

*Gabhi Bittanta* is also a very significant novel that will get a permanent place in the history of Bangla novel. In a very satiric milieu, the novelist has placed the supreme institution of our country – The Dhaka University. Making caricatures of the people of this highest education centre, Sofa has tried to ridicule the whole society in general. In *Gabhi Bittanta*, the author actually attempts to expose the so-called intellectuals of our society. It is evident in this novel that the psyche and the intellectuality of our nation is going through a serious crisis.

Today, we can learn from Sofa, who said very long ago that the basis of the religious/secular dichotomy that grew prominent between the Islamic fundamentalists and the communists of his time, was a cause for great concern (Ibrahim, 6). We see that the socio-political scenario of Bangladesh undergoes through many dramatic changes. Like everything else these changes affect the country's intelligentsia with a majority of them having directly or indirectly support ongoing politics and in many cases serve as the puppets of the ruling class. Hardly, does the nation witness voices that spoke for the country and peoples' interests with courage and integrity. Sofa, in his writings, tries to put the nation's interests above anything else. He portrays some humanists who can effortlessly transcend the barrier of race, religion, gender, age, education, social status, etc. But most of the characters of his fictions and non-fictions suffer from existential crisis amid these social dogmas. In his writings, we see that they try to revolt against these so-called social dogmas but they fail and at last throw themselves into the world of unseen spiritual crisis where they only exist objectively.

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# **The Agony of Mother Earth and Susan Rawling: Interpreting “To Room Nineteen” Through the Spectacle of Ecofeminism**

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## **Abstract**

This paper aims at creating a relationship between patriarchal psychological oppression and Ecofeminism. The story of “To Room Nineteen” subsumes the phallocentric mental oppression and want of a private life. This paper will try to show the similarity between female gender and the nature as the feminine from a patriarchal view point and also investigates how the masculine gender treats the feminine. This paper applies the theory of patriarchy and the theory of Ecofeminism to analyze the text. Ecofeminism helps to examine the equal position between women and mother nature from a patriarchal viewpoint. This paper shows how the powered phallocentric society takes a woman to death and also the nature to decay because of the powerful. The treatment of the masculine from the patriarchal viewpoint towards the feminine is shown through the use of the theory of patriarchy. The modern society tends to believe in gender equality but still the patriarchal mindset embodied it in different form.

**Keywords:** Ecofeminism, Patriarchy, Women and nature, Psychological oppression, Privacy

## **Introduction**

Nobel Laurette writer Doris Lessing in full Doris May Lessing, original name Doris May Tayler was born in October 22, 1919, Kermānshāh, Persia (now Iran). She died in November 17, 2013, London, England. Lessing was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in the year of 2007. Her writings are mostly concerned with the people involved in social and political disturbances of the 20th Century. Lessing passed her childhood

outside of Britain and Europe in Southern Rhodesia. She started her writing career by *The Grass is singing* in 1950, this book helped to establish Lessing as a talented young novelist.

The short story “To Room Nineteen”, the main focus of this study, was first published in 1963 in the collection *A Man and Two Women*, which traced Doris Lessing’s keen interest in the consciousness of women under the torments of modern life. The story was written in the period of second wave of feminism and it prognosticated the kind of feminist queries that were to become much more common after 1970. Critics found similarity of the works of Lessing with the works of D.H Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield among the 20<sup>th</sup> century writers and some also found similarity with the writings of Fay Weldon and others of the later period.

The story is about a couple, Susan and Matthew Rawling; well-matched, sensible, intelligent and happy, “Not Only they, but others, felt they were well-matched: their friends; delight was an additional proof of their happiness” (Lessing 413). The couple had everything that a happy married couple would want; four healthy children, comfortable home and all appropriate that everyone would wish for (if they were able to choose). But it seems like that the Rawlings has chosen their family. Amidst all that perfection the only fleck was Matthew Rawlings infidelity for just one night, this eventually looks acceptable but draws a crevice in the perfect picture of their marriage. There was nothing else wrong in their life but it was Susan who slowly goes insane inside the meaninglessness of her life and finally she commits suicide. The plot is not much more than this but the point that pushes the readers to go deeper into the text to figure out that little crevice which drives Susan to such desperate measures when there is almost everything that looks perfect in the eyes and so little that is wrong.

“To Room Nineteen” is short-story that can be analyzed under the context of ecofeminism as the protagonist character Susan bears feminist, environmental and ecological characteristics. The connection of the text with the underlying theory of this paper, ecofeminism shall be further dissected into the details. The theory of ecofeminism is along with a movement and philosophy that advocates nature and women against the patriarchal mindset. It claims that all the things that causes women to suffer are the inferiority and detachment from “production”. The destruction and degradation of the ecological system that is the nature also stems from patriarchal power. Genetically women and men have or tend to present to have different

qualities from each other. Women are more connected and sensitive to nature whereas men are isolated and rational to nature as they are more insensible, rational and ambitious. Ecofeminism calls on women and men to work together to promote awareness in society about restoring the natural balance and preserving the earth from any potential harm for future generations and the survival of all forms of life on Earth, as a solution to Earth's feminist and ecological challenges. Ecofeminism is a feminist ideology which encompasses a humane, yet environmental approach transcending any gender-related or political arguments. It argues that women should take action to restore everything in its natural place and protect nature for this is the only way to preserve survival of the Earth (Shiva 17-18).

This paper comprehends a qualitative approach. The texts and some secondary sources are incorporated here. The paper includes the text of "To Room Nineteen" along with the expository notes with the authors and a study of the theory of Ecofeminism and theory of patriarchy. The ecofeminist features will be applied to the text via point-by-point references, and the novel will be examined in terms of ecofeminism and as a visible synthesis of related theories and Lessing's own views.

Global warming, flood, prairie fire, sea level rise, ice-melt, climate change, species extinction is some of the problems that the world is facing due to environmental issues. The sufferings of the nature are mostly caused by the irrational behavior of human beings. Ecological crisis is now very alarming and to create awareness literary contribution is must. To do so literary works and criticisms are possible and important. It is important to highlight the problematized nature and how it should be conserved and preserved and the subject should be the point of exploitation. This idea is similar to the notion that the man's attitude toward women. Patriarchal ideology constructs women in the same position with nature because of the common features of producing, caring and nurturing. Because of the similarity between the exploitation attitude nature is also considered as feminine. This paper wishes to put light on the issues and helps in the process of eradicating the problems of these exploitation by drawing a connection between nature and woman like Susan so that readers can be aware of the suffering of the both.

## Theory of Patriarchy

After the establishment of women equality, the modern world agrees to working together of men and women in every sector. Today's world cannot imagine a day without the assistance of women. Starting from authoritative position, women is now performing as queen, prime minister, president etc. in all that smaller or greater measures. But all these powers and position does not change the fact that the system is male dominated and inserted in the system in a variety of ways.

The word 'patriarchy' literally means the rule of the father or the 'patriarch', and originally it was used to describe a specific type of 'male-dominated family' – the large household of the patriarch which included women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants all under the rule of this dominant male. Now it is used more generally "to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways" (Bhasin 3).

Feminists use the term 'patriarchy' to describe the power relationship between men and women. Patriarchy refers to the male domination both in public and private spheres. It is more than just a term; feminists use it like a concept, says Dr. Jodie Whittaker. Mitchell as a feminist defines patriarchy as, "to refer kinship systems in which men exchange women (Mitchell 24). Walby defines "patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby 20).

The point on which this paper deals with from the theory of patriarchy is how masculine shows attitude to the feminine in the patriarchal culture, here masculine does not only refer to men or male but also relate to power, strength, domination and exploitation and both men and women can be called as "masculine" when they show power, strength or domination which leads to the character of oppression and subjugation. Femininity is the qualities like caring and nurturing that are attributed as the characteristics of women. Goldberg wants to assert that men's philosophy of dominance comes from their willingness to sacrifice that is necessary to maintain that control and power whereas women's sacrifice comes from a different thought which is care and love. They sacrifice out of love for the sake of

children and their loved ones subconsciously (Goldberg 20) and this trait is common in the character of our protagonist, Susan Rawling.

Patriarchy also practices hierarchy which positions one “over” the other from the point of view of both intelligent and power. In patriarchy women is thought something negative and omitted and referred as “the Other”, and this paradigm justified the exploitation and oppression over women. This practice is to maintain power in the system and this practice has made the women to believe consciously that they were naturally created to “domestic” matters (Pilcher and Whelehan 56). Simon de Beauvoir states that the dualism of masculine and feminine is not used in balance and reciprocally:

The terms masculine and feminine are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity (Beauvoir 15).

All this inequality and defining by limiting the power, depriving of reciprocity shows that the domination of masculine is deep rooted into the patriarchal society and it is widely practiced in many cultural and social norms and integrated in people’s mind, institutions and authorities too. Regarding this internalization of patriarchal paradigm this paper uses the theory to analyze the modern world and society depicted in the story where the society also acknowledge the equality and justice to women but practice patriarchy in different forms. The tensions that are experienced by women and nature somehow proofs that there are oppression and exploitation by the attributes with privileges.

### **Theory of Ecofeminism**

This part of the paper discusses on the ecofeminist approach from a western patriarchal viewpoint. Ecofeminism is a social movement more than a theory and it pairs women with nature due to their interconnection and demand solutions to serve the problems of the both. The theory of ecofeminism blends both ecology /environmentalism and feminism in it, that’s main argument is that the ecological disaster along with women’s

stigmatization are the result of patriarchal oppression. Beginning with the realization that human existence and environmental stability are inextricably linked, ecofeminism provides a universal concept that opposes all forms of oppression, men over women, civilization over nature, and the first world over the third (Baysal 26).

Ecofeminism is an ideology and movement that views climate change, gender equality, and social injustice as inextricably linked concerns, all of which are linked to male domination in society. Ecofeminism specifically argues that most environmental concerns can be linked back to the worldwide priority of masculine traits (especially those some would consider poisonous, such as aggressiveness and control) and those in power who represent such qualities (Gaard 19).

Françoise d'Eaubonne, a French feminist, coined the word "ecofeminism" in 1974. Eaubonne thinks that the oppression and disenfranchisement of women, people of color, and the poor are inextricably related to the deterioration of the natural environment, as both developed as a result of patriarchal control. Ecofeminism is a movement that advocates for women in science, technology, and ecology. Vandana Shiva and Carolyn Merchant are just two of the prominent names who have been involved in the movement since its inception. Some other names of note include Val Blumwood, Greta Gaard, and Susan Griffin (Gaard 5-7).

The ecofeminist critics proposed that there is a relationship between women and nature as the feminine in the patriarchal culture. According to ecofeminism the values and attitudes of women and the issues between men and women are not only because of the equality problem but the grit is in the patriarchal mentality of being superior and to treat the women as the inferior or the Other. The ecofeminist believes that the women are different and superior than men in terms of their compatibility, as men do not own what women own. On the same time the ecofeminists are also aware of the subjugation and oppression that exists in the society. Regardless, their field of study is not only the subjugation of women but also the non-human or the nature.

The ability of reproducing, nurturing and caring are the shared values and qualities of women and nature in the perspective of ecofeminists. From this perception the ecofeminists consider women and nature in a parallel line. The point of calling earth “The Mother Earth” also comes from

this perception. The linguists use the pronoun “She” to mention nature, world, or earth, which is also a proof that nature and women are in the parallel position.

Kate Soper points out that nature is the “womb of all human production” (141). As mothers give birth and also nurtures their offspring and even lactate in the same way the nature not only produces natural resources but also give shelter and nurtures all types of living creatures just like a women do. These qualities of women and nature though allocated differently but cultivated as valuable aspects of both nature and women in being feminine.

The challenge of ecofeminism is to break the patriarchal domination. Janis Birkeland in his basic precepts of a holistic value system in ecofeminism puts forth some aspects to be argued by ecofeminists. Some important proposals are: 1) to transform the social system the anthropocentric viewpoint is to be changed into more ecocentric viewpoint, 2) the connection with the nature should be reciprocal rather than one-sided and human must ‘work with’ the nature instead of controlling it, 3) changing the hierarchical mindset to natural respect and move from power-based relation to ethic based relation, 4) to incorporate the false dualistic framework that promotes the dominant ethic of equality necessarily (Birkeland 18-20). This is the proposed way to remove the polarity between culture and nature, men and women.

Karen J. Warren, the founder of the organization Women and Nature says that women and nature are similar because they are perceived as feminine. The use of animal terms like “fox”, “vixen”, “chicks”, “bitch” etc. to refer women shows that women are perceived as nature. In the usage of grammar, and utilization of words nature are referred to feminine treatment or attitude like “she”, “her”, “mother” etc. The use of some dominating words like raped, controlled, penetrated are enough to demonstrate the attitude of men (Tong 238).

Vandana Shiva in her book *Staying Alive* (2010) introduces some thoughts regarding the matter of perceiving women and nature as feminine. She has shown a dialectical connection between the world’s renewing and producing quality according to Indian cosmology perspective and this process works in balance because of this dialectical connection (Shiva 37). She also enforced that there is a strong connection between Indian women

and nature. She said, “At, one level nature is symbolized as the embodiment of the feminine principle, and at another, she is nurtured by the feminine to produce life and provide sustenance” (37) She draws a contrast line with the western views saying, “contemporary western views of nature are fraught with the dichotomy or duality between man and woman, and person and nature” (39). Furthermore, women's production is dependent on the productivity of nature. As a result, the loss of nature leads to oppression of women, including devaluation, relocation, and marginalization (40). As a result, this study employs Shiva's concepts in an analysis that explores how women connect to nature and how to understand their parallel position.

### **Theoretical analysis of “To Room Nineteen”**

The theoretical analysis of ecofeminism explains that women and nature both stand on a parallel line and they have a relationship between them regarding values of feminine such as caring, nurturing and reproducing. The ecofeminists refer these shared values as their privilege and qualities of good human and as advantages of developing themselves but on the other hand the patriarchal view observe these values as their justification to exploit, dominate and subjugate women.

The patriarch considers women as an open field to play power and show strength they even avoid the existence of women to show their hierarchy and sometimes they also take women for granted and these are same attitudes the powerful people, considered as patriarch in ecofeminism, show towards the nature by using it as they wish to forgetting the fact that this very nature is the place where they live and where they born in and they breathe in here they drink in here and also eat from here. Thus, the idea of basic dualism in ecofeminism is shown in the story of Susan Rawling.

The story of “To Room Nineteen” is about Susan Rawling who is a progressive, intelligent and conscious women about her own wellbeing and rights but at the same time she is also abide by the cultural constructs of women and accepted the traditional role of wifehood, motherhood and nurturing and at last the role of a betrayed wife. Susan, began to feel locked up in a cocoon made up of stereotypical roles and collectively imposed identities of an understanding wife, ever-available mother, the suburban, party girl in the good time. Susan wears all these garments put on by the patriarchal society and were weary of the role of sustainer and comforter, and become a psychic and experienced a pectoral death. After experiencing

the state of catatonia Susan resists the culturally stupefying constraints and wears off the garments of social roles she has worn and adopted and retreats herself into a room of her own which she thinks as her own territory. At the very last she feels that all her life she lived a life that has no identity of itself and so to confront her own self she thought to choose a life of isolation outside the cocoon of social recognition.

The story begins with a first-person omniscient narrator by which Lessing wants to express the sarcastic gap between the individuals; “This is a story, I suppose, about a failure in intelligence” (Lessing 413). Rawlings are initially seen to lead nearly a mechanical life; they were pitifully lack of confidence in intellect and sensibility. The tale develops with a narrating where sensibility fades and the readers are gradually immersed in the dark world of Susan’s psyche.

Rawlings got married at their late twenties after having known each other for some time and also after experiencing other’s relationship. So, they got married which was a very practical union and their friend along with them considered them, “well-matched”. They started their family in the suburb of London, in Richmond and they had four children with twins. After the birth of their first children Susan had to leave her job, she worked in an advertising firm and used to enjoy her job whereas Matthew was a sub-editor for a London newspaper. The ultimate sacrifice of leaving financial freedom was done by Susan, the mother where they both become parents. Our mother earth also sacrifices her beauty and freedom by giving birth to different beings and due to taking care of them and giving them shelter it is losing all her places but the sacrifice is not valued.

Though they had a happy life together but a very flat life of having the same routine every day. Inside they thought about all the work they did, outside and inside and its outcome. However, they used to love other and were determined to have a successful marriage. So, they convinced each other that everything in their life was okay. Though Susan looks forward to rejoin her job after the youngest children, the twins, start school. She also thought that she will have some private time for her own when the children will grow up. Her seemingly perfect family was gradually becoming insufficient for her though she overlooked the inadequacy and avoid to response to such critical thoughts. She thought of waiting until the children became older, as they need an attentive full-time “mother”, so she postpones the possibilities of finding some meaning of life in work: “Often enough she

was bored, since small children can be boring; she was often very tired; but she regretted nothing. In another decade, she would turn herself back into being a woman with a life of her own” (Lessing 419). The world of patriarchy makes the women believe that it is only their sole duty to reproduce and nurture the children and by giving them the medal for the quality of motherhood they just make the women live in heaven of fools.

For all those twelve years Susan had been living a life defined by others and after the years suddenly she began to feel the pangs of “bitterness” (Lessing 418) and is “more and more often threatened by emptiness” (Lessing 418). The only spike that causes the psychic disruption of Susan is the infidelity of her husband. Till that Susan as a woman has been the “looking glass” of her husband as Woolf mentioned in *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), “possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size” (Woolf 35). Mathew is a depended man who demand emotional supports from others whereas remains happily ignorant about other’s specially Susan’s emotional needs. Moreover, he dallies sexually liaisons but very carefully handle the matter of his infidelity as his hypocrisy and self-indulgence.

The character of Mathew is the representative of the patriarchal society, where women are the sole victim of bearing all the physical pain and also mental and emotional breakdown and loneliness. The male counterpart enjoys the freedom of life under the logic that they are the sole earner and the women are to sacrifice their everything including the financial career on the ground of being the “mother”. The connection of the mother earth with women is on the parallel here, our world is experiencing the high time of cruelty of oppression by the dominant class. The people are taking away all the natural resources and the beauty and the durability of the earth in the name of civilization and development. There is no one to care about the pain the earth is enduring and if the situation continues the earth is going to also commit suicide like Susan Rawling.

Susan tries to deny the fact that she has been torn apart by her husband’s infidelity and starts treating the situation as, “banal”, ‘not important’, and tries to take shelter to her knowledges of “education.... discrimination....and judgement” (Lessing 416). But how hard she tried she was left with the feeling “irritable”, “bad tempered, annoyed”, she finds “something unassimilable” about the betrayal of Mathew and his confession (Lessing 418). Though she behaves understanding but she cannot forgive her

husband from her heart and she takes forgiveness belonging to “savage old world” of wickedness and brute passion (Lessing 420). She cannot make her mind about how to react on the situation and her erroneous behavior takes her out of the traditional feminine virtues and so the patriarchal egoistic people find a way to weigh her down. Day by day she was being confined in the area of her house of Richmond and was burdened by intense anger, sadness and jealousy. Though she continuously tried to deny her real feelings and emotions because of the thinking that hers was a “perfect marriage” (Lessing 413). Performing the act of sole housewife, mother and caretaker of the children or sometimes sexual counselor of her male counterpart Susan has lost her true identity and as Beauvoir said that her existentialism was on question and she has accepted to be an object denying the subject-self. In the book *The Feminine Mystique* (1979) Betty Friedan questions the ideals of the religion of domesticity that tailored women’s inner and outer images of femininity and under the picture of n happy married women lies the dead body of a miserable, condemned and intellectually dead person (Friedan).

Mrs. Mathew Rawlings gradually changes into a women sank in despair, rage, insanity from a loving domestic wife and the catalyst was Mr. Rawlings one night infidelity and the world also behaves in the same way if seen through the mirror of eco feminism. Once the world gets out of her stability because of the attitude of people living upon her she gets outraged and we can feel instability of the earth through different natural disasters.

After bearing and coping up with such situation alone Susan begins to look into her life in a different way. She started to take her mothering skills and household activities as her mental instability rather than something virtuous, suddenly she became aware of the part of herself that has remained unfulfilled. The hollowness of her life drives her crazy and did not let her stay in her house. She was suffering from loss of connection with her inner self, to get her back she decided to rent a room in a hotel under a fake name. She thought of confronting her “essential’ self by isolating her through solitude and self-analysis so she rent a room in Fred’s hotel, room number nineteen. Susan negates her social role and patriarchal strangling formalities for the first time in her life and she restrain her from the character of Mrs. Mathew Rawlings by changing her name too.

Susan’s self-indulged exile let her travel through her life reviewing her formal identity and explore to being a woman of self-position in the society. Through her rebellion she sheds the ideology of the” Other” she has

been carrying throughout her life and shape herself according to her own needs of freedom. She fights against the mental captivity and patriarchal constructed setting of conventional female duties. She also fights for her desire to meet her own wants, minimize her parental obligations, and seeks her freedom, independence, and old self. These are a clear revolt against conformity to specified orders, to socialized sanity. Susan finds her peace of mind in her “To Room Nineteen”:

What did she *do* in the room? Why, nothing at all. From the chair, when it had rested her, she went to the window, stretching her arms, smiling, treasuring her anonymity, to look out. . . . She was Mrs. Jones, and she was alone, and she had no past and no future. . . . And she leaned on the sill, and looked into the street, loving the men and women who passed, because she did not know them. She looked at the downtrodden buildings over the street, and at the sky, wet and dingy, or sometimes blue, and she felt she had never seen buildings or sky before. And then she went back to the chair, empty, her mind a blank. . . . For the most part, she wool-gathered – what word is there for it? – brooded, wandered, simply went dark, feeling emptiness run deliciously through her veins like the movement of her blood (Lessing 437).

Susan felt that room nineteen was her place of sanctuary that offers her the taste of freedom from that “enemy” she used to feel around her house and the Susan made by the contents of patriarchal society.

She sat defeating the enemy, restlessness. Emptiness. She ought to be thinking about her life, about herself. But she did not. Or perhaps she could not. As soon as she forced her mind to think about Susan (for what else did she want to be alone for?), it skipped off to thoughts of butter or school clothes. or it thought of Mrs. Parkes (Lessing 423).

In the room Susan found out herself back, “Here I am”, she thinks, “after all these years” (Lessing 437). She discovered that she was someone else outside her domestic world. She did nothing there in the room, just sat in a mediative position in the armchair and engages herself in a self-questioning process that helps her to grow from inside. Lessing tried to show us that when someone breaks the cage and come out of the masks a new

person is born. Susan come out of the prescribed role and emerge to accept her potential self.

After getting back to real self, Susan began to talk with Mathew from her new identity. This change in Susan makes Mathew concern about his position as husband. The reflection of the prim and real women makes the patriarchal Mathew feel insulted. So, he wanted to name the sudden change of behavior of Susan as an extra marital affair. He allegedly blamed Susan that she used to go out to meet with someone else. When Susan was in a process of collecting the pieces of her together and getting her back to an empowered image to a unity of motherhood, wifehood and the new Susan the journey got interrupted by Mathew. His suspect made him follow her and the sojourn journey stops. Once her hide about was known she again began feel the same enemy back and the feeling of imprisonment gives way by removing the peace of mind.

She tried to brought back the peacefulness by returning to the room several times but she could only feel, “a moth dashing itself against a window-pane, sliding to the bottom, fluttering off on broken wings, then crashing into the invisible barrier again” (Lessing 441). She also feels exposed like “a snail pecked out of its shell and trying to squirm back” (Lessing 442).

Susan felt that emancipation of herself is better than to bear the threat of non-being. Her decision of self-willed death is not a defeat but an answer to the patriarchy to the question asked in the way of finding, “elsewhere” for women herself. Susan paved the way for women to stake out a new place for enunciation of women subjectivity by rejecting the created culture of patriarchy.

According to the ecofeminist critics the same thing happens when we use the earth as something taken for granted that is we forgot to take care of the mother earth. The oppressor or the so called first world countries who are trying to build a world full of comforts and machines perhaps forgot that once the world gets angry it is not possible to bring her back to normal if we do not begin to care for her soon. As a result of patriarchal oppression towards the earth today we are suffering from untimely floods, frequent earthquakes, sea level rising, ice melting at the poles, temperature rising, attacks of different viruses and bacteria and so on.

The ultimate cause of the major problems of women and nature on earth from the ecofeminist perspective is the mainstream theory which includes the most common ideology and the practice of patriarchy that demolishes both the harmony and peace. From the emergence of the philosophy and science especially framing from the Enlightenment Period, the European society always tried to expand along the borders and they could only attain it through male domination and neglection of women and the marginalized people and also the nature. The School of Science commands the men to epistemologically exclude women from production and building contact with nature while their existence is methodologically ignored because the abstraction of males from both parts is pretty essential (Gaard 23-24). This is the very reason women are seen as non-significant beings and they treat the nature as feminine to use it and possess it forcibly where they can trespass for their and the well-being of a society. The prejudiced system categorizes women as stupid, weak and emotional beings as they always think about their family and children over them. This is the reason men think that they are fools and delicate and not as strong as men in physical strength too as they carry babies. The ecofeminist philosophy wants to proof that how hard the male tries to stereotypes, the men and women, both the gender possess a common position in the nature under the umbrella of humankind and the ecofeminist movement does not support the dualities.

## **Conclusion**

Dorris May Lessing being a challenging writer tries to always holds up her position in support of the inferior beings. Her “To Room Nineteen” is also a mirror to the society that shows the mental vacuum it creates inside a woman due to its patriarchal sentiment. Lessing wrote the story in the changing atmosphere of World War-II when Britan was experiencing the second Wave of feminism. Here Lessing writes of a woman, Susan and her internal battle of depression as for her it was difficult to accept the change inside her family and her relationship with her husband and her position in the family after the years of self-sacrifice. Susan tried to ignore all the allegations and all the problems inside her alone without the support of her husband, she tried to find a peace for her own but she couldn't as the always intervening male counterpart follows her like a monster. Susan had to bear all these because she was a woman and the society thinks that the woman is born only to give and they do not have any demand physical or mental. Ecofeminism is for an ethic that spreads the theory of care where decisions are made equitably and the care for the both genders, because it comes from

the cycle that if we poison the Earth we will be poisoned in the consequence and as like the patriarchy where the powerful has the right to dominate, control and exploit. Ecofeminism calls for the replacement of this entire masculine system of dominance and exploitation with an ethic of care, a morality based on feminine traits of motherhood. This approach emphasizes human kindness and acts that promotes concern for others.

This paper applies the philosophy of Ecofeminism and a part of mainstream theory that is the patriarchal theory to show the relation between nature and woman. It reads out how woman and nature are being spoilt by the powerful or the patriarchy in another name. It shows how the power of phallocentric can demolish a woman mentally to death. The paper suggests that the patriarchy has all these years played the role of controller of woman's life and also the mother earth where the people in the power position uses the mother earth for their own wellbeing as the patriarchal society uses a woman just for their own purposes of giving birth and nurturing and taking care of their families. The life of the protagonist of the story 'To Room Nineteen' is controlled by the demands of her family, husband and children and whenever she chooses a life of her own, she was watch over like a guilty person that traumatized her and led her to mental isolation and an ultimate death. The philosophy of Ecofeminism is the balance of right among all the beings and that is the only solution over all the exploitation whether of woman or of nature.

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# Anxiety and Memory of 1971 War Mothers in the Literature of Bangladesh

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## **Abstract**

The position of women on the battlefield is a kind of being victimized in wartime; as a result in war literature, mostly, writers have designed their plots related to the abasements of the women in the combat. No doubt, the mothers' anxiety for the freedom fighter sons while participating in the war and the unbearable remembrance of losing their dear and near ones throughout the life is abandoned in most of the war discussions. The freedom fighters' mothers of the Liberation War of Bangladesh are no different in this regard, though having all their anxieties and memories of the wartime, they have impeccable sacrifice and support to create a new country, Bangladesh, on the world map in 1971. The article has chosen a memoir, namely Jahanara Imam's *Ekatturer Dinguly* (1986) and two fictions, *Maa* (20012) by Anisul Haque and *A Golden Age* (2007) by Tahmima Anam, and also interviews are also taken from a few real-life mothers of the freedom fighters of Bangladesh to conduct the article and to portray the war mothers' anxiety of sending the sons to the war field, and the haunted memories that they carry throughout their lives;

**Key Words: Mother, Freedom Fighter, Anxiety and Memory.**

In a war, generally, the battlefield is taken as the domain of men and the term War usually is considered as a male-oriented job. Madelein Bunting (2002) in the essay "Women and War" depicts the idea about the involvement of men in war and says, "This is reinforced by the impression that virtually all the people involved in handling this crisis are men.... The power structure is exposed at such times, as the token women slide into the background, leaving war to men" (Bunting 310). Again, it is also referred

that the term war goes with the man because “the oldest gender stereotypes about women’s tendency to nurture life rather than destroy it” (Bunting 310). In reality, women are seen as “the victims; women are cast as passive” who undergo the war-time suffering, and anxiety for their fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons; and carry out the long-term memory of the lost ones for the rest of their lives. Women are thought to be physically and emotionally weak to endure the brutality of the war. Moreover, women are subject to be sexually harassed and suffered during wartime as they have given birth to war children. Sometimes, the mother as in the short story *Mother Courage and Her Children* is a capitalist war profiteering one who values making money in the war more than her children. According to Henry Glade (1967-68) in this short story, the mother has been “broken and grief-stricken after the death of Kattrin, harnesses herself to the wagon upon hearing the call of trumpets” (137). He also has referred to several critics who have observed: “something animal-like about her as she stamps her feet, tries to move the wagon with one pull, falls, and dies” (Glade 137). However, Micaela di Leonardo (1985) raises the fundamental question “What do women have to do with war?” (Leonardo 599). Again, the analysis also comes from his study “most of the contributors to *Over Our Dead Bodies* emphasize popular education over appeals to women as mothers and nurturers” (Leonardo 604) and also reviews the fact that, “...aside from its equivocations on certain male pacifist leaders, has a clear theory on gender and militarism: women are Moral Mothers with both the strength and more righteousness needed to end male military terror”. (Leonardo 607) It is to remember that war cannot be a gender-biased phenomenon, yet people from all walks of life and all types of relationships are the victims of war; as the article finds out the mothers’ psychological turmoil due to the anxiety for their sons in a wartime situation and recalling the memories of losing them throughout their remaining life.

The anxiety and the memories of the mothers of 1971 wartime become obvious when the remembrance of those moments has been projected through different memoirs, short stories, and fiction of the Bangladeshi writers. The freedom fighters of Bangladesh fought for the sovereignty of their motherland in 1971. They were young people, students, workers, villagers, and Bengali regulars who worked in the Pakistan Armed Forces who had dynamically formed the invincible spirit of Freedom Fighters of Bangladesh after the proclamation of Bangladesh’s independence on March 26, 1971. Mukti Bahini or Freedom Fighters of the country operated as an effective guerrilla force to keep the enemies on the run. People of all strata of society joined the Mukti Bahini. The nation remains

indebted to the collective of regular force members, urban and rural youths of Bangladesh. The concern of the mothers during the liberation war for their freedom fighter sons since the decision-making moment of forming the Mukti Bahini and sending them to the Warfield and the unbearable memory that has been carried out by those mothers after the independence are vital issues to discuss and bring before the world.

In the historical Encyclopaedia of ‘Women and War’ (2006) referring to Richardson, it is noted that the soldiers and the mothers have such an intimate relationship that in true sense focuses “sentiment as mateship, and a closer, more established, more emotional and even more romantic tie than many marriages” (“Women and War”, 27) with a belief that the mothers can endure the anxiety with “A belief in patriotic duty eased the pain of separation...” (“Women and War”, 27). They have shaped up the eternal umbilical relationship, though mothers suffer and bleed internally sending their beloved sons to the war fields, “You know how we mothers are suffering just now...I’ll miss your little homecomings, I’ll miss your kisses and...smile and miss your...everything dear...as we have been as close as friends and companions, as well as being your own mumie...” (“Women and War” 27). Not all mothers have been wholehearted supportive towards sending their sons to the battlefields. Ellen Derham supported her son to join World War 1, but she announced: “I want no Victoria Cross, I want my son” (“Women and War” 33) and traveled her journey of grief alone by sending the son to the battlefield.

In the wartime situation, the anxiety of parting between mother and son has known no bounds; however, the degree of the separational anxiety has determined the maternal conduct and the emotion begets not only worry or sadness but also accelerates the passion of the mothers for their freedom fighter sons through proper guidance, support or sacrifice. There are multiferous anxieties that the mothers come across for their children in wartime. At the very outset, the mothers of these literary works are anxious to be assured enough regarding their sons’ logical thinking about the emancipation of the motherland. They want to be confident whether their sons want to attend only because their friends have joined the war or the sons really can realize the wartime needs. In *Ekaturrer Dinguly* Rumi, son of the martyr mother, Jahanara Imam, and in *A Golden Age* Sohail, son of Rehana are students, and Azad, son of Safia Begum in *Maa* has just completed their studies. This is usually the time to take preparation for launching a career,

but the sons of the mothers feel as Rumi shares with his mother, “But haven’t the events of March 1971 turned it (giving priority to self-career-building activity) into an untruth? Our condition is worse than the Roman gladiators. The gladiators had at least a slim chance of escaping from the clutches of the lions but we don’t even have that...Is it the proper environment for studies? Is this the time to pore over books in preparation for the future?” (Imam, 66). When patriotic young blood like Rumi manages to contact the Liberation Forces Headquarters, his mother becomes worried and wants to be sure about how far the young heart is firm in his decision, “I just wanted to make sure that your desire to join the War of Liberation was genuine and not a decision was taken on the spur of the moment” (Imam 76). She wants to be certain about the implication of his decision, as she says to her son “...to realize the seriousness of your decision. I wanted to realize that you were voluntarily courting danger, even death” (Imam 76). Thus the apprehension of a mother of 1971 prepares her son to realize the responsibilities and go-ahead to protect the beloved country. The assurance of Imam’s son echoes in her heart Khalil Gibran’s words: “Your children are not your children/ They are the sons and daughters of Life’s/ longing for itself” (Imam 77).

The fresh blood sons are worried about their motherland and become restless to join the war that gradually making it possible to have the psychosocial functioning of the mothers and sons, who finally come to the baseline keeping aside their anxiety and becoming the absolute moral support to each other. The worried mothers are convinced as the sons have clarified them with logic about their active participation in that particular history-making movement. Accommodating with the anxiety individual mothers have become ready to sacrifice their loving sons for the larger cause of the motherland as Jahanara Imam says, “I sacrifice you to the cause of the nation. You may join the war” (Imam 66). When Azad seeks permission from Mrs. Safia Begum, she asks for some time to think over it. Finally, she feels that her son should work for the motherland and her people. In the morning, she calls Azad and says, “Alright, you can go to the war. I bless you” (Haque 181). Being puzzled, Azad wants to read the mind of his mother whether she is angry with him knowing about his decision and be assured, “Why should I be angry. Should you not work for the independence of our country?” (Haque181). In the novel, A *Golden Age* Sohail wants to join the Mukti Bahini without informing his mother because he feels if anybody asks her about him, she can answer that she does not know anything, yet the mother says, “I want to know the moment you step out of

that door, the moment you cross that gate. I want to say Aytul Kursi and Surah Yaseen” (Anam 82); and allows her children, having anxiety within, to actively participate in the war because to the mother “It is too great a thing” (Anam 81).

Ragnhild Dybdahl (2001) in his study of the victimized mothers and children of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina has brought the severe trauma experienced by them. Amidst the political violence, when male members are away to the battlefields, family means the “mother” centric code. In war the absence of male members like father, husband, brother, or son can be reported as the source of stress, anxiety, and traumatic mental condition, “Therefore, one important factor in accounting for family support may be the mother’s state of health, especially her mental health” (Dybdahl, pg 1215). The increasing tension of the mothers for the freedom fighters has involved them on a greater scale to serve the motherland. Their anxiety for the sons promotes their support in the crisis of the nation. They are assigned to convey the message to different places on behalf of the freedom fighters. They collect money and other necessary things like medicines and clothes for the freedom fighters. To Jahanara Imam and the other mothers of Freedom Fighters, the term “Freedom Fighter has an electrifying effect.... It creates a sense of awe” (Imam 94). She accomplishes her responsibilities “Number one, a message to be conveyed to Mrs. Shamsunnahar Musa, Manager of the Ladies Branch of the Muslim Commercial Bank...Number two, a letter to be delivered to the Director of Bangla Academy, Dr. Kabir Chowdhury” (Imam 106). Her active participation is seen when she has contacted Mrs. Shamsunnahar Musa. In a whisper, she replies to her, and their conversations mark their whole-hearted and active participation:

“As you know, the War of Liberation is intensifying. The trained guerillas are coming to Dhaka and carrying out their operations. They need some safe houses where they can take shelter in an emergency. They also need medicine, doctors, and safety clinics for treatment when they get wounded. Besides, a lot of money is requested for their (Freedom Fighters’) operations.”

“Of course. This is a matter of our life and death. Just tell me how I can help (Imam 108). The mother sends money from time to time to the freedom fighter son she can collect from different sources. The commander of Sector Two asks for a list of bridges from Rumi’s parents which has been needed to be destroyed to encumber the communication of the Pakistan

troops. When Mr.Sharif, Rumi's father, is making the list with two other supports of the Liberation war, Shahadat and Alam, Mrs. Imam are guarding the gate to keep the secrecy of that noble task. She also has given them, "a few bottles of Belladonna Six, a few nail cutters and three sunglasses... gave Rs 200. . ." (Imam 127). She keeps herself busy for the Freedom Fighters, even then her eyes become moist now and then and she has trouble breathing thinking of Rumi, "When is my Rumi coming back to me?" (Imam131)

During wartime, it becomes more intensive to remain with the revolutionary-minded sons because, in war or peace, no mother wants to keep her child away from her eyesight. Similarly, Mrs. Imam does not want her Rumi to be away from her nearness even for a single moment when he comes back from Melaghar, India, where he has received training, "You better smoke before me. You have come only for a short period and I want you to remain within my sight as much as possible" (Imam 140-141). The mother can understand the tension of the time and the psychological state of the freedom fighter son. So, forgetting even to take him to the task, she becomes friendly with the son. The anxiety-ridden bosom of a mother all the time has been centered on her son and his safety, "I don't know where Rumi is now and what he is doing. Is he sleeping in somebody's house? Is he out on the streets in this rain? Is he in a car or a boat? There is no way of knowing" (Imam 150-151). That is how our awaiting mothers spiritually are portrayed as the inevitable part of the Liberation War of 1971, although they remain far away from the war fronts.

Time passes by and the anxiety of the mothers grows up. The houses of Jahanara Imam, Mrs. Safia Begum, and Mrs. Rehana are the places to keep weapons and meet to plan operations. All the Bengalis are moved by strong nationalistic feelings. In Haque's Maa Azad's mother has heard about the Pakistan forces' merciless killing of Bangladeshi innocents without any cause. She feels, "... This kind of apprehension should not be expected. This is unethical. She should help the freedom fighters" (Haque174). Azad's friends are also participating in the war and Safia Begum believes that Azad should help his Freedom Fighter friends. She asks her son, "Bring your friends" (Haque174). Syed Ashraful, cricketer and the youngest friend of Azad, shares from his memories that the single sentence permission of the mother turns the house into a mini cantonment "In 1971 Azad's house was looking like a mess for the Freedom Fighters" (Haque 176). She also always cooks food, as done by Jahanara Imam, for the Freedom Fighters and whoever comes to her house.

In the novel, *A Golden Age*, Tahmima Anam turns the personal agony of a mother who has been worried about losing the custody of her children into the wartime anxiety of Mrs. Rehana, who works as a catalyst to have self-discovery by becoming a nationalist. After the death of her husband, Iqbal, Mrs. Reahana's brother in law has got custody of her children and is off to Karachi. Finally, she has got back the custody of her children bribing the judge and the incident makes her always worried about the separation from her children. Though at the beginning of the novel she is in an extreme dilemma about her identity in Bangladesh as she was born in Calcutta and is good at Urdu speaking, she has overcome all the hesitations to be involved in the Liberation War of Bangladesh with her children. Like her son, who "loved Bengal...the swimming mud of the delta; the translucent, bony river fish; the shocking green palette of the paddy and the open, aching blue of the sky over flat land" (Anam 34), she gradually becomes a true patriot's nationalistic mother. Mrs. Chowdhury's comment about Sohail is heart-aching to Mrs. Rehana that "He is too busy with politics-he'll never make a good husband" (Anam 32). But, as a pro-independence mother, Mrs. Rehana prioritized the spirits of her children regarding their anticipation in the Liberation War of Bangladesh, because, "Ever since '48, the Pakistani authorities had ruled the eastern wing of the country like a colony" (Anam 33). She has developed every logic of her children to be involved in the politics at this crisis period of the motherland, "One general after another made promises they had no intention of keeping. The Dhaka University students had been involved in the protests from the very beginning, so it was no surprise Sohail had got caught up, and Maya too" (Anam, 33). Once departed from the children, she has now seen the logic, "...what sense did it make to have a country in two halves, poised on either side of India like a pair of horns?" (Anam 33). Her children who have direct participation in the Liberation War of Bangladesh, help her to throw out all her hesitations regarding the motherland they belong to, and Rehana's silent participation is started on the very morning of 26 March 1971 when she has found refugees at her veranda, "I'm going to bring over some food" (Anam 62). Then she becomes restless to know what grief has caused these people to run from their homes and seek shelter at her doorsteps.

The tension of the war, gradually, along with the personal anxiety of losing children once again, makes Mrs. Rehana part of the Liberation war of Bangladesh. Maya, daughter of Mrs. Rehana, declares to her mother that

they need warm clothes for the Freedom Fighters and she realizes “We’re at war, and my daughter says I have to do something” (Anam 92). Rehana opens her old almirah, she has not opened for years that carried her dead husband’s loving memories. When Mrs. Rahman advises her not to use her clothing and they would find some old cotton, she reacted: “Why not? Everyone has to make sacrifices, why not me? It’s my country too”(Anam 92).

The impulse of the freedom fighter son is transmitted to the mother, as a result, when Sohail informs his mother that the guerrillas require a place in the city to keep their arms, “A safe place to hide out before and after the operations” (Anam 101), without a second thought she offers, “My house is yours” (Anam 110) so that they can do their revolutionary activities smoothly. Because of her heart-felt support to her children for the cause of motherland the Major, a freedom fighter who has received shelter being wounded at her home, called her “a true Nationalist” (Anam142).

Amidst the national crisis and complete national disaster due to the war, none can avoid the very private attachment, and right that moment one’s tension becomes the others’. Sohail wants her mother to help Sabeer to be brought back from Pakistan's custody. It is “the most distasteful, gruesome task” (Anam 169) on Mrs. Rehana’s part to request her brother-in-law, Faiz, who has some connections with the Pakistani Army. But she goes to Faiz for releasing the tension of her son, Sohail, and to support the other freedom fighter, Sabeer. Rehana goes alone with a release order from Faiz to Mirpur Thana to bring out Sabeer. Again, with all her grief and restlessness of mind for her children, she cannot adjust to refugee life and does not want to go back to the camp but she stays in the camp finally and tries to help Supriya, who has been her friend, neighbor, and tenant from Dhaka. Supriya has lost her husband and son before entering the refugee camp. She wants to be the ultimate shelter of this completely heart-broken lady, “The war will be over soon. It’ll be like it was before. You can stay at Shona-we’ll be neighbors again...It’s your home too. Come with us” (Anam 237). Such words sow the seeds of hope for a newly independent nation and demonstrate the contribution of an optimistic mother.

Throughout the world, the anxiety of the revolutionary sons’ mothers is the same. In the beginning, the war mothers of the Freedom Fighters resemble Maxim Gorky’s mother in his remarkable historical novel Mother. The novel is based on two actual events like the May Day demonstration of workers in Sormovo in 1902 and the subsequent trial of its

members. At the very outset of the novel, Pelagea, Pavel's mother, is no different from the rest of the working women of Russia who toils in factories throughout the day and put up with wife-beating men at night. But later she starts feeling that she is no less part of the socialist circle of which her son has gradually become a key figure. Gradually she becomes an active part of the social movement as the mothers of ours have been in 1971. She disguises herself as a peddler and begins a life of an active social worker, "Give them to me! I'll do it. I'll find a way" (Gorky 93) and also assures them saying, "Tell him I'll do everything that has to be done-let him know that" (Gorky 94).

As the houses of the freedom fighters Rumi, Azad, and Sohail, Pelagea's house also becomes a centre of revolutionary activities. On the very crucial May Day demonstration Pavel decides to carry the banner at the head of the column. With the usual motherly affection, Pelagea also wants her son to stay back but she says, "I won't stand in your way" (Gorky 149). Finally, the court exiles Pavel. After getting the speech of her son cyclostyled, she leaves for a railway station in high spirits to distribute copies. She is finally caught there by the gendarmes and while they beat and choke her, she echoes as the mothers of our Freedom Fighters, "Not even an ocean of blood can drown the truth" (Gorky 405). Once Pavel has regretted, "When will we ever have mothers who send their sons to death with a smile?" (Gorky 149) and his mother mitigates his longing by being such active support in time of a social revolutionary movement; and also, the war mothers of Bangladesh send their sons to death with a smile for the cause of the beloved motherland as shown in these three very significant novels.

All the suffered mothers are recalling the good and bad memories of the wartime with their sons and counting the days of their sons' safe arrival from the very day the freedom fighters have been taken to the Pakistan Force custody on 29th August 1971. In *Ekatturer Dinguly*, Jahanara Imman reminiscences how Rumi, Azad, and other freedom fighters are tortured mercilessly to reveal the names of their co-fighters. From the very moment, they are taken to the torture cells prepared for them by the Pakistan Army, the mothers of the freedom fighters have completely lost all their peace of mind. They run here and there in search of their sons. From the cheat Pir Shahib (fake religious man) to thana (Police custody) and then to MP hostels they look everywhere for their sons. But despite their very personal agonies they do not forget to support the other wounded and suffering freedom

fighters around them. Soon after Azad and other young guerrillas are captured throughout the country, Azad's mother shifts the hidden arms of her house. She can understand that the Bengali agents of the Pakistani Army would come in search of those arms. The mother does not allow Azad to reveal the names of the other Freedom Fighters even in the face of torture. She asks Azad, "My dear son, I wish, you don't reveal anybody's name." and also "...when they will beat you, tolerate it. Keep patience. Don't reveal anybody's name" (Haque 230).

At the end of the war, keeping the sons in mind, when Indians had dogfights with Pakistani warplanes, the houses of these mothers become the shelter of suffering people. The Pakistani armies with the collaboration of traitors take Azad, Jewel, Bashar, Monwar, Secandar, and Chanchol from Azad's house. Safia Begum's son, Azad, is in the custody of the Pakistanis, while she with all her suffered soul and worries for her son has to take care of her two severely wounded nieces at the hospital.

Interviews with mothers of real-life freedom fighters have also been taken to enrich this study. While looking for the real-life mothers of the liberation war it has been found that most of the freedom fighters' mothers died or they had been above ninety years old. Either they couldn't talk or abruptly circulated the information due to old age complexities. The most sensitive fact is that whether they are in conscious or subconscious condition, the moment they have been asked about their freedom fighter sons, they go back to the year 1971 with all the installed memories of the wartime. It seems their intense attachment with their sons makes us be part of the liberation war period. The real-life mothers and the fictional mothers of the freedom fighters share the same standpoint of motherhood during the liberation war to prove again literature is the mirror of factual incidents through the remembrances of their freedom fighter sons, their sufferings, and sacrifices that bring the new dawn to the sky of independent Bangladesh.

This is the story of anxiety and reminiscing the wartime memory of Mrs. Mahbuba Begum from Bashabo, Dhaka; mother of Mojammel Haque (18 years old). In the beginning, the mother was not ready to send her son to the war out of the very motherly anxiety of losing the son on the battlefield. When the country had been under the bloodshed of mass killing, rape, and tyranny; at one point the mothers felt, "This or that way we are dying. Let's die facing them on the battlefield." (Mrs. Mahbuba Begum, mother of Mojammel Haque. She lost her sanity at one point thinking about the adversity of her son. She used to pour cold water on her head, most of the

time she spent on her prayer and fasting. One midnight the son came to visit his mother and on that very night, the Pakistani Army intruded to the house getting information about the freedom fighter who had been back home. The information of the freedom fighters was given to them by the country traitors, namely, rajakar, al badar, and al shams. Then after she could not get any information about her son for six months and turned to be a depression patient for the rest of her life. After the independence, the son came back, but the mother could not get out of the trauma she had to face for the nine months war of 1971. While taking the interview she has been almost 90 years old and sighed very distinctly every now recalling those days of anxiety and tension.

Another freedom fighter's mother is Mrs. Jahanara Begum; the mother of martyr Saifuddin Khaled Chowdhury (19years old) of Patya, Chattogram. She has been bedridden for a long time and in a sub-conscious state of her mental condition. One of her sons has shared the details of his mother during wartime. The mother permitted the son to participate in the liberation war of 1971. The moment the name of her son was uttered before her, it seemed she went back to the days of Pritilata and Master Da Shurjo Sen, Bengal revolutionary nationalists from the Indian Subcontinent and were influential in the Indian independence movement, from where she received the patriotic essence. The son might receive the zeal of patriotism from the mother and gradually became part of the nationalist movement for the liberty of his beloved East Bengal (Bangladesh). The memory of the nationalist movement has remained vibrant even in the mind of the bed-ridden, half-faded memory of the freedom fighter's mother, Mrs. Jahanara Begum. It is to be noted that soon after the appointment of this brave mother of a courageous martyr, she died of old age after a couple of weeks.

Md. Shamsul Alam, son of a proud mother Begum Rasheda Khanom, joined in sector two, Akhaora of Kashba at B-Baria in Bangladesh. All through her interview, the anxiety of the wartime situation, after allowing her son to join the war, has been the reflection of an intense feeling of a mother commemorating the moments of the 1971 liberation war. She detailed the wartime struggles of her son with teary eyes. She informed that the war mothers helped to extinguish the fire that the Pakistani Army lit to the houses of the villages with water. The reminiscence of the mother echoes her anxiety for the freedom fighter son. Her son suffered in want of food and clothing in the adverse situation and weather. The mothers of the Liberation

War of Bangladesh has been bearing the legacy of Titumir's mother, Ayasha Begum, who inspired the women of the British Colonial period of Bengal to fight against the Zamindar and the British in Narikel Baria and supported her son (Kabir and Mujib 19-20).

For ages in the greater Bengal the mothers have been standing strongly along with all their agonies besides the freedom lover sons as the mother of Muhammad Mohsin (known as Dudu Mia), shouldered the Forayezi Revolution at Noyabari in Dhaka, also assembled young ladies to be inspired to take part in the Liberation War; offered shelter to the freedom fighters; kept the arms and ammunitions in the secret places; and provided nursing to the wounded warriors. The mother then supported the son of tender age staying behind the curtain. When her son Dudu Mia was captivated by the British soldiers in 1857, the mother announced: "my son fights for the valid cause, I am proud of him" (Kabir and Mujib 20).

The British and American female writers have been recording their memories of the First World War and Vietnam Wars and the common context "for these writings, wherein the woman's role as a nurse to the injured men occasions her traumatic seeings, drawn attention to the role of vision as a gendered activity" (Acton 54). The above-mentioned non-fiction and fiction of Bangladeshi writers have truly portrayed the war mothers' anxiety, memory, suffering, and support for the cause of the Liberation war of Bangladesh. The writers are very minute to tell about the dilemma, anxiety, support, and sacrifice of lots other mothers of the wartime of Bangladesh. Mrs. Jahanara Imam, Mrs. Safia Begum and Mrs. Rehana who have smiling faces sent their sons to the risks of their lives for the sake of this beloved country and her people are the representatives of those apt mothers during the liberation war of Bangladesh. This paper has tried to present mothers of Jahanara Imam, Anisul Haque, and Tahmima Anam as idealized characters, who stay back at home but have become the strong supports of the Freedom Fighters to bring forth the Freedom of the nation by the way of providing shelters and guarding weapons of the resting Mukti (warriors), cooking and serving food to them and also giving medical care at home supplying first-aid medicines, braving the risk of being assaulted by the brutal Pakistan Army. Regarding the responsibilities during the war period, the mothers of these three works are impeccable in the history of Bangladesh in 1971. Now the time comes to record and recognize that war mothers' anxiety, open-cry, individual and personal awaiting, long and deep sigh they have left for shaping the history of the independence of Bangladesh.

and keep alive the memory of the wartime values of war mothers during the 1971 Bangladesh.

Different documents about the anxiety and memory of the mothers inscribed in the memoir, fiction, non-fiction, and interviews of the real-life freedom fighters' mothers can strongly uphold the contributions of the mothers in the war literature of Bangladesh. The recollections that the mothers cherish in a broken heart for the sufferings in many ways during the war when the sons are at the battlefield, and with pride when the mothers can feel the sacrifices of their sons' life, who bring a national flag, are to be more discussed academically. When the war literature will highlight the impartial, noble, and nationalistic approaches of the mothers with all their griefs and nightmarish days of 1971 to the upcoming generations with profound glory and significance, only then their anxiety and memory of the wartime would be honoured and remembered ages after ages in the minds of the readers of the war literature.

**Notes:** 1. *Ekatturer Dinguly* is a memoir written by Jahanara Imam from her personal experiences of the time.

2. Quotations from Anisul Haque's *Mother* have been translated by the writer of the article.

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# **Poetics of Mythical Femininity: An Ecofeminist Study of Representation of Female in Select Jibanananda Das' Poetry**

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## **Abstract**

The poetic world of Jibanananda Das has undeniably been enriched and ruled by his captivating narrative of nature and seminal female prototypes exclusive and indispensable to the aesthetic realm of Bangla literature. The impact of his representation of these two has been so far reaching that it contributed to a whole new era of redefining the subcontinental conception of modern poetic femininity. This paper argues that the melodramatic mystification of his female figures through association with natural elements foregrounds the narrative of author himself and posits females as elements of/for fantasy and an “absent referent”/“signified” instead of the words/signifier themselves. This qualitative study contends the enigmatic existence of females in Jibanananda’s poetry makes them an “other-worldly” phenomenon and hence aloof, absent and passive from the world of voices, liberty and presence. To explore these central issues, the paper concentrates on two of his groundbreaking poetic creations: “Banalata Sen” and “Camping” from ecofeminist perspective analyzing how abstraction works as a technique to suppress voice and proffers gender performative norms drawing references from different ecofeminist and gender theories.

**Keywords:** *nature, femininity, mystification, absent, passive, ecofeminism.*

## **Introduction:**

Nature and women have always been the center of Jibanananda’s poetic interest. He has created and nurtured a world of images in which nature and femininity cohere as integral parts. They are the muses he evokes his poetry towards thoroughly and distinctively. This regular presence of both in his poetry has contributed to his stature as the “poet of nature” for

Bangla poetry. His romantic description of scenic nature and women in his poetry has earned him extraordinary credit for his mastery over poetic imagination. Being the recurring components of most of his poetic creations, the underlying linkage between nature and women in his poetry is undeniable. What remains untalked about so far is that in Jibanananda's poetry, 'nature' and women hold an important position only in respect of the "poet's desire" to attribute them with meanings. In the process of creation of this artsy epitome of "Bangla femininity", Jibanananda's poetry has reinforced a passive and unvocal image of women whose existence and essence are exquisitely dependent on the poet/other. They are mostly dependent on the self-assertion and self-positioning of the poet himself. It is the poet who attributes meaning and brushes both the nature and the females he writes about with his concept of beauty. Jibanananda Das maintained a discreet style while portraying females in his poetry as they hold particular significance in a "non-dominating" avatar which might be compromising the feminist causes.

The objective of this paper is hence to analyze Das' treatment of these two culturally Interlinked (as claimed by ecofeminism) entities in his poetry keeping the ecofeminist concerns in mind. It proposes that Das' take on creating illimitable poetic female characters and their association with nature puts forward an aesthetic version of the mystified, seductive and whimsical temptress or "femme fatale".

While probing into different nature-centered narrative for the female characters, this paper takes into account the act of naming and universalizing through abstraction and explores how Das' poetic fancy actually disrobes the females of their voice or authority in the guise of universalizing. This eventually contributes to a sophisticated backgrounding of subjective entity in which the 'fantastic' ontology of mythical and supernatural beings eventually pushes them (nature and females) behind.

Besides it directs the discussion towards the act of naming as performed by Jibanananda Das' in many of his gynocentric poems with reference to the names of the poems: "Sudarshana" ("The Good Looking One"), "Shankhamala" ("The Conch-Garlanded One"), "Suranjana" ("The Sweet and Pleasing One"), and "Loken Bosher Journal" ("Loken Bose's Journal) following their English translation by Professor Fakrul Alam. In doing so, the paper reflects on how the beauteousness of Jibanananda's (hero)ines derives a part of its socio-cultural essence, artistic beauty and gracefulness from the "assumptions" their names promote regarding their individualistic features.

Besides it directs the discussion towards the act of naming in some of JibananandaDas' gynocentric poems and how it contributes to reinforcement of gender performative norms.

### ***Bon-o-Lata: The Mysterious Mistress of the Pastoral***

Ever since Jibanananda has penned it, the exemplary “Banalata Sen” stands out to be the singular reference to represent the poetics of femininity in modern Bangla literature. She has been elevated to the stature of demigoddess, someone in/with whom the poet “finally found some bliss” and turned into almost a myth. Banalata Sen, being the production of Jibanananda’s fancy and fantasy, is a heavily allegorized entity in whom Das’ applies all his expertise at once. She is universalized, abstracted, mystified, other-worldly, therefore, she is aloof, lost, passive, dependent on the poet for being voiced. Most of her essence is reliant on her “to-be-looked-at-ness” or male gaze as elaborated by Laura Mulvey. “Male gaze” is a term widely used in the psychoanalytical theory that talks about the politics of gaze and how the patriarchal desire objectifies woman through a way of looking at women in which men holds the power to attribute meaning to women’s bodily/sexual existence. This makes woman subject to male’s desire by denying her own sexual desires or intellect. Laura Mulvey in her “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975) explains how visual media (which is also applicable for other “texts”) serves the expectations of male audience by sexualizing and objectifying a woman in a way that they become a “spectacle” while males are the “bearer of the look”. Hence, woman’s essence is defined by their how much they are looked-at-ble or their “to-be-looked-at-ness”. Males are the bearers of her/their essential and hence existential ethos. She is serene; therefore she does not evoke chaos or resistance. Banalata contradicts the modern womanhood as she accepts and accommodates within the narrative while female characters like Draupadi of *The Mahabharata* or Nora from *A Doll's House* resents, rejects and involves herself in the process of life as a protagonist. To nurture this image Das alludes to different mythical structures and imageries while describing the beauty of her hair and face. What is noteworthy is, this frequent usage of allusions to describe Banalata’s hair which is full of darkness of a “distant Vidisha night”, or her face filigreed with Sravasti’s artwork, posits Banalata to a far remote and “distant” world. Banalatadoes not live in the present or the bio-spiritual real world of activity. Professor FakrulAlam states in his essay on Jibanananda which is even applicable for Das’ earlier poems like “Banalata Sen” as well:

“One has to read the poems of Jibanananda posthumously published sixth volume of verse, that is to say the Rupashi Bangla (Beautiful Bengal) poems, to realize how he saw

himself in Barisal's melancholy fields and forest riverbanks in a world that had transcended the present to become one with all vanished worlds- historical, mythical, real or imagined." (Alam 132)

This explains how Jibana had his poetic world be merged with a 'vanished' one in which while berefting his females of any literalization, the poet pushes her to a distant past through allusions and description. Throughout the poem "Banalata Sen", the constant emphasis on the poet's subjective narrative makes it an androcentric one in which the role of the female is limited to contend the poet's tired soul. This patriarchal desire of men to derive comfort and solace from troubles from both the nature and woman imposes an inherent and indirect burden on both in which their roles become delimited to that of an all-inclusive and all-enduring caregiver, nurturer, comforter. The poem eventually turns Banalata's tale into a metaphor for the events in poet's own life instead of hers. It is his story, his journey, his existential saga where she is a momentary comfort zone, if not mere:

I, a tired soul, around me, life's turbulent, foaming ocean,  
Finally found some bliss with *Natore's Banalata Sen.*

-(Das 61)

To answer the claims that, the poet finding solace in her company makes her powerful enough, the journey is his, while the craving is of her, as it's her who asks the crucial question from darkness:

"Did I see her in darkness; said she, "Where had you been?"  
- (Das 61)

It seems it was Banalata's concern to have met the poet at some point of her life, to add meanings to her existence, it was her who has been waiting days after days for the poet to arrive while the poet has actually never looked for her. Even though his meeting with her gave him solace from "life's turbulent, foaming ocean"; the urge for meeting is attributed more to Banalata and least to the poet. She is rather an abode of his poetic thirst, a source of sensation and relief providing him with emotional solace in tranquility. At the same time she is presented in a manner that this question seems to be coming from an omnipotent messiah (messenger), which is a second layer of abstraction as she is turned into an "absent referent", the signified, and the abstract which can be interpreted but not perceived.

Despite the myth of breaking free from the traditional narrative of classical femininity by introducing a female who confronts, who sits face to face unlikely of the Tagorian archetycal (hero)ines; Jibanananda promotes a modern, “polished” version of the same gender roles. The constant emphasis on subjective narrative or to be more specific the poet’s, hence a male’s narrative makes it an androcentric and anthropocentric poem in which both nature and female derive their meanings, their existential ethos from the author without whom they are nothing. From a Marxist point of view, Banalata Sen serves well to the upper middle class fetish of sophisticated, apparently bold and yet “composed” womanhood. She is abstracted to the point of being the object of negligence and through this annihilation of the presence of a concrete female avatar modern capitalism and patriarchy both function. In this case, the poet kills the nothingness or the non-existent by taking off the expected attention. This annihilation is even supplemented by his sequel of this poem named “Life’s Mart Has Closed Again” (“Shesh Holo Jeebaner Lenden”) as Banalata Sen disappears from the scene, she doesn’t exist anymore.

Banalata is lost as life’s mart closes, she is sent far away by words, through poetry and ideas as we can find the poet asking him, “Where have you gone at this time of the day?” and saying “But you are nowhere, Banalata Sen.” The poet even questions her existence altogether as he poses questions such as:

“Was there anyone like you anywhere?

Why is it that you are the first to disappear?”

-“Life’s Mart Has Closed Again” (Das 136)

On the other hand, with every adjective used to describe nature, nature is further tamed, softened and more serene, therefore made more subject to poet’s imagination and narration both in which description takes over actions. In Jibanananda’s poetry, or specifically in “Banalata Sen”, nature is adorned with soft sound of dew, sad colors, blue darkness, night falls and the world’s color fade, it’s either dark or is an ash-grey world and thus provokes a tingle of “delightful horrors”. Even between the nature and woman couplet, the much talked about sublime aesthetic of Jibanananda actually reflects an androcentric gaze. The sublime (being the more powerful aesthetic experience) is associated with nature whereas beauty, being of less importance, is affiliated with the woman in the poem. This view contends Day’s claim in the chapter named “Gender and the Sublime” in Romanticism: “priority and ultimacy reside with the masculine while the feminine is accorded a secondary, supportive role”. (190)It also avows the

understanding of beauty's correlation with subtlety and "goodness" and sublime's correspondence with greatness or vastness. Jibanananda's poetry stripes away its women of the terror and wonder that sublimity apprehends by taming them with beauty and calmness.

Therefore, in the world of Jibanananda the birds settle for home, only darkness suffice and Banalata of and from a historical past stays in darkness facing the poet. To the weary traveler soul, if Banalata is the destiny, she is fixed and static too just as the poetic world of Jibanananda, She is beautiful, solitary and reclusive in a man's world. In Buddhadeva Bose's words:

"His world is one of tangled shadows and crooked waters, of the mouse, the owl and the bat, of deer playing in moonlit forests, of dawn and darkness, of ice-cold sea-nymphs and the great sweet sea. All things hidden, forlorn, furtive, all things wanton and non-human are dear to him ; some of his most characteristic poems are on birds and beasts ; and when he praises a woman it is one whose eyes are like birds' nests and who is seen in the dark 'as mariners, lost in far seas, glimpse the dim greatness of cinnamon islands'. (57).

### **The Moonlight Camp, The Hunt and The Doe:**

To further this ecofeminist understanding of Jibanananda's view of a woman this paper now shifts its attention towards another masterpiece written by Jibana Das named "Camping" following the translation by Professor Fakrul Alam."Camping", being one of the most beautiful pieces of modern Bangla poetry, has educed subsequent discussions on its sensual portrayal of a feminized nature to the core.—Unlike "Banalata Sen", "Beautiful Bengal" or many others similar poems, this poem deals with a scenario which evokes tension and which have been inextricably linked with the gender constructs in terms of representation of women and nature. The poem has provoked a wide array of discussions regarding its "controversial" content and carnal appeal. What makes the poem more intriguing is the image of hunting and the gendered vocabulary implied for a narration of the hunter and hunted. With due regards to the untranslatability of Jibanananda's piercing choice of words; "Camping" accredits its linguistic source to animal vocabulary; interestingly most of which cite not only a biophysical entity, rather a detectable, intricate feminine feature as complementary.

“Camping” is our introduction to Jibanananda’s infamous “*doe*” or “*ghaihorini*”; the seductive female deer who has been taken as the perfect projection of patriarchal conceptualization of the female as a temptress or a “femme fatal”. What an ecofeminist may want to concentrate on is the portrayal of the female deer (doe) throughout the poem and how the poet draws an androcentric connection between the socio-cultural discourses about seductive (therefore, destructive?) femininity by eroticizing the very act of hunting. Hunting and its descriptions in general and particularly in this poem carry subtle but significant erotic undertones as the act of hunting involves the prey being “seized” and “conquered”. In her book named *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*, centering around ecofeminist concerns, Susan Griffin’s writes her ironic metaphorical piece called “The Hunt.” Griffin ridicules the socio-cultural mode/tendency to attribute females as “hunters” implying negative connotations to it saying:

“She has captured his heart. She has overcome him.....He pursues her. She makes him pursue her. The faster she runs, the stronger his desire..... She has no mercy. She has dressed to excite his desire. She has no scruples. She has painted herself for him. She makes supple movements to entice him. She is without a soul. Beneath her painted face is flesh, are bones. She reveals only part of herself to him. She is wild. She flees whenever he approaches. She is teasing him.” (Griffin, 103-04).

Interestingly the ‘her’ she writes about is also a fawn per se young deer. At the end of this Griffin shows what happens ultimately to her. Finally, she is defeated and falls. Her body becomes a mass of organic ruins and she becomes subject to four men’s harvest. We see a similar feast in “Camping” too though the “*ghaihorini*” herself contributes to such celebration in this case which makes her role even darker.

An akin sexualized undertone can be traced in the poem “Camping” when the doe “in heat” calls for a companion:

“Here, close to the forest, I have pitched my camp  
The whole night long in the southern wind  
Under the moonlit sky-  
I hear the call of a doe in heat-  
Who is she calling?”  
- (Das 32)

The doe being “in heat” has widely been interpreted in regard of its sexual desire for the other sex and it’s her who pronounces the call for mating. Therefore, the claims that stags (hence males) are after the doe, they are powerless as they strive hard to get close to the doe seems less convincing as the poem’s narrative mostly grabs the readers’ attention by focusing on the doe (hence a female deer) who initiates the call. Even though this apparently seems to be a dauntless projection of female sexuality which hardly made any space in Bangla poetry; it again limits female’s strength to encounter the world as determined by her sensuality and sexual appeal through this metaphorical projection. Jibanananda puts the doe-deer binary to the classical archetype of mysterious seductress-seduced.

The doe serves as a relevant model of “femme fatale” while the stags are allured by her charming calls. Following Griffin's description, it (the doe) too is “wild”, “she flees whenever he approaches” and she “teases” him perpetually:

“The doe in heat keeps calling the whole night Somewhere deep in the forest- beyond the moonlight Stags are listening to her calls; They can sense her presence, They are coming close to her! On this night of wonders The time to love has come for them.” - (Das 32)

As the poem progresses with the sensual description of this seize between the doe and the stags along with the call from the “soul sister coming from the deep forest in the moonlight” (“Camping”, 22-23); the poet opts for an even more eroticized portrayal of the doe which allures not only the stags rather even cheetah!

“The stags have nothing particular to dread today, Not even the shadow of some doubt; All they feel is thirst, And excitement. Perhaps the beauty of the doe’s face has dazzled even the cheetah! Lust-longing-desire-love-dreams-all erupting everywhere”- (Das 32)

While the narrative keeps emphasizing on the doe’s calls in the moonlight, it also constantly focuses on the image of men “lured” by women and draws an analogy between the temptation both the doe and men encounter: “Like men lured by the smell of salty women the stags come”. The poet even compares his own heart with that of a stag.

Following the intricate projection of seduction, lust and lures working in nature; Jibanananda doesn't forget to seal the fate of the seduced with death and the number isn't even minimal. This tale of love, lust and longing in the natural world resonate the same chronicle of human world. It's the same deadly consequence of the seduced victim: hurt and dead, and the same assumption regarding the role of doe or the female in human world. The poesy corresponds with the same socio-cultural patriarchal structure within which the female is interpreted as a destructive temptress and her "victims" are many in number just the same way the doe is seen with all her "fallen lovers" who are "shot". The patriarchal mode fails to view the inter-gender interaction without this imposition of the responsibilities onto the female as it doesn't cooperate in viewing the males as being responsible for their own damnation and seduction. In fact our patriarchally programmed psyche is to a great extent incapable to even accept any reverse image of this plot. It forgets that men also seek for their salvation from the women in different forms, i.e.: Banalata Sen or the stags from the doe; and every time the interaction fails or takes turns towards any unrequited fate, only the female is alleged of seduction.

Having said that this is a "lesson" and she has learnt this art of seduction from humans, Jibanananda rectifies his analogy between the doe-stag duo and the humane temptress-tempted or seductress-seduced binary. This becomes more vivid as he shifts to his absolutely personal narrative later on and clarifies he is "too like them" as he was also "called" by someone in moonlight and his heart has become "a stag" ever since. He also has learned his own "lesson" just like the stag from someone who tempted him:

"Why should the thought of stags bring pain?  
Am I too not like them?  
On a night full of wonders  
Didn't someone call me in moonlight- in  
the southern breeze  
Like that doe in heat?"  
- (Das 32)

He goes on pointing towards further resemblance, similar pain and wonder until the end of the poem. But beside these the wonders of forest, the moonlight saga, the obscure "somewhere", a mystified absence of particularity, of concreteness complement the abstraction (therefore a lack of clarity and presence) and mystified sensual depiction of femininity throughout the poem. While the poet's portrayal of the deer functions as a metaphor of the archetypical misogynic conception of females as being

deceptive; it also berefts the deer of any sort of specific or accurate detailing. Stags can only “sense her presence” from the “deep of the forest”. Her physical presence is placed second in the context. The queer and bewildering presence of the deer almost acts as a labyrinth of insolvable enigma, one that’s puzzling and incomprehensible. We must note that this whole seize takes place in an impenetrable forest land. The setting itself contributes to the mystic quality of both the poem and its characters (or the ones they metaphorically represent). This takes us back to the understanding that women in Jibanananda’s poem are a source of melancholia, a catalyst for damnation, a maze of deception and sometimes seems to be quite powerful as well. But Jibanananda almost never forgets to deprive her poetic muses from their “contemplation of true being” (Plato 524). As “true being” represents the actual/ultimate manifestation of existence, the absent presence of the females in his poetic world makes them reside in the world of ideas instead of that of images making them subject to imagination and illusion and therefore subtly passive and aloof from the real world or core existence and the setting, plot and narrative of the poem “Camping” stands as a testimony to that.

### **What's in the Names?**

Moreover, if we briefly focus our concentration towards Das’ pattern of naming the women in his poetry, with a view of understanding his treatment of women, it’s instantly notable that Jibanananda’s women have grabbed our attention for both their extraordinarily beautiful names and the feminine quality of those. As mentioned before, the body of women in his poetry appeal through their “to-be-looked-at-ness”; their names too entreat a soothing sensation to the mind of his readers (perhaps particularly those of male ones). Many of his major poetic creations such as Sudarshana” (“The Good Looking One”), “Suranjana” (“The Sweet And Pleasing One”), “Shankhamala” (“The Conch-Garlanded One”), Akashleena (“The Sky-Suffused One”) and “Loken Bosher Journal” (“Loken Bose’s Journal) pay their tributes to unforgettable female entities introduced by him. But, beside their aesthetic appeal and the thrill of beauty they’ve been able to invoke; they also serve the gender expectations through their names themselves.

Firstly, the idea of naming something itself involves an inherent power to control as knowledge of the true name or essence of something may help someone overpower that particular thing, idea or person. Secondly, in the process of writing, if you give name to something, you can put your expectations into that vessel of the name you’re giving to him/her. The inherent qualities of a name have much to do with the development of a

persona. Thirdly, name contributes to the complimentary images it creates in the mind of the readers of any character. It helps a reader to imagine, elaborate and identify with the images it induces while complimenting their socio-cultural connotations. Jibanananda has practiced both his power and this control over how his women are “expected” to act in his poetry to the core. An alert observation of the names he gives to the women of his poems convey the inherent patriarchal attitude and supplementary expectations from those. He frequently uses the prefix “su” (*Sudarshana, Suranjana, Sujata*) in Bangla which connotes the same meaning as “goodness” in English in almost all the names for his female characters. This particular fact points finger towards Jibanananda’s urge towards representing his female characters as “good looking”, “garlanded” (ornamented) or his/social expectations from them to act “sweet”, “pleasing” and feminine (in its gendered sense) in essence to the core. He uses the adjective “beautiful women” frequently in many of his poems. Their names, traits and quirk owe their crux to the gender norms. Jibanananda “uplifts” his women towards an expected integrity, righteousness, dignity, decency, nobility, purity, beauty and so on by putting them in an inherent moral obligation through their names. These entitlements carefully detract their power to resist or act on fierceness in a cautious manner and one can think about all these only in leisure “when one has the time”. (“LoKen Bose’s Journal, 3). Thus they are not a part of the worldly business rather a home for solace in leisure.

They’re bound to serve the socio-cultural roles of a pleasing comforter by the rule set by their names, hence the poet. Even we can detect him declaring them as dead: “Sudarshana, this day, you are dead”. (“The Good Looking One”, 14) or dictating the woman regarding what should be her course of actions such as asking her to not talk to other males:

“Do not go there Suranjana,  
Do not talk to that young man.”  
-(Das 95)

It is notable that all of Jibanananda’s muses are associated with natural elements i.e.: sky-clouds-color-a climber/twiner and not a full tree; which complements the idea of “beautiful” more than it does for the sublime. They are also absent and resides only through the poet’s imagination and longing: “Suranjana, you are still with us in this world”. (The Sweet And Pleasing One, 1) Unlikely of his imperiled males who face the angst, the “pleasant pain” or the existential dilemma; they are “phantastically” finite within a boundary of presumptions as posed by the names attributed to them and it might not be untrue to say that this reflects the construction of female demi-goddess in the hands of a male poet stays somewhat subject to male’s

collective subconscious desire to control /overpower the women of their lives by limiting them to beauty, sexuality and passivity.

**Conclusion:**

Nevertheless, with due recognition of the fact, Jibanananda's poetry requires more extensive and critical research with inclusion of many other poems written by him; the current paper's contention is that despite his sincere evocation of both nature and female, Das somewhat couldn't imagine a female into the present, active, real world as he did in his other creations such as novels, interestingly. In Das' poetry Both nature and female are worshiped and elevated to the mythical world and hence subtly uprooted from the world of activity and none of the two speak for itself except for the author - neither the nature nor the female. He also failed to break through the typical modes of knowing, perceiving interpreting and representing females as passive, non-existent and constrained to her sexuality. Jibanananda expected his poetic muses to stay in his imaginary world and whenever they came into being in the real world or his household (i.e: *Malyaban, Kalyani*) he antagonized them by portraying them as antipathetic, bitter and toxic which demands for a psychoanalytical approach towards Jibanananda's psychic reality as well. Whereas Jibanananda depicts a world which cannot be discerned without taking the language and images he uses into consideration, an attentive investigation into it exposes the spaces for speculation in regard of his treatment of nature, women and ecology altogether in his poetry as a reflection of patriarchal conscious and male gaze. This research has explored such gendered dynamics of the normative sociological expectations present in the poetic body of Jibanananda primarily from an ecofeminist outlook while keeping the psychological aspects of naming in mind and thus explored subtle authoritarian male consciousness present in those.

**Note:** In Bengali language the word “Bon” refers to forest/wilderness while “Lata” refers to climber plants. The word “Banalata” therefore connotes the climber plants which reside in the forest lands or metaphorically it represents a woman who is inherently tender and inclusive just like the setting the name itself resembles.

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# **Magic Realism in the *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Style of Applications**

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## **Abstract**

‘Magic realism’ has become a well-grounded concept contributing to powerful artistic form in literary works around the world and has continued to remain present throughout the history as a researchable object in literature (Bowers, 2004). Gabriel Garcia Marquez epitomized the image of magic realism who also influenced a great number of authors to apply this mode as an innovative literary technique. Having Marquez’s magic realist style still been unexplored, the study critically analysed the using patterns, motives and overall styles through which Marquez applied the mode of magic realism in his *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The study is qualitative in nature. The researcher used content and document analysis methods to obtain data through exploring both the primary and secondary sources. The text by Marquez has been considered the primary source and all books, research papers, articles, journals and websites, used in the study have been considered secondary sources. All data have been presented through critical analyses and logical interpretations.

**Keywords :** Magic realism, origination, Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, motives, patterns, style of application

## **Prelude**

‘Magic Realism’ is the term which many people have heard but a few have a clear idea about what the term may include or imply. However, ‘Magic

Realism', 'Magical Realism' and 'Marvellous Realism' became fashionable and derided during the 1980s. In recent time, 'Magical Realism' has most popularly been used as a term. However, in this paper, the term has been addressed as 'Magic Realism', referring to a particular narrative mode that offers special ways and alternative approaches to reality to that of Western philosophy, expressed in different postcolonial, postmodern and non-Western works by, most famously, novelists like Salman Rushdie and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Magic Realism has developed as a popular narrative mode for its offerings to the authors to write against inhumanity and attacking all negative aspects in social, political, historical, psychological and personal spheres and so on of human life. The reason of its popularity, thus, mostly remains in its being used as a means to write against authoritarian and totalitarian rules and regimes and attack the definition that supports the totalitarian system e.g., colonialism. A postcolonial critic (Cooper, 1998) noted that magic realism opposes fundamentalism at its best, and at its odds, it opposes racism, ethnicity, homogeneity and the like. This is the key to the popularity of magic realism as a narrative mode (Bowers, 2004). The writing of Marquez has been found, by critics like Bowers, to be moving towards a new direction for the literature of Latin America after the movement of the New Novel. His *Cien años de Soledad* i.e. the *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has been evaluated as the turning point of the new novel away from fiction, which emphasized on the experimentalism. How has Marquez's magic realism been in its origination, nature, motives, techniques and how it is in actions and emphasis have yet been remaining as a big set of questions. It is because research works on Marquez's magic realism style could be hardly found excepting the few in Europe and America. The present work, therefore, has been initiated to explore the text of Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and observe the overall style of Garcia Marquez in his use of magic realism in the novel.

### **Statement of Problem**

It was urged in *Culture and Imperialism* (Said, 1994), to pay attention to the 'specificity' and to the 'context' of the magical realities of the stories. Magic/ magical realist stories generally take place in a real-world locality. The stories can be set in a pastoral as well as in urban landscapes. It

reflects the sense of the time, place and the atmosphere. There is always an overtone of the location, giving the setting a magical but realistic perception. Generally, the magic realist happenings create and demonstrate factors of life corresponding to the ‘universal’ appeal of mankind but such universal realities are executed through magical effects completely based on ‘local’ and specific context. Often the stories stand for meaning narrowed and specific occurrences of history or society. Although it is difficult to assume that the application patterns of magic realism determines the interpretation of the text to which it is applied, yet, the styles through which the author has applied magic realism into his works can produce an interpretation of the patterns and motives of creating such magical realist atmosphere, happenings and episodes. Said (*Ibid.*) meant that readers, critics or researchers should focus more on the specificity of magic/magical realism and its being too local or regional, to find out the power of their values in reality. In evaluation of the term i.e. ‘magic realism’ and its ‘uses’ in the works of Marquez, the researcher investigated the real values of the magic realistic images, scenes and actions in serving the purposes of the realities in human life and, at the same time, attempted to see how the patterns of its imageries fit to reality as well as to a fairy land as part of the common features of magic realist happenings. The study constituted an attempt to critically analyse and know the styles of magic realist applications by Marquez in his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Latin America got acknowledged as a significantly distinguished region to produce a lots of magic realist works. Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a Latin American Nobel laureate author, epitomized the image of magic realism and influenced a great number of authors in applying magic realistic mode in literary works as an innovative literary technique. The study launched critical analysis by locating the uses of magic realism in the *Cien años de Soledad* i.e. the *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The study critically analysed using patterns, motives and overall styles through which Marquez applied the mode of magic realism in his novel.

## Literature Review

Critics opined (Bowers, 2004) that ordinary, average and every-day characters populate magic/magical realistic stories. The study marked that

Marquez's characters are just people, they are plain and simple and that Marquez's magic realistic stories depict everyday events but extraordinary things take place generally in the less big event. Time does not always march forward in the magical realist world view and the distant past is present in every moment, and the future has already happened (Tonkin, 1990). Great shifts in the narrative's time sequence reflect a reality that is almost outside of time. This accounts for ghosts, for premonitions, and the feeling that time is a great repetition rather than a progression (Guenther, 1995). Guenther held that time is often everything but the clock is nothing. The minute hand is replaced by the breath, the hour hand is by a rhythm of yawns (*Ibid.*). Guenther also stated that tone is everything in the extraordinary stories which are told in an ordinary manner without any exclamation point (*Ibid.*). The study investigated how these characteristics match with the magic realist works by Marquez.

The technique involves understatement, when the matter is large but often there is an overstatement when the matter is small (Zamora, 1995). There is always a mystery hung on the air of the setting of a magic realist fiction. Atmosphere of magic realist fictions consists of times and places and actions fit for fairy tale where forests are homes and animals can speak. The story is told in a way that takes it away from an average tale. "The narrator does not provide explanations about the credibility of events described in the text. Further, the narrator is indifferent; the story proceeds with 'logical precision' as if nothing extraordinary took place" (*Ibid.*). This paper explored into the events in the works of Marquez and evaluated their atmospheric status in regard to the term of magic realism.

Food, eating, nature, natural world, land and the world, love, home, patriarchy, dissidence against social, political and cultural oppression and all things from everyday life are generally the common themes (Angulo, 1995). Angulo added that magic realist stories often have a sense of meaning or greater importance inside and events and things possess a deeper meaning than what it simply displays on the surface. According to him, the most extraordinary things are there in the simple things and only the wise can see them. The present research went through the selected texts of Marquez and analysed each of their themes, both the central and the sub-themes to find things used by the author and attempted to point out their general features.

In magic/magical realism the writer confronts reality and attempts to untangle it and discover what mysterious lie in things in reality, in life and human acts (Faris, 1995). Faris said, “The principal thing is not the creation of imaginary beings or worlds but the discovery of the mysterious relationship between man and his circumstances. In magical realism key events have no logical or psychological explanation” (Ibid.). Of course, a magic realist author actually does not imitate the surroundings of reality. S/he does not have an intention to wound the reality but looks for catching the mystery standing behind things in reality. The study has explored the characters, their relationships and tried to analyse the nature and psychology of their mind and ultimate motives of the author in applying his magic realist effects in the light of the above statements.

Situations and events, myths and legends, historic context and societal concerns, real-world, political events and social movements, distorted time and sequence, real-world settings and matter-of-fact tone etc. include the basic elements of magic/magical realism (Faris, 1995). Of course, it is merely a process of adding such elements to a story so that things may turn a bit tricky. It is not unnatural to confuse magical realism with similar forms of writing but fairy tales can not be magic realistic. Neither horror stories, ghost stories, science fiction, nor the dystopia, paranormal fiction or absurdist literature can be magic realistic. The present study has attempted to examine these features in the magic realist works of the above mentioned author. Thus, in analysing the style of the author, the paper had to see as to how things were made on reality basis and around the experiences of everyday practical life of man. So, the researcher had to be aware that the author didn't take a project to write supernatural fictions, and that what he has exposed are nothing but the reflection of his inner psychological perceptions.

While analytically observing the manifestations of the magic realistic events and actions in the fictions, the researcher always kept it in mind that the word ‘Magic’ always with its companion word in translation, ‘marvellous,’ implies an appreciation of the real, rather than a distortion or replacement of it- as suggested by (Hancock, 1980).

It has been mentioned (Webster, 2015) that *to have supernatural power over natural forces giving a feeling of enchantment* while Jay Archer David

(2019) is more poignant about the interpretation of the words ‘magic’ and ‘real’. To him (*Ibid*) -“The forced relationship of the irreconcilable terms, ‘magic’ and ‘real’, mirrors a fundamental human question that has indelible appeal.” The paper, so, investigated the power of the suspensions of disbelief by the authors in creating the atmospheres, images, scenes, actions and events in their works.

There has been a work (Roy, 2016) on sources of magic realism of Marquez but it did not focus on its effects, styles and using patterns. Works on Marquez’s magic realism are quite rare in India and Bangladesh. There have been a few works on Marquez published in Europe and America which detailed the history of Marquez’s development as a magic realist writer and emphasized more on theoretical aspects of magic realism.

In the light of the above review, it may be mentioned that there were many criteria, characteristic features and pre-requisites in appropriately defining the effects of magic realism in the works by Marquez. The study evaluated the nature and characteristics of the used images and happenings of magic realism in the texts from perspectives of the characters, magical realist world view, extraordinariness of stories, themes, atmospheric conditions, tone, meaning and the patterns of display on the surface etc. There have remained good research gaps in regard to evaluating the basic elements of magic/magical realism used in the selected works of Marquez.

### **Objective of the Study**

The general objective of the study is to conduct a critical analysis on Garcia Marquez’s style of using magic realism in his works. The specific objectives are:

- (i) to review the basic concepts and characteristics of magic realism,
- (ii) to critically analyse the sources, themes and motives of magic realism used by Garcia Marquez,
- (iii) to analyse the using patterns and ultimate styles of Marquez in applying magic realist techniques in his works.

## Rationale of the Study

Gabriel Garcia Marquez is considered to be the master of the use of magic realism in literature. Research works on magic realism of Marquez in America and Europe are still too scanty to mention. Quite a few studies have been found conducted on Marquez's magic realism in India. Garcia Marquez's works can still be considered a virgin ground in Bangladesh because research on Marquez's magic realism or his style of applying magic realist effects could hardly be found. Thus the field has still remained unexplored and this is the main justification of the study. Besides, magic realism has, now a days, become an important phenomena in all over the world and Marquez has been considered one of the pioneers of using this mode of literary technique but the nature, types, forms, motives and overall style of its application by Marquez has not yet been explored. The present study has investigated the using patterns of magic realism in the *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Marquez and found out the characteristic features of his magic realism in the novel.

## Methodology

The study is basically qualitative and deals with qualitative data only. It is also explorative and descriptive in nature with a bit explanatory in analysing giving clarifications to different facts and facets. The researcher used content and document analysis methods to obtain data through exploring both the primary and secondary sources. Seven (07) original texts of Alejo Carpentier, Angel Asturias, Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Isabel Allende and Laura Esquivel have been taken as primary sources and all books, research papers, articles, journals and websites, used in this study, are considered to be the secondary sources. All data have been presented maintaining possible order of sequences with critical analyses and logical interpretations.

## Discussion and Analysis

Garcia Marquez depicted history of an isolated town, which was once a village, called Macondo as well as its founder the Buendías in his *Hundred Years of Solitude*. While getting founded, Macondo was disconnected from

the outside world. José Arcadio Buendía, an impulsive and inquisitive patriarch of the family and leader of Macondo deeply alienated himself from others. His descendants José Arcadio, his older son and Aureliano, the younger one, inherited his strength and impetuousness respectively. The village received gradual changes over time: it went in contact with different other towns and lost its innocence and solitude. Civil wars began and brought violence, terror and death to the peaceful town. Macondo did never have such experience. Aureliano rose up as the Colonel Aureliano Buendía, the leader of the Liberal rebels. Macondo changed from its idyllic position to a town, destructively connected to outer world with mischievous acts of Colonel Buendía. Several governments changed for several times during and after the war and on a certain point, Arcadio, rising up as the cruellest, ruled Macondo with full dictatorship and was shot in the firing squad. A mayor was appointed and was killed in another civil uprising. The civil war ended with a peace treaty. Now imperialist capitalism entered Macondo. The banana plantation moved and exploited the land all its public, workers and owners of the plantation projects. Inhumanly treated, the banana workers went on strike and thousands of them were massacred by army. And after their bodies were dumped into the sea, rain began for ceaseless five years which created flood that ensured Macondo's final fall. Macondo turned once again solitary and isolated. A very few of the Buendía family, who remained, turned incestuously upon themselves became alienated from the world and were doomed to a solitary end—in which the last member of Buendía family is found translating some ancient prophecies and reading that all had been predicted: that the so called village or the town and its people had been living merely a preordained cycle, incorporating great beauty and tragic sadness.

specifically, magic realism used in the novel served two purposes mainly: first, it involved Columbian culture that revolved around the story and secondly, it forced the readers to question the absurdity of the everyday lives.

Colombian culture inherited traditions and superstitions. Marquez combined both aspects of traditions and superstitions and represented actual Columbian culture of the era he came across. His approach to magic realism is unconventional for the exaggeration he used to create fantasy.

The people of Macondo were not surprised with supernatural for they encountered it in daily life:

“This time, along with many artifices, they brought a flying carpet. But they did not offer it as a fundamental contribution to the development of transport, rather as an object of recreation. The people at once dug up their last old pieces to take advantage of a quick flight over the houses of the village” (31).

The gypsies presented Mocondo a flying carpet, at this, the people were amused though, they were not amazed. This magical flying carpet was lost and thus, Marquez allowed the readers to skip the absurdity of the event since it entwined a realistic and everyday problem, by reflecting Columbian culture of the time when, to its people, everything seemed to have a magical element and they were used to inventing many such things. The flying carpet is an exaggeration of such inventions the Columbian people of that era often made.

The incestuous marriage of Ursula and Jose caused them a child having a pig tail. Ursula was always terrified with her firm belief that this curse would be the result of their incestuous marriage. Through her faith, Marquez wants to convince his readers that such possibility of a child with a pig tail is not as absurd as it sounds.

Father Nicanor introduced a magical trick. His assisting boy brought him a cup of thick and steaming chocolate and he stank them without pausing to breathe and-

“Then he wiped his lips with a handkerchief that he drew from his sleeve, extended his arms, and closed his eyes. Thereupon Father Nicanor rose six inches above the level of the ground. It was a convincing measure....No one doubted the divine origin of the demonstration” (82).

The levitation of the priest is another magical occurrence in the novel. In this case however, Marquez combined magic and religion. The Latin American culture allowed many things to be explained by religion when no scientific explanation were found. Father Nicanor let the people believe that

miracle is possible with divine intervention. As the levitation has been explained by religion, it seems less difficult for readers to believe.

Marquez's style of building magic realism has included using numerical facts which made imaginary events realistic. Marquez presented exaggeration of what people face in daily life:

"It rained for four years, eleven months, and two days. There were periods of drizzle during which everyone put on his full dress and a convalescent look to celebrate the clearing, but people soon grew accustomed to interpret the pauses as a sign of redoubled rain" (315).

Time's numerical descriptive detail about the length made a contrast with the normal literal description of time. Thus, by creating a distraction for readers, it reduced the event's absurdity. Again, the statement that inhabitants of Macondo gradually became accustomed to the ceaseless rain, made it easier for readers to be accustomed with it as reality. Numerical exaggeration has been found in Marquez's description of Colonel Aureliano's life:

"Colonel Aureliano Buendia organized thirty-two armed uprisings and he lost them all. He had seventeen male children by seventeen women and they were exterminated one after the other on a single night before the oldest one had reached the age of thirty-five. He survived fourteen attempts on his life, seventy-three ambushes, and a firing squad." (103). The exaggeration of numbers in every aspect of Aureliano's life added a sense of reality to the unbelievable scenario they created.

Dates were used with exaggerations contributing to the magical effects to the novel. The crazy calendar of Fernanda seemed unbelievable for the number focusing restricted days she had. Yet, it is realistic that people generally use calendars and mark the holy days. Her calendar has been used as an exaggeration of restrictions that people place on themselves for "religious days" i.e. "holy days".

On the other hand, Marquez included folklore in his *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, rather in a form than authorized beliefs allowing voices of politically un-represented and culturally marginalized people belonging to

Colombian-Caribbean coast to speak out in his novel. In regard to the use of magic realism in the novel, this has been noted that it-

“must be a political question of re-interpretation of reality, utilizing the oral style inherited from his grandmother's fantastic story telling, Garcia Marquez seemed to want to reproduce a traditional, popular rural perspective – challenging the hegemony of the alien, dominant imported culture and reinstating the value of the community's own cultural perspective” (Swanson, 1995).

The location of Marquez's childhood was the basis for the town Macondo recurrently found in his other novels and has most significantly been found in the setting of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The were the characters living for five-year beyond the natural life-span. There were the characters frightened to know that their child would be born with a tail of pig as a consequence of incest on which time the entire town suffered from insomnia which was finally saved by Melquíades, an enigmatic gypsy when rain continued for years. Marquez's uses of magic/magical realism were provided with things of the town considered extraordinary, for example, the scientific inventions brought to Macondo by Melquíades, Jose Arcadio Buendía's being amazed with ice and a telescope, Buendía's being considered ‘mad’ by Ursula, his wife for saying that the earth is round. It has been considered that these sources of magic realism of Marquez might be associated with Fenz Roh's ideas because the attitude that had been portrayed received the magic of everyday things of life (Williams, 1985). Some critics found Marquez's magic realism to be the powerful form of an indirect political resistance because his fictions were often concerned with the tragedies of history like civil wars, rules by the dictator, brutality against own people by the military and the like.

The works by Gabriel Garcia Marquez has been found moving towards a new direction for the Latin American literature after the tradition of New Novel. His *Cien años Dr Soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*) has also been considered to be the turning point of the New Novel style away from fiction in which experimentalism was emphasized and the emphasis was politically and historically motivated, specially in its dealings with folklore

and the ‘*Pubilo*’ (*common people*). Marquez included experimental techniques in his work.

Marquez, in his *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, portrayed the Strike by the Banana Workers of his own coastal area. The Civil War went on and the strike took place. Military shot down great number of strikers. The exact number of the killed workers could not be identified or known. No official record was felt necessary by the government and thereby no reliability in speculation of the massacre was to prevail. Jose Arcadio witnessed the massacre but later there was no one to agree with the truth he witnessed. As none could dare disclose the matter of fact to bring it into the light, the episode of Banana Workers’ Strike became a myth. Here, Marquez went on playing with the ‘Idea of Extreme Denial’ and the ‘transformation of the denial into oblivion and complete Ignorance’. This is the instance of Marquez’s style and strategy as well to reflect manipulation of the reality and truth by the rulers as government who practiced corruption and brutality to become the main agency to rule the human beings. The rulers’ denial of truth is the severe reality mingled with magical attire i.e. truth is veiled as untrue. This ‘black turns white’ situations were felt para-normal and were depicted through creating magical effects in everyone’s reality, in his/her everyday life.

In view of some critics, Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* can be considered as the generic Latin America- a kingdom of innocence, isolation, magic, high mountains, rainy tropics, ash-coloured seas along with civil wars, bureaucrats, strikes, North American interventions, military rules etc. Here is the Latin American sub-continent presented as carefully suspended between myth and history. Marquez simply mingled experiences from history and his real life with imagination and exaggeration to mould the magic realist effects and apply in the novel. Colombian history has hugely been involved in the *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: for example, the reform arguments of 19th century, the arrival of railway- cinema- automobile, the War of the Thousand Days, the American fruit company and the massacre of strikers- tragic demise of the plantation workers in 1928. The most striking fact of modern Colombian history which is simply known as the inescapable Violence, got indirect expression in the novel by the ‘guerrillas’, ‘gangsters’, ‘self-defence groups’, ‘army’ and the death toll of

200,000 people. Even when it was claimed to be over in 1962, still 200 civilians were dying every month. The Violence in One *Hundred Years of Solitude* indirectly appeared through the massacre of striking workers which was sparked off by the assassination of Jorge Eliecer Gaitan, who investigated the strike of 1928. The event was violent enough to stand as a compression and anticipation of later phenomenon, an allusion and a synecdoche (Wood, 2010). Marquez himself addressed it in his *No one Writes to the Colonel* and *In Evil Hour*. Marquez created a magnificent passage of magic realism in his *One Hundred Years of Solitude* basing on tragic event of history:

“It was as if the machine guns had been loaded with caps, because their panting rattle could be heard and their incandescent spitting could be seen, but not the slightest reaction was perceived, not a cry, not even a sigh among the compact crowd that seemed petrified by an instantaneous invulnerability. . . . the panic became a dragon’s tail as one compact wave ran against another which was moving in the opposite direction, toward the other dragon’s tail in the street across the way, where the machine guns were also firing without cease. They were penned in, swirling about in a gigantic whirlwind that little by little was being reduced to its epicentre as the edges were systematically being cut off all around like an onion being peeled by the insatiable and methodical shears of the machine guns” (311).

The novel referred to the events like discovering the suit of rusty armour with calcified skeleton, the enormous Spanish galleon and a bloody civil war all of which had real life testimony based on Colombian history.

Marquez took huge things from the Colombian socio-political history and selected magnificent samples of magic realism for his *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The civil war between the Liberals and the Conservatives echoed events similar to the socio-political and historical events of Colombia. In this regard, Michael Wood maintained that Colombia has had a political tradition, the Liberals and the Conservatives dominated the 19<sup>th</sup> and a great part of 20<sup>th</sup> century politics and stood for various things e.g. reform and/or reaction, free trade and/or protection, separation and/or conjunction of church and the state (8). And according to Wood, they gradually turned into a narrow band of class interests (*Ibid.*). in regard to this, Gabriel Garcia

Marquez may be found as a novelist, re-creating lives and livings from social, political and historical nostalgia. He should be considered a possible refiner of nostalgia into lasting work of literature repairing a broken memory with his technique of ‘magic realism’. He reached us with the news of: wiped out Macondo, city of mirrors (images or mirages), home and archetype of real facts delivered to non-belief. To Marquez, the purpose of magic/magical realism is not limited to be a way to express the mixed cultures abundantly as it was maintained by Carpentier with his own European-Cuban perspective. Marquez saw it as a way to express the cultural context of his own. And in the process, he used the technique of his grandmother’s story telling. In this regard, Garcia Marquez explained by saying in a conversation with E. Gonzales Barmejo—

“I realized that the reality is also the myths of the common people, it is the beliefs, their legends; they are their everyday life and they effect their triumphs and failures” (Williams, 1985). Williams said that Garcia Marquez grew up in a huge and supposedly haunted house of his grandparents in Aracataca town in the coastal area of Colombia which offered him a superstitious atmosphere- a perfect setting for magic /magical realism. He mentioned, “A synthesis of African and Hispanic cultures, with aspects of all centuries from the Middle ages to the present, this region is viewed even by Colombians as a distinct and exotic part of the nation” (Williams, 1985).

## **Findings**

Marquez included experimental techniques in his work, away from fiction in which experimentalism was emphasized and the emphasis was politically and historically motivated, specially in its dealings with folklore and the '*Pubilo*' (*common people*). Idea of ‘Extreme Denial’ and the ‘Transformation of the Denial into Oblivion and Complete Ignorance’ worked as the background motivational force and thus the motive was to uphold the cruellest truth and save the truth from being denied, forgotten and eradicated for ever from the socio-political history of Colombian people. This is the instance of Marquez’s style and strategy to reflect manipulation of the reality and truth on earth in society and to life where the ‘black turning white’ situations are felt para-normal as comprehended through magical effects. Marquez included folklore that made his magic realism

more realistic as part of the embedded beliefs inherited from the age old culture. Marquez's magic realism stood up with political questions for the re-interpretation of the reality that occurred years ago and here he utilized the oral style inherited from his grandmother's fantastic story telling in a matter-of-fact voice. Marquez's magic realism can be seen as the powerful form of an indirect political resistance that exposed the full extent of the Latin American realism, discussed as a complicated category. Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* possesses overwhelming atmosphere of nostalgia along with continued magical occurrences like a child born with a tail as an everyday reality matter. Marquez's magic realist exuberance is not a mere celebration of the Latin American diversity like Carpentier, his is a style reflecting as a way to express the extreme political violence and confusion of Colombia and Latin America. This may be because of his coming out of a greatly traumatized country Colombia and his writing on the long lasting periods of civil unrest i.e. the War of A Thousand Days (1899-1902) and brutality of the government known as '*language violencia*' (1948-58). It was 1982, during the Lecture of Nobel ' The Solitude of Latin America', Marquez demonstrated how the horrific past as well as the present of Latin America lets itself to be the subject matters of magic realism due to her ability to convey the 'unearthly things of Latin America' (1982b: 88). To Marquez, the purpose of magic/magical realism is not limited to be a way to express the mixed cultures abundantly as it was maintained by Carpentier with his own European-Cuban perspective. Marquez saw it as a way to express the cultural context of his own.

## Conclusion

Marquez used magic realism as a technique or tool to imagine, exaggerate and amplify the absurdity lying in the struggle of life, brought out through social, political and historical events, images and actions of the characters. His magic realism is ingrained with the context of culture, tradition, customs and superstitions of Colombian people. However, Marquez balanced the uses of these fantastical elements with reality by demonstrating them in normal ways through his 'matter of fact' descriptive detail. Marquez's style of incorporating magic realism in exaggerating things in reality is maintained

as usually as we take for granted in our daily lives. That is why his readers accept his magic realist illustrations and love to relate to them.

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# **A Critical Study on White Collar Crimes in Bangladesh**

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## **Abstract:**

This paper provides a comprehensive understanding about the newer form of crime as known white collar crime. This type of crime basically means the crime committed by a person of high social status and respectability during the course of his occupation. The idea of white collar crime was first introduced in the field of criminology by Prof. Edwin H. Sutherland in 1939. The prevalence of white collar crimes in Bangladesh, they are spreading like a rapid fire in every sphere of society. In this article the authors intend to focus on the main reasons for committing the White Collar Crimes in Bangladesh and formulate tentative solutions for eradicating the problem. The paper highlights various legislations of Bangladeshi laws which talked about the punishment of these types of crimes. This study has been conducted by using qualitative method. All the data and information used here are from secondary sources like the report of Transparency International (TI), Books of different writers, English and Bengali dailies of Bangladesh, different journals, different websites, case laws, Act etc.

**Keywords:** *White Collar Crime, Corruption, Penal Code, corporate crimes, Bangladesh*

## **Introduction:**

This is a common perception that only lower class people are responsible for anti-social behavior in our country. But such a perception could be incorrect

in many cases. Actually, it is true that there are certain professions which offer lucrative opportunities to criminal acts and unethical practices which hardly attract public attention. These criminal acts and unethical practices committed by the high class or special group of people are generally known as white collar crimes. There have been crooks and unethical persons in business, various other professions, who tend to become unscrupulous because of no reason apart from the thirst of gaining more and more for themselves. These deviants have least regard for ethical and moral human values. Therefore, they carry on their illegal activities with impunity without the fear of loss of respect and prestige. With the advance of commerce and technology white collar crime has become a global phenomenon. Like any other country, Bangladesh is equally in the grip of white collar criminality. This article analyses a critical study on white collar crime in Bangladesh.

### **Concept and Nature of White Collar Crime:**

White-collar crime is a broad term that includes many types of non violent criminal offences involving fraud and illegal financial transactions. Sociologist Edwin Sutherland started systematic research into the criminal practice of the elites (Newman, 1958) and coined the term ‘white collar crime’ in his address to the American sociological Society in 1939 (Kader & Hussain, 2010). The concept of white collar crime found its place in criminology for the first time in 1941 when Sutherland published his research paper on white collar criminality in the American sociological review (Paranjape, 2009). Sutherland defined white collar crime as a “crime committed by persons of respectability and high social status in course of their occupation”. Eventually, he seems to have redefined definition by identifying white collar criminal as “a person of the upper socioeconomic class who violates the criminal law in the course of his occupational or professional activities”. He further pointed out that a white collar crime is more dangerous to society than normal crimes because the financial loss to society from white collar crimes is far greater than the financial loss from burglaries, robberies larcenies etc. The most dismal aspect of white collar crime is that there is no effective programme for the enforcement of criminal law against them and the influential persons involved in these crimes are able to resist enforcement of law against them (Paranjape, 2009).

*Herbert Edelhertz* defined white collar crime as “an illegal act or series of illegal acts committed by non physical means and by concealment or guile to obtain money or property to avoid the payment or loss of money or property or to obtain business or personal advantage (Stuart P. Green, 2005).”

*According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)*, white-collar crimes are those illegal acts which are characterized by deceit, concealment, or violation of trust and are not dependent on the application or threat of physical force or violence. These acts are committed by individuals and organizations to obtain money, property, or services to avoid the want or loss of money or services or to secure personal or business advantages.

*Marshall Clinard* defined white collar crime as “a violation of the law committed primarily by groups such as businessmen, professional men, and politicians in connection with their occupations” (Marshall Clinard, 1952).

*According Paul Tappan*, “White collar crime is a special type of solitary professional criminality. It involves real violation of criminal law systematically or repeated by business, professional and clerical workers in addition to their occupation”.

Sir water Reckless suggested that white collar crime represents the offences of businessmen who are in a position to determine the policies and activities of business (Paranjape, 2009).

### **Types of white collar crimes:**

White-collar crimes are indeed diverse in nature. There are ample such kinds of the white collar crimes being committed in Bangladesh, they are as follows:

- 1) **Tax Evasion:** Tax evasion, also known as tax fraud, is the purposeful failure to pay taxes due. The term covers all those who earn income, do not report it or conceal the earnings by falsifying a return or supporting documents. It is true, nobody wants to pay more tax than their fair share, hence, taxpayers often try to find ways to reduce their tax liabilities to the Government.
- 2) **Bank Fraud:** Bank frauds are financial scams. It is made through false representations by fraudulent companies. It also involves

handling negotiable instruments such as check bouncing, securities, bank deposits etc.

- 3) **Money Laundering:** Money laundering is a crime wherein criminals try to mask the identity of the money. In such crime, criminals attempt to cover up the original ownership of the money and the source since it is usually obtained illegally.
- 4) **Blackmail:** Blackmail is an act of coercion using the threat of revealing or publicizing either substantially true or false information about a person or people unless certain demands are met.
- 5) **Bribery:** Bribery is a very common type of white-collar crime. In bribery, we give the individual money or goods in exchange for a favour. Bribery is in simple words when a man gives money to the other person who has authority. It is done to insist on something or discourage something from being done.
- 6) **Breach of Trust:** These crimes basically committed by breaching the trust of their respective clients in forms of financial frauds, embezzlements, insider trading, misuse of frauds and so on which also victimizes the clients of them and sabotages their client loyalty relationships in the brutal extent.
- 7) **Cyber-crime:** Cyber crime is the crime of computer networks. With the rapid increase in technology advancement there is also a rapid increase in technology-related crime. It is directly or indirectly committed against the victim to damage his image physically or mentally using the internet and other technical sources. Cybercrime is deemed to be a threat to nation's security and financial status of the person.
- 8) **Infringement of an intellectual property right:** Under this the crimes being committed by violating the substantial principles of the Intellectual Property Laws by the wrongdoer in relation to the Trade Marks, Patents, Copyright and so on like that.
- 9) **Forgery:** Forgery refers to the counterfeiting of checks or securities intended to defraud the other individual. It also involves a false document, signature, or other imitation of a value object used for the purpose of deceiving another.

- 10) **Counterfeiting:** Counterfeiting is a criminal act specified in section 28 of the Penal Code, 1860, where something real is imitated to steal, damage or replace the original work of someone. It makes it easier to make profits from illegal transactions and to mislead a person who believes that the portrayal is real and that the imitated work is of greater value. Counterfeit products contain fake logos and brand names, and harmful chemicals have also been found in some products that lead to the death of the consumer.
- 11) **Professional crime:** Some of the professions involving technical expertise and skill provide sufficient opportunities for white collar criminality. They include medical profession, engineering, legal practice, private educational institutions etc.

#### **Reasons for the growth of White Collar Crimes:**

The general perception amongst the people about white-collar crimes is that they are only committed out of greed, competition and lack of economic instability. Although the above stated factors indeed form the major reasons behind the growth of these crimes in Bangladesh, there are number of other reasons too:

- 1) **Greed:** Human beings are greedy by nature, as rightly quoted by the father of modern political philosophy, Machiavelli. He also said that a man can sooner and easily forget the death of his father than the loss of his inheritance. The same holds true for the people who intend to commit any type of white-collar crime. People of High class are financially stable; however, they still commit crime because of their greed to earn more. For this purpose, they even choose illegal ways to have an economic gain.
- 2) **Competition:** Darwin in his theory of evolution has stated that “survival of the fittest” is necessary and thus there will always be competition for survival. However, some people for their own greed and in order to get ahead of their peers commit crimes.
- 3) **Lack of Awareness:** One of the prime causes of white collar crime is ignorance of people about this crime. As the nature of the crime is totally different from traditional crimes, people rarely understand it though they are the worst victims of such crime. The more

awareness will increase among people the less will be the numbers of white collar crime.

- 4) Technology:** With the advancement of technology, white-collar crimes have become a global phenomenon and increasing at a tremendous pace in Bangladesh too. The proliferation of personal computers and smart phones have further aggravated this problem as the use of these not just results in the generation of many more ideas, but also gives open opportunities to the people residing in any corner of the world to commit these crimes.
- 5) Access to Information:** The availability of important sensitive information of individuals such as bank details, investments, passwords, etc. on their smart phones and laptops can provoke the criminal minds to use the data for their own benefit. The target for such white-collar criminals can be rich people/organizations like banks, casinos and financial firms where a huge amount of money flows daily. Hackers can thus steal access codes, retina images, and other information that can easily fool biometric systems and manipulate it further for personal gains.
- 6) Necessity:** Necessity is another factor of committing crimes. People commit white collar crimes in order to satisfy their ego or support their family.
- 7) No fixed laws or punishments:** After committing the crimes most of the offenders get away without getting any punishment because there are not enough laws to deal with such kind of crimes. In many cases, because of the supreme political connections most of the offenders get away without any punishment. Moreover, in many cases there are no witnesses for the said offences as such offences are committed in private.

### **White collar crime in Bangladesh:**

White collar crimes have already reached at the ultimate worst situation in Bangladesh. In rural, urban and central level of administration, white collar criminals are playing their unremitting accused role. In rural level, though the extent and the visibility of such crime are not noteworthy, the urban and central level is the main ground of this vice. In these two levels, to secure

each single crime the white collar criminals are committing lots of additional crimes. Centrally the criminals are practicing many crimes which are seriously harmful to the national interest. Frequently the crimes of them are crossing the national border. The white collar crimes or criminals in our country have some important features as follow:

- a) The crimes result in social injuries far greater than conventional crimes where only individuals are affected primarily.
- b) A large number of these offenders are recidivists, though repetition is not necessarily of the same type of crime.
- c) White collar crimes or illegal activities follow more or less the same *modus operandi*.
- d) White collar criminal does not lose his status among associates because it is not considered as a violation of business code. In fact, many successful criminals of this type are hailed as dynamic and innovative leaders of institution as well as of society.
- e) While ordinary criminals are afraid of enforcement agencies, white collar criminals are rarely so. Because, they think that on being detected, they may only be transferred or fined or given a short term simple imprisonment.

### **Scenario of white collar crime in Bangladesh:**

In Bangladesh, not only the people of upper socio economic class are involved in white collar crime, the people from top to bottom are practicing this vice, so far corruption, bribery and other malpractices are concerned. All the types of white collar crimes are existed here, but corruption occupies the most prominent place.

### **Corruption in public and private services sector:**

A survey on corruption in 2017 reveals that 66.5% households became victims of corruption while receiving services from different public and private sectors or institutions (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2018). In the survey, the law enforcing agencies (72.5%) are found as the most corrupt sector followed by passport (67.3%), BRTA (65.4%), judicial

services (60.5%), land administration (44.9%), education – Govt. and MPO enlisted (42.9%), health (42.5%), agriculture (41.6%) (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2018). Among various types of corruption and irregularities, paying bribe or unauthorized money is in the worst level. Among the service recipient households, overall 49.8% experienced bribery or unlawful transaction of money in different sectors (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2018). Among the households that experienced bribery, 89.0% mentioned that they paid bribe as the services they sought were not rendered unless bribe was paid (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2018). Whereas, education is playing a good role to considerably minimize corruption and bribery in service sectors (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2018), it itself is among the country's most corrupt (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2018). The worst case is that lower levels (pre-primary, primary and secondary level) are more corrupt compared to the graduate and post- graduate level (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2018). Above all, the highest corruption rates of the law enforcement agencies and the judicial services which are to maintain law and order in the society and ensure security of the people and their properties is compelling the common people to have any legitimate expectation from the service sectors.

### **Corruption of Politicians:**

Politicians are the elected representatives of the people, repository of public confidence. They should ensure good governance and sustainable development of Bangladesh. Instead of dispensing their proper role, they are alleged to be involved in corrupt practices. A survey on corruption in 2005 reveals that among the people involved in corruption, 8.1 percent were elected representatives. Among them 43.5 percent were Union Parishad (Local administrative organ of the Govt.) chairman, 27.1 percent were UP members, 11.8 percent were municipality chairman, 8.2 percent were members of parliament, 4.7 percent were ministers, 1.8 percent was ward commissioners, 1.2 percent were city mayors (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2005). A study of 149 MPs conducted by Transparency International Bangladesh, in 2012 found that as many as 97% of MPs were involved in illicit activities of which:

- 81.8% were engaged in activities related to influencing local administrative decisions, job-placement and transfer processes.
- 76.9% were engaged in abusing their positions on the boards of local education institutions.
- 75.5% abused development funds/projects for their own benefit, including taking commissions for approving projects or programmes.
- 53.5% were directly involved in criminal activities.
- 69.2% influenced procurement decisions in government.
- 62.2% were accused of influencing local government elections.
- 8.4% received residential plots in Dhaka despite already having property in the city (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2012).

### **Legislation against White collar crimes in Bangladesh:**

There is no specific law for measuring and punishing the white collar criminals in Bangladesh. However, the government in order to reduce its pressure can utilize different traditional laws being in force to punish the white collar criminals until any specific law be enacted addressing the white collar crime. Some important laws are as follows:

- 1) **The Penal Code, 1860:** The Penal Code 1860 is the most comprehensive codified criminal law of Bangladesh. It specifically does not mention the word 'White collar crime' but deals with many offences which are closely linked to white collar crimes such as bribery and corruption, counterfeiting of coins and government stamps, of offences relating to weights and measures, offences relating to adulteration of food stuffs and drugs, misappropriation of public property and criminal breach of trust, cheating, forgery and offences relating to documents and counterfeiting of currency. Besides this, the chapter 9 of the code has defined, and prescribed punishments for, offences by or relating to public servants.
- 2) **The Special Powers Act, 1974:** The Special Powers Act, 1974 deals with smuggling, adulteration of, or sale of adulterated food, drink, drugs or cosmetics, counterfeiting currency- notes and

government stamps, hoarding or dealing in black market. This Act can successfully meet up the challenges of these crimes as the punishments prescribed by it are very harsh in nature.

- 3) **The Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012:** This Act has made Money laundering a non bailable criminal offence for which criminals can be penalized up to twelve years imprisonment and fines. Special courts for corruption related cases have jurisdiction to try cases of money laundering. To successfully fulfill the purpose of the enactment, the Government, or in appropriate cases the Bangladesh Bank (BB) has been empowered to enter into agreements with foreign countries or organizations to control money laundering. It further authorizes the Bangladesh Bank to supervise the activities of banks in relation to money laundering and to take appropriate steps to address any problems that may come up. Furthermore, a Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) has also been formed that operates as part of the BB's Anti-Money Laundering Department.
- 4) **The ICT Act, 2006:** ICT Act, 2006 has been enacted to tackle with computer-related crimes. Section 61-65 of Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 prescribes the penalty for the following offences:
  - Unauthorized access to protected systems(Section-61)
  - Misrepresentation and obscuring information (Section-62)
  - Disclosure of confidentiality and privacy(Section-63)
  - Publishing false Digital Signature Certificate (Section-64)
  - Publishing Digital Signature Certificate for fraudulent purpose etc (Section-65)
- 5) **The Digital Security Act, 2018:** Chapter six of the Digital Security Act, 2018 also has defined and prescribed punishments for some digital crimes.
- 6) **The Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2004.**

#### **Remedial measures to prevent white collar crime:**

It is easily understood that there is no one entity that can alone get rid of white collar crime. Laws alone cannot do anything if they are not enforced properly. Similarly, institutions or organizations alone cannot do anything if

they do not have the support of the public. In a country like Bangladesh where large scale of starvation, mass illiteracy and ignorance, along with patronization of such criminals by dirty politics affect the life of people, white collar crimes are bound to multiply in large proportion. Control of these crimes is a crucial problem for the criminal justice administration in this country. However some of the measures for combating white collar criminality may be as follows:-

- a) Creating public awareness against these crimes and its subsequent laws and punishments to deter them. There is an immediate need to educate and keep the general public well-informed. The electronic and print media should be utilized in an effective way to spread awareness about white-collar crimes and the remedies they could seek in case they become victim of such crimes.
- b) A new separate enactment has to be passed solely relating to white collar crimes in Bangladesh. This enactment shall be titled as “Prevention of white collar crimes in Bangladesh”.
- c) A separate chapter on white collar crimes and socio-economic crime should be incorporated in the Penal Code, 1860 by amending the Code so that white collar criminals who are convicted by the court do not escape punishment because of their high social status.
- d) Special tribunals should be constituted with power to award sentence of imprisonment for life for white collar criminals.
- e) Stringent regulatory laws and drastic punishment for white collar criminals may help in reducing these crimes. Even legislation with retrospective operation may be justified for this purpose.
- f) The Anti Corruption Commission should be equipped properly by providing sufficient manpower, money and other logistic supports so that the commission can combat white collar crime.
- g) The government should appoint sufficient number of ombudsman in every Ministry and department in accordance with the provision of our constitution. Besides, proper mechanisms should be established to ensure strict accountability and transparency in every private establishment.
- h) The judiciary should create such an environment that the judges can dispose all allegations against corruption without any political influence with a view to ensuring rule of law in the society.

- i) The Government should be established a separate authority/institution to monitor the abuse of White Collar.

### **Conclusion:**

Finally it must be stated that white collar crimes are to be considered as a global phenomenon to which Bangladesh is no exception. This kind of crime is very heinous crime in nature and its impact is costing society more than any other ordinary crime. It is done by some people, but its loss is massive. Bangladesh is a developing country and white collar crime is not only a detriment to the economic growth of the country but also spoils the image of our country. It can be easily understood that to eliminate white collar crime, it is not easy at all, but if we can aware our general people about it, then it will not take any longer. Therefore, the government of Bangladesh must improve governance and take strict action against the offenders. The traditional laws need to undergo drastic changes to accommodate such crimes, penalize them, and deter their occurrence. The Penal Code, 1860 along with special laws formulated to combat such crimes must be worked upon. Though political leaders are also involved in this type of crime, the government along with the opposition party and also along with the people should come forward and take necessary decisions to reduce and try to remove this serious crime from our society for the betterment of the development of our country.

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# **Multimedia Aided Classrooms in the Pedagogy of English: Problems and Plausible Solutions in the Context of the Private Universities in Bangladesh**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Teaching students in the private universities of Bangladesh using multimedia is a common issue that is discussed among teachers and students all over Bangladesh. With the advancement of technology, new accessories are invented giving tremendous progress in the pedagogy of English ensuring maximum benefits and acceptability among teachers and students. In the context of the private universities of Bangladesh, the number of multimedia accessories is not sufficient to run classes simultaneously using multimedia. There are a number of barriers that teachers and students face in a multimedia classroom that ultimately hamper their teaching and learning. Following both qualitative and quantitative methods in this study, survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used as instruments for data collection. In the multimedia teaching process, a teacher's personal strategy and teaching ability can design the supervision and assessment system. By implementing reforms on multimedia teaching equipment as well as quality standard evaluation of multimedia teaching, an effective supervision and evaluation system may be developed in multimedia teaching in the context of private universities in Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Multimedia, Accessories, Pedagogy, Technology, EFL

## **1. Introduction**

Multimedia aided classrooms are designed to facilitate learners than the traditional methods all over the world but in the context of private universities of Bangladesh, we observed that there are certain barriers for students and teachers that make it really difficult to receive and deliver lessons.

Tools like Pie Chart, Word Cloud, and TreeMap are used to support our claim. The TAM model by Davis explains the cognitive factors of the operability of the examined information system that is, it deals with learners' understanding as well as the use of the information from the multimedia. Pie Charts show students' responses to the various questionnaire regarding their opinion on the problems they often face in multimedia classrooms. Word Cloud helps to give a graphic representation of the most used words from the interview of the teachers and students related to the multimedia classrooms. Lastly, TreeMap is used to display all the data in a hierarchical order.

Multimedia is an exciting combination of computer hardware and software that allows one to enhance presentations by integrating video, motion graphics, audio, visuals, and test resources into an accessible desktop computer (Susikaran, 2015). Multimedia applies to computers or tablets, projectors, speakers, and other associated instruments and cables called prerequisites for using these technological devices in a real-life school. It seems like many patterns are developing. Computers are becoming readily accessible in schools across the world. Governments, educators, and parents advocate the networking of these devices, and all stages of education make long-term preparations for their use. New requirements are then set for teachers to use the technology creatively, culminating in a sharp increase in membership of associated mailing lists and the number of internet teacher training courses available (Teeler & Gray, 2000). Some private English medium schools and private universities in urban centres are seeking to use Google classrooms to upload academic tasks, submit assignments and get reviews, though peripheral organizations have no clue regarding Google Classroom. As they have no chance to be affiliated with such gadgets, they are slumping behind and trailing out of new technical development (Alam, 2018). If expertly handled and imagination, multimedia can be a very productive means of educating students at every education stage. Multimedia classrooms can be far more exciting than classes of conventional boards and markers. It is also valid, though, that not all courses can be taught using

multimedia effectively. The use of multimedia in the form of language teaching has become one of the fundamental skills that a person must possess today for the successful functioning of the class. Multimedia, in reality, has transformed all facets of the essence of schooling and language learning (Ahmed, 2018).

In the context of Bangladeshi private universities, most of the teachers are bound to take classes in traditional board and marker. This does not mean that they do not want to take classes using multimedia rather highlight some of the limitations they are unable to overcome in terms of using technology.

Teachers take classes avoiding multimedia for certain reasons in the private universities of Bangladesh. Firstly, the pressure of taking classes is high and they do not get enough time to prepare slides for efficient multimedia classes. Secondly, the limitations of accessories are high for which there is a possibility of not finding multimedia support before taking a class for all the teachers at the same time which ultimately demoralizes them not to go with multimedia classrooms. Thirdly, materials and resource support for preparing slides are so limited that they hardly find motivation in preparing slides for multimedia classrooms. Fourthly, the lack of teachers' training for preparing and taking multimedia classes is also another key factor of their avoiding multimedia classes.

Like external problems, internal problems are as many. Both teachers and students shared their views when asked regarding the problems they found while teaching and attending multimedia classes. These issues are recognized by many but not taken further to give a solution. We believe that if we can showcase these issues and come up with some possible solutions then it will be beneficial for the teachers and learners in the pedagogy of English in the multimedia-aided classrooms in Bangladesh. Therefore, this article offers some plausible and possible solutions to those hurdles and proposes some possible ways to make multimedia classes more effective.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1. Multimedia and an overview*

Within the classroom, there has been a large selection of studies and publications on multimedia use. In the last couple of decades, managing digital classrooms and multimedia as teaching tools have been a significant

area of discussion in academia throughout the world. Several educators and scholars have spoken a lot about multimedia usage and clarified why students could use multimedia. The researchers investigated various related questions in this report to find out regarding issues with contemporary classrooms. In their study, Kern and Warschauer (2000) stress the need to utilize genuine materials that can be learned through technology, and this form of technology can be useful in addressing the demands of social, teaching, and learning needs. Their study points out that if the teachers support the students join new authentic cultures of debate, and if such groups of discourse are gradually online, it seems necessary to integrate online experiences for their societal benefit and their supposed real pedagogical importance. In generating media-rich outputs, multimedia includes the integration of media and is organized in some chunks connected by hypermedia. Learners can traverse to the educational resource in a lesser duration, attach the major aspects and build their understanding with the important insights (Hede & Hede, 2002; Parekh, 2006).

Technologically speaking, multimedia is the new technological breakthrough to be announced as the policy tool plaguing American education, also recognized as hypermedia or hypertext. Such ambitious concerns were raised earlier (Cuban, 1990), and definitely few would honestly think that immersive multimedia or emerging innovations can indeed save classrooms. Even so, multimedia is a fact and it is important to fully explore its effectiveness in the curriculum (Fan & Orey, 2001). Meskil (2005), in this regard, has defined two critical features of technology where the computer plays the most pivotal role. As with all instruments, their usage changes the ways it is perceived, performed, and connected. In digital classrooms that serve the function of educating students to promote their learning, computers are undeniably crucial. Some applications form the approach students learn, act, and connect in the classrooms, too, in any case.

Throughout the world, the usage of multimedia and different applications in teaching and learning language-based courses have become an incredible phenomenon through which the entire process of teaching and learning the basic skills of language such as listening and speaking have reached a different level. Tang (2011), in her study on the usage of multimedia in teaching language courses in China, mentions that the usage of multimedia, especially in teaching English as a language, has added a new dimension. The usage of different software and application have made language teaching and learning quite easier than past for both the teachers

and the learners. Having language labs with multimedia facilities and a multimedia network infrastructure offers an authentic and native English listening and speaking experience and allows students to provide more chances to improve their listening and speaking skills not only inside the classroom but out of class too. Teachers serve as planners, leaders, and coordinators of student listening and speech events in and out of class where students don't act as the "tape-recorder" anymore. Rather, they become engaged listeners and interpreters who are expected to undertake a set of listening and speech tasks (Tang, 2011). Thus multimedia-based teaching technique has elevated education, especially language-related ones to a certain level where both the teachers and the students have the experience of utilizing the technological aids which make everything easier for both parties.

Research done by Kasper (1997) reveals that students are motivated to compose a critical review on tasks by teaching English utilizing multimedia such as paper, movie, film, internet. Conclude, the performance of the students improved dramatically. The departmental reading and writing tests were passed by 92 percent of the candidates. Moreover, their opinion on the debates was really good. Through their capacity of using English, they show faith. They contribute this enhancement to the multimedia model because the texts teach English to them and include valuable knowledge in other subjects and allow them to find it helps to identify content so they see, hear, and learn about the subject.

Although recognizing technologies and diverse facets of technology, it still needs to consider how they should be effectively applied inside schools, meaning that students are sufficiently facilitated. Several obstacles have been noticed inside the classrooms regarding the usage of multimedia while teaching language-related courses among the private universities in Bangladesh from the viewpoints of teachers and students that need care.

## *2.2. Multimedia Classrooms for EFL*

Using multimedia in the classes for the English courses has always been quite a difficult task for teachers in different parts of the world. Teachers have encountered many obstacles while introducing multimedia in teaching the English language in the classes. Getting proper technical supports, setting up the equipment in the classrooms, training the teachers on the usage of multimedia, teachers' preferences, familiarizing the equipment to the

students, these all became the barriers on the way of introducing multimedia-based teaching, especially for the English language classes. Fernández Carballo-Calero (2001) in her study on EFL teachers' experience regarding the multimedia classrooms in Spain mentions that English classes are typically conducted in the traditional way, giving lecturers, writing on the board. Thus, the use of multimedia in English classes has been quite a challenge, especially in language classes. There are some more issues that can hamper the teaching process while using multimedia. As per the study done by Cummings (1995, 1996), mentioned in Blin's study (1997), there have been six major points that can be considered as the barriers that demoralize the teachers and other academic personals from utilizing the multimedia in the classrooms. However, it is not only the multimedia that the study found, rather all the other technologies in the classrooms that could have been some major threats to the teachers regarding their teaching process and attitudes. The major issues are:

**i. Incentives:** The feeling that they would be displaced by machines. This is a factor often figured out by Tanguay (1997), who argues that paranoia is irrational because the teaching equation would still involve a human being on both sides. What occurs, he describes, is that as it increases both the teaching and the learning ability of the pupil, the machine placed between the two human beings becomes more efficient.

**ii. Understanding the technologies used in academia and education**

**iii. Model of teaching: The evolution of teaching process and the role of a teacher.**

**iv. The lack of resource access.**

**v. Technological challenges.**

**vi. Institutional traditions (curriculum, staff overload...)**

Fernández Carballo-Calero (2001) in her study, mentions the importance of having the fixed roles of the teachers in the classrooms, especially in the classrooms where the subject is English, and the teacher conducts the classes through multimedia. Besides the role of the teachers, there are significant roles of the tools. As per her study of the computer in multimedia, the classroom functions as a tool only while the teacher is present in the classroom and in charge of the classroom.

In the English classes (both language and literature), using multimedia has been a challenge for the teachers where English is not the primary language. The students also encounter several challenges regarding the same issue. However, it is the teacher, who makes the lessons and the teaching process more comprehensive for the students by using multimedia just as a tool to assist them in the classrooms.

### ***2.3. Multimedia Classrooms in the English Classes in Bangladesh***

Throughout the world, technology has become a vital pathway in the teaching and learning process in almost all levels of academic institutions. From primary schools to the public and private universities all over the world have adopted the advancements of technologies to improve the education system of the region, and the use of multimedia is one of the instances in this regard. Bangladesh is no exception in this regard. Being one of the developing countries, this country has been trying quite hard to adapt the latest technologies in almost every sphere of development. New technologies are a clear determinant in the extent multimedia and its methods are applied in a language classroom. The idea of multimedia in the academic sector of Bangladesh is not an unrealistic and far-reaching topic. Instead, it has a positive effect on curriculum advancement, digitization of the educational environment, and cooperation of the technique of education (Ahmed, 2018). Ahmed, in his research on multimedia-aided teaching in Bangladesh, mentions that the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is an accessible arena that has intrinsic features comparable to any other advancement in meeting citizens' needs.

The present era is defined by the significant expansion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the scope of language education for learners in English as a Second Language (ESL) is a thriving and perhaps most classified issue. The application of multimedia to Bangladesh's language teaching is not so far from. Bangladesh is also at the early stage of completely adopting the idea of multimedia and is heading via a sequence of uprisings in the maximum implementation of this recently developed principle. There is a wide potential for teachers and students to use technological equipment such as laptops, overhead projectors (OHP), and classroom speakers in any single skill. Students may be able to benefit from the visual presentation of the subject in real life, listen to what video resources are playing on, and read in chorus reading passages or reading papers delivered by the instructor of the course (Ahmed, 2018).

Ahmed (2018) has figured out a few visible challenges in the multimedia aided language teaching in Bangladesh, such as deficiency in budget and limitations in the resources, gaps in the infrastructural establishments, technical support like power crisis and continuous electric supply, poor internet speed, and finally the unavailability of the well-trained teachers for the multimedia-based classes, especially for the English language and literature classes. Despite all these challenges, in most of the universities in Bangladesh, teachers are using multimedia as a teaching tool both in the English language and literature classes. Moreover, at the present day, due to the boom of modern technology, CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) and MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) have become quite familiar amidst the students from various levels of education in Bangladesh. And these two processes of language learning help the students even outside of the class.

In our research, we found the challenges are many from both teachers' and students' perspectives regarding multimedia classrooms which need serious attention. Therefore, we not only identified the problems but also tried to give some possible solutions so that it can facilitate both teaching and learning experiences using multimedia accessories in the context of the private universities of Bangladesh.

### **3. Methodology**

To get the best outcome and to achieve the goal with more credible findings, the current study requires a mixed-method formula. Therefore, the authors have applied both the qualitative and the quantitative methods for conducting the study. Since the study focuses on the barriers such as the imbalance of the syllabus and semester-length, lack of basic language skills knowledge, the lack of resource access, regarding the multimedia classes for the English courses (both English language and literature), it requires the opinions of both the teachers from the department of English and students from various departments including English from different private universities in Bangladesh. The questionnaire survey for the students is conducted for the quantitative portion of the study and the part of in-depth interviews with the teachers from the department of English from the different private universities in Bangladesh have been done for the qualitative part. The study has been conducted through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Data were analyzed using google form and pie chart where both students' and teachers' responses were taken anonymously.

### **3.1. Sampling**

For the current study, the authors have done convenient sampling to collect data. The authors collected primary the data (for both the qualitative and quantitative parts of the study) from their own workplace and from other private universities in Bangladesh. For the questionnaire part, 100 university students have responded and 10 university teachers have been interviewed from different private universities in Bangladesh.

### **3.2. Data Collection**

The data for the current study has been collected from both primary and secondary sources to get the answer to the research question and achieve the goal of the study. The authors here set 10 close-ended questions for the questionnaire for the students from different levels in the different private universities of Bangladesh. In total 100 university students from different private universities in Bangladesh responded through the questionnaire where the authors set 10 closed-ended questions regarding their opinions on their experience of the multimedia classes on the English courses. The questionnaire part functions as the quantitative data. The qualitative data has been collected through in-depth interview with the English teachers (lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors). The in-depth interview is one of the core processes of primary data collection. Boyce and Neale (2006) have defined an in-depth interview as a "*qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation.*" Due to the pandemic situation caused by the COVID-19, the authors managed to conduct the semi-structured in-depth interview with the English teachers online.

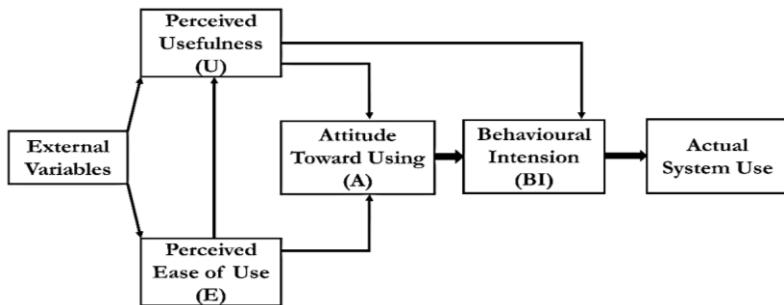
### **3.3. Data Triangulation**

The authors have been very mindful of the credibility of the report. The data collection methods have been taken as an in-depth interview with the teachers from different private universities in Bangladesh, a survey questionnaire from the private university students, and a paper analysis showing a triangulation of the quality of the details. In addition, the report's reliability meets integrity, reliability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **3.4. Theoretical Framework**

The current study has been conducted through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The Technology Acceptance Model was developed by Davis (1989) and is one of the most common testing frameworks for individual users to forecast the use and acceptance by individual users of information systems and technology. TAM has been extensively researched and validated by numerous experiments investigating the conduct of specific acceptance of technology in different constructs of information systems (Surendran, 2012).

The following figure (Figure 1) demonstrates the TAM model. The opinions from both teachers and students have been analyzed through the key issues of the TAM model.

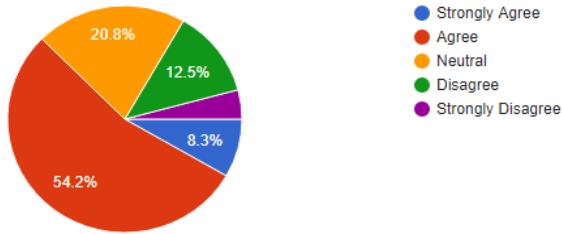


**Figure 1: The TAM model by Davis (Davis, Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1989)**

### **4. Review from the students**

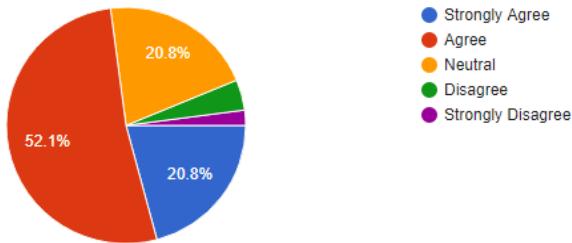
The review from the students have been collected through the survey questions. In the questionnaire survey, the authors received responses from 100 students for 10 questions related to the objective of the study. This part of the study presents the percentage of the opinions of the students from the questions.

- i. Do you think that it hampers your understanding of the lecture of the teacher in a multimedia classroom because the slides attract you more than the lectures?



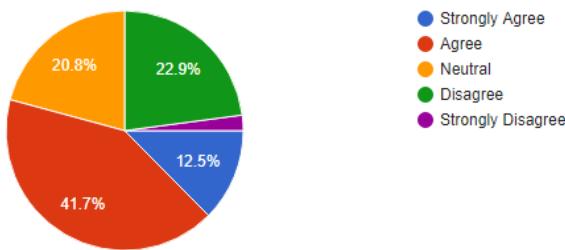
**Figure 2: Slides attracts more in multimedia classroom which hampers students' understanding of the lecture.**

- ii. Many students often fail to take important notes from the slides due to sitting in the back or in the corners of the classroom, do you agree?



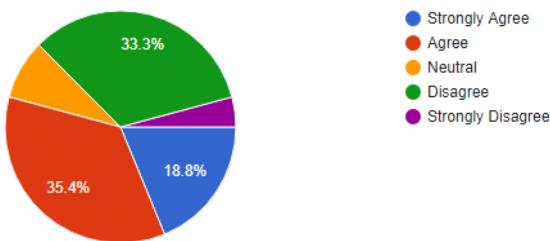
**Figure 3: Sitting in the back or in the corner of the classroom creates inability of students' taking important notes.**

- iii. Do you think the teacher often fails to control the students in a multimedia classroom when paying more attention to the slides than keeping eye on the students?



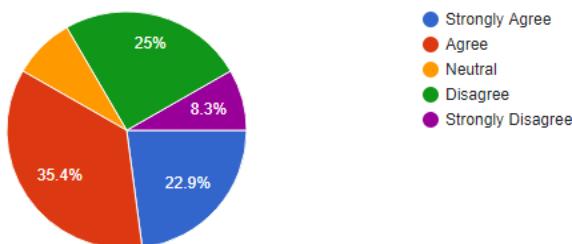
**Figure 4: Teachers' failure in controlling the students in a multimedia classroom for paying more attention on the slides.**

iv. Do you think in a multimedia-aided classroom, few students lose attention after a while and start gossiping among themselves which may cause disturbance for others who are attentive in the class?



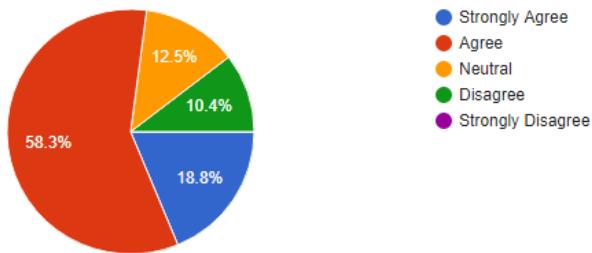
**Figure 5: Gossiping of students after a while causes disturbance to others.**

v. There is often not enough information in the slides as in the lecture in a multimedia classroom which makes it more difficult for the students to understand the lecture accurately. Do you agree?



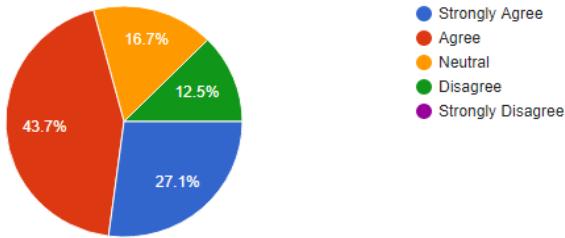
**Figure 6: Lack of enough information in the slides makes it more difficult for the students to understand lectures accurately.**

**vi.** Do you believe that in a larger class, the use of an audio device like a microphone can be useful to reach the lecture to the students, which most of the private universities in Bangladesh cannot provide?



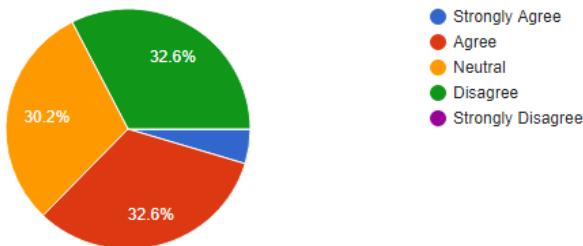
**Figure 7: Inability of the private universities to providing accessory like microphone in the large classrooms in Bangladesh makes lectures less effective.**

**vii.** In Bangladesh, many newly admitted students in private universities have lack of basic knowledge about various skills of the language like listening and writing skills which can be a barrier to being able to follow the lectures properly in a multimedia classroom. How far do you support this statement?



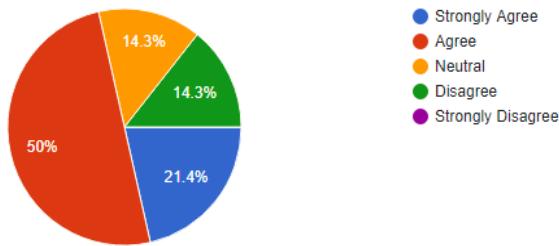
**Figure 8: Lack of basic knowledge about various skills of language works as a barrier to follow lectures in multimedia classroom.**

viii. Do you think teaching grammar through multimedia is more effective than the conventional use of board and marker?



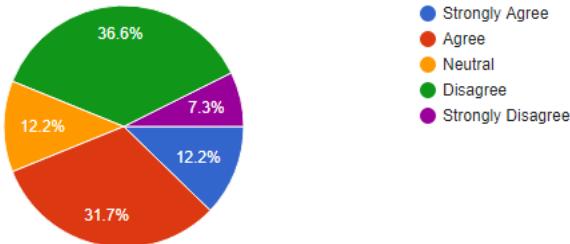
**Figure 9:** Students' opinion on whether teaching grammar using multimedia is more effective than conventional board and marker.

ix. Do you think students need to get the slides or the other materials forehead to be able to understand a multimedia class thoroughly?



**Figure 10:** Students' opinion on whether they need to get slides or materials forehead to better understand a multimedia class.

x. Do you think that teaching every course through multimedia can be fruitful rather than using relevant texts for better understanding?



**Figure 11:** Students' opinion on whether teaching each courses using multimedia can be beneficial for learners.

## **5. Findings**

The study was conducted on the University Level students from various universities (City University, Manarat University, BGMEA University of fashion and technology) in the Dhaka division. About 35.4% of students expressed that in a multimedia classroom, few students lose attention after a while and start to gossip among themselves which is a cause of disturbance for the others who are attentive in the class. On the other hand, nearly 33.5% of students disagreed with this. Approximately, 35.4% of students said that there is inadequate information in the slides of a multimedia classroom which makes it difficult for the students to understand the lecture accurately. Contrarily, 25% of students disagreed with them. 58.3% of students think that, in a large class, the use of sound equipment like a microphone can be useful to deliver the lecture to each of the students which most of the universities lack in our country. Another interesting finding is that the multiple references which the teachers refer before a multimedia class are also hard for the students of Bangladesh to understand on their own. About 50% of students agreed that teaching basic grammar rules using multimedia is more helpful than the conventional use of board and marker. About 43.7% of students agreed and 27.1% strongly agreed that students coming to get admitted to universities do not have enough basic knowledge about various skills of language like listening and reading skills and it can be a barrier in following the lectures properly in the multimedia classrooms. Nearly 50% of students agreed that they need to get slides on other materials beforehand to be able to understand multimedia class. Almost 31.7% of students said that teaching every course using multimedia can be fruitful than using relevant text for better understanding but 36.6% of students disagreed with this. Most of the teachers believe that due to the imbalance of syllabus and semester-length, the class time is often very short to cover all the areas of slides which they often have to skip and as a result, it hampers the understanding of the students. Another interesting finding is that, in most cases, managing between lecture and multimedia hampers the flow of lecture which can be very much confusing for many students to be attentive spontaneously.

## **6. Discussion**

### ***6.1. Analysis of the questionnaire survey***

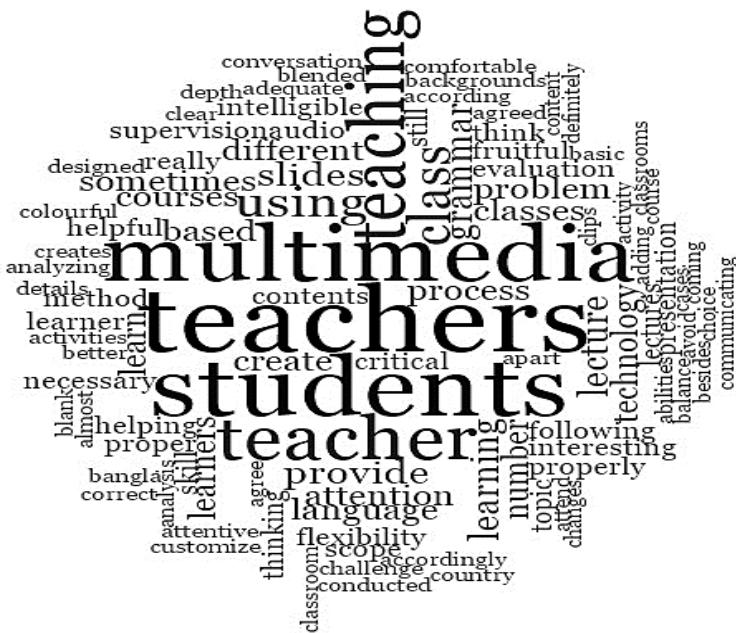
Students from the university level agreed that it hampers their understanding of the lecture of the teacher in a multimedia classroom because they are always giving more attention in taking notes from the slides. Sometimes, students who have to sit in the back seats or even in the corners often fail to take the important notes from the slides which make them unable to receive the information properly hence hampers learning. In our country, students coming to get admitted in universities do not have enough basic knowledge about various skills of language like listening and reading skills and it can be a barrier in following the lectures properly in multimedia classrooms They also opined that multimedia classes are not that much interactive like the conventional way of giving lectures.

### ***6.2. Interview Analysis***

Most of the teachers mention that using multimedia while teaching basic grammar in the classroom is helpful but using a blended learning method is the most effective way. They think that while teaching grammar, the teacher needs to write/make a number of examples to make the students understand the correct usage of grammar. Because, in this regard, the teacher might face some difficulties while making a number of changes in the same sentence during teaching a topic of grammar. But in terms of teaching literature, most of them agreed that using multimedia can be helpful for a teacher as he can show some relevant pictures and sometimes video clips related to the text. It makes the lecture more interesting and intelligible. They feel that it is a big challenge for the teachers where the number of students is really big. Teachers suggest pre-study but in most of the cases, it is seen that students attend their classes with blank heads. It really throws teachers in a very tough situation to make the class fruitful. In this case, teachers can provide some easily intelligible handouts before starting the class. Most of the teachers said that almost 99% of teachers don't know how to make PowerPoint presentations properly and use multimedia tools effectively and it is very shocking.

Figure 12 indicates teachers' opinions regarding multimedia classrooms. Their most commonly used words are "students", "multimedia" and "teachers." From the interviews of the teachers, we found their opinions

regarding grammar and literature classes where they shared their views on using multimedia in such classes and how they can be effectively used to facilitate the students. Though some of them had mixed views regarding multimedia classes, most of them agreed that teachers can bring a balance between lecture and multimedia without having any difficulties in giving lectures spontaneously.



**Figure 12:** The word-cloud from the teachers' opinion.

Ten teachers and ten students were conducted for the interview. Analyzing the thoughts from the conversation with students as well as teachers, it is clear that learners coming from different backgrounds have different abilities to understand the lectures given in English which is one of the major problems in our country. Most of the students say that students from Bangla medium, face this type of problem. Sometimes teachers have to hurry to finish all the slides in the classes and often do not provide adequate information which is necessary and it creates problem to learn. For this, students have limited scope to learn. Using slides is an interesting way for both teaching & learning and a colorful presentation of the class will help the

students for being attentive in the class. It will help to learn a particular topic in detail.

According to the teachers, as classes through multimedia give the scope of involving the students in different audio-visual tasks and activities, it helps to create a more responsive environment in the classrooms. Communicating in a foreign language is not a comfortable issue for the students. They lose their interest and attention very quickly. Using multimedia is helping the students to follow the class and works as an aid to the teachers to grab the attention of the students. Primary level education is far away from the multimedia facilities and is still following the traditional teaching-learning method which is still a problem. Through a multimedia class on language, a teacher can provide the students several types of content (such as audio, videos, posters, diagram, graphs, many more) that are necessary apart from showing the grammatical rules of the target language. When teachers are following a designed course structure and using the same multimedia, again and again, they are losing flexibility. On the other hand, while preparing the contents for multimedia, the teacher has a wide range of flexibility in adding or removing materials and creating variations in the content. Definitely, multimedia teaching technology is not suitable for all the courses. There are some courses that are based on critical thinking or based on the theory that required in-depth analysis. Multimedia class is not a good choice for these. Again, for the courses that need practical performance, real-life activity, critical thinking, and group discussion, multimedia technology cannot provide better support.

Figure 13 indicates the relationship TreeMap from the interviews of the teachers. When it comes to teaching grammar, using technology such as multimedia cannot be an effective tool as using multimedia only may not be sufficient. Therefore, using a whiteboard is essential when it comes to the teaching of grammar. However, multimedia can also be used with the whiteboard. Not only in the case of grammar but also in classes of literature, this juxtaposition can be followed. The relationship TreeMap highlights teachers' suggestions following which teachers can juxtapose multimedia and whiteboard and bring a balance in the traditional and technological classes which can facilitate students more than any of this one individual method of teaching can do. Moreover, they suggested that following this way students will not lose their attention from the classes. Besides, it will improve their learning. Again, there should be a scope of interaction for the students with the teachers so that they can get involved in the classes. If to

facilitate students and their learning from a multimedia class, teachers need to get proper training in using PowerPoint properly and efficiently. They need to master making slides with proper materials and supervise students from time to time. Only then it will be possible to facilitate the students and reach the targeted outcome.

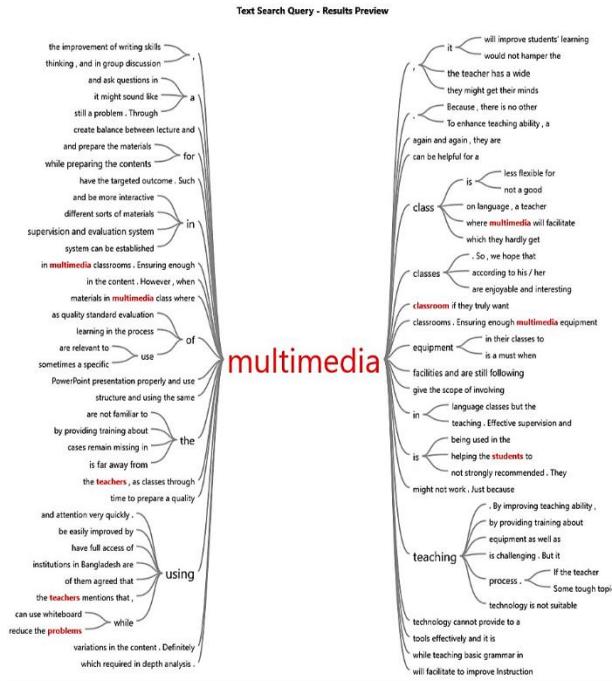


Figure 13: The relationship TreeMap from the interview of teachers.

## 7. Recommendations

Some suggestions can be given in order to reduce the problems while using multimedia in teaching. Effective supervision and evaluation system can be established in multimedia teaching by providing training about the multimedia teaching equipment as well as quality standard evaluation of multimedia teaching.

By improving teaching ability, a good environment for teachers can be created. Supervision and evaluation of the effect of learning in the process of multimedia teaching are challenging. But it can be adaptive. Many

educational institutions in Bangladesh are using multimedia in language classes but the number is not many. If the students are not familiar with multimedia, they might get their minds deviated from the class and they can only look into the decoration of the slides, or the videos only. And a completely opposite scenario can appear if the contents of the presentation become too hard to apprehend for the students, as in a PowerPoint presentation we put fewer descriptions rather than only the main points of the topic. Wherefore, the teacher has to play an important role in preparing the contents accordingly. If the course objectives are relevant to the use of multimedia, it will improve students' learning skills. For example, listening and speaking skills can be easily improved by using multimedia. Because there is no other way of familiarizing them with the correct pronunciation. But for the improvement of writing skills, multimedia is not strongly recommended. They may find the audio-visual tasks difficult because of their novelty. But we think these obstacles can be overcome through identifying the students' problems particularly. On the other hand, while preparing the contents for multimedia, the teacher has a wide range of flexibility in adding or removing materials and creating variations in the content. However, when multimedia is being used in the class, the board is always there for the solution to the impromptu problems or questions asked by the learners. We think a teacher has the flexibility to design and prepare the materials for multimedia classes according to his/her own way. S/he can use different sorts of materials in multimedia class where multimedia will facilitate to improve instruction efficiency without reducing flexibility. The personal strategy and teaching skills of a teacher can customize the supervision and evaluation system in the multimedia teaching process. Some tough topics can be discussed by writing on the whiteboard in detail so that students can understand those topics clearly. Teachers can use a whiteboard while using multimedia. In the scenario of Bangladesh, most of the private universities are not well equipped with teaching materials whether in the library or on the server. In order to ensure quality education, teachers need to study scholarly articles and publications which often require buying from the internet, and with poor salaries that teachers get, it becomes really unaffordable for them. Therefore, we propose that universities provide funds or directly take suggestions from them and then buy required materials from the internet.

There should be a balance between the syllabus and semester duration, so that the instructor may cover all of the sections of the slides. As a

consequence, the students' understanding of problems will be reduced. In a multimedia classroom, a large number of students is a barrier to effective teaching, so the number of learners should be controlled. Adequate projectors and computers should be available in universities so that a large number of teachers may take multimedia lessons at the same time.

Ensuring enough multimedia equipment is a must when several classes are ongoing at a time. Teachers need to have full access of using multimedia equipment in their classes to make teaching-learning fruitful and if the universities fail to provide this equipment aptly then it will be really impossible to have the targeted outcome. Such multimedia classes are enjoyable and interesting than traditional ways of teaching in most cases. Therefore, we expect universities will take the necessary measures in this regard.

## **8. Conclusion**

The discussion of using multimedia in the classrooms for teaching English language and literature has been widespread in Bangladesh for the last few years. Teachers and students of public and private universities often discuss this matter. When it comes to the public universities where multimedia accessories are sufficient, the condition is quite the opposite in the private universities. The difference in the students' ability of understanding is also quite evident when it comes to public and private universities. Nonetheless, our focus is on the problems that teachers and students face in the private universities of Bangladesh regarding multimedia-aided classrooms. Throughout this paper, we have discussed the major issues that teachers and students often find in multimedia classrooms which hinder their teaching-learning. We believe that the utmost goal of a multimedia classroom or any classroom is to facilitate students' learning and if that is not ensured, there is no point in conducting classes whether conventional or multimedia aided. Only well-equipped classrooms, well-trained teachers, and well-planned lectures can ensure a fruitful class where students will be able to share their views and ask questions. Teachers, on the other hand, will supervise and provide required materials beforehand to ensure their students' comprehensiveness for the particular multimedia classes. If the plausible solutions we have recommended can be implemented, we think that most of the problems that teachers and learners encounter within a multimedia-aided classroom will be resolved.

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# **Interaction Problems with EFL Learners: First Year Language Classes at Gono Bishwabidyalay**

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## **Abstract**

**T**eacher learner interaction in a second language class has become much more essential. Interaction here means an educational exchange between teacher and learners. Interaction helps to expose the learners to the practice and use of a language. The language courses offered by Gono Bishwabidyalay to first year (Hons) students are designed to develop the four skills—reading, writing, speaking and listening. So the courses can be more productive if they are taught through classroom interaction, which includes all these modes of communication. Second language teaching pedagogy gives special importance to classroom interaction, because it is the way that can bring the learners into the direct touch of customary and habitual facts, and pronunciation of and the important explanations about a language. But interaction is not productive always. The author, as a language teacher, has direct experience of such interaction and its failure at Gono Bishwabidyalay. Through his close observation, the author found that there are some obstacles to making the classroom interaction effective. Poor vocabulary and grammatical knowledge of the learners, lack of shared knowledge, unclear idea about a topic, class time restriction, differing back grounds of the learners, poor listening skill, huge number of students in the class, unscientific classroom decoration, insufficient modern scientific equipments in the classroom and failure to relate the linguistic phenomena being taught to real life are the major interaction problems with the students at Gono Bishwabidyalay.

**Key words:** Classroom interaction, Second language learning strategies, Obstacles to learning a foreign language through interaction, Teaching-learning environment in the class, Unsuccessful interaction

## **(I) Introduction**

In second language classes teacher learners interaction takes place in different ways, such as teacher asks questions, teacher corrects learners' errors, teacher and learners use the second language in the class for instructions and explanations, and the teacher awaits learners' answers and gives corrective feedback (Brown and Rodgers, 2002). First year language courses of Gono Bishwabidyalay focus on the four skills of language. First year language courses are enclosed in the appendix I.

The expected objective of these courses is to make the learners competent in communicating in English effectively, intelligently and powerfully. Practical teaching, presentation, role playing, question and answer, drilling, hand out, home work, etc are the strategies by which the courses are taught. But pedagogically these strategies should be conducted through interaction so that the fact that form, meaning and use of a language are interconnected can be shown in the conceptual situations, that is, in the classroom (Yule, 2019). But the weakness of learners(at Gono Bishwabidyalay) in different aspects of interaction such as syntactic, semantic, stylistic, of usage, of cohesion and coherence, of topic, of discourse strategy, of basic relational structure makes the interaction unsuccessful.

## **(II) Real picture of classroom interaction**

As an evidence of ineffectiveness of classroom interaction, a real picture of a language class is given below. From this picture, one can easily infer the proportionate related data of ineffectiveness of classroom interaction:

COURSE TITLE: BASIC ENGLISH GRAMMAR

TOPIC: TRANSFORMATION AND MEANING DIFFERENCE

TOTAL STUDENTS: 40 CLASS TIME: 50 MINUTES

DATE: 14 AUGUST 2021

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(NB. T=Teacher, S= Student, SS= Students

Wrong, incorrect and unacceptable sentences are asterisked.)

**T :** Hardy wrote a novel. [1]

= A novel was written by Hardy. [2]

How do we get [2] from [1]? Is there any meaning difference between them?

SS : We get [2] from [1] through active passive transformation.  
: There is no difference between them, because grammatical transformation never causes different meaning.

T : Are you sure grammatical transformation does not cause meaning difference?

SS : Yes, I am.  
: \*Our headmaster said meaning not change in transformation.

T : OK. Then do you want to say that there is no semantic difference between *Everybody loves someone* and *Someone is loved by everybody*?

SS : Semantic difference?  
: What is it?  
: \*The difference one sentence active, other passive.  
: \*Please tell the question in Bengali.

T : (The teacher interprets the point in the native language Bengali.)

SS : OK. No difference in meaning, because in active passive transformation there is no difference in meaning.  
: Sorry, sir, I could not hear you. Please tell me again.  
: Sir, can I speak in Bengali?  
: \*Subject works in active voice. When active voice transformed into passive, *am/is/are* is used before past participle. I find this difference in the sentences.

T : Oh, no. Come to the point. You have already killed much time.  
Anyone else?

SS : In these two sentences we find difference. It is...  
: (Back benchers) Excuse me sir. He should speak loudly. We can't hear him.

T : OK. Go on.

SS : In the second sentence the subject is someone.  
: So what? He is speaking nonsense, sir. Please tell us yourself.

T : Of course there is semantic difference between these two sentences. Whereas in the active sentence *someone* has generic reference, in the passive sentence it has particular reference, which causes a great meaning difference.

**S :** Generic and particular references mean?

**T :** Generic reference includes all the members of a class, and particular reference refers to an individual member of a class. However, let me cite some other examples to show that in some cases corresponding transformation causes semantic difference. For example...

**S :** Sir, class time is over.

**T :** OK. This is all for today.

### **(III) Discussion/Analysis**

Classroom interaction is a complex situation in which many things go on simultaneously. Asking questions by the teacher takes place more frequently in the classroom. Obviously the linguistic choices the teacher and the learners make in the classroom interaction depend on their purposes and the practical situation they are in (Lock, 2005). Here, the learners are to be aware of how the teacher structures his questions to know a variety of information. They get confused when the teacher uses questions descriptively because they are used to the prescriptive uses of language which are nothing but a set of rules showing no contextualized use of a language. For example, they just know that a question is used only to know something. They do not know that other intensions such as a request (eg *Can you act for me when I will be on leave?*), a suggestion (eg *Why don't you see a doctor?*), emphasis (eg *In the society, who can do whatever he likes?*), etc can also be expressed by a question. Moreover, the learners are not aware of meaning difference caused by different syntactic position of sentential elements, say, the position of a *wh*- element in a *wh*- question. As a result, they take the function of *what* (say) in *What does he do?* to be the same as in *He does what?* But they are never the same. In *What does he do? what* is used to know something, but in *He does what?* it is used to repeat (by the speaker) a particular part of the sentence that the hearer missed(Quirk et al, 1985).

A great problem arises when learners make only propositional meaning out of every sentence/utterance they hear/read. Social, contextual, pragmatic, etc meanings are usually unknown to them. For example, when the author, in a cold weather, said, ‘The door (of the classroom) is open.’, the students just looked at the door and said, ‘Yes’. They could not realize the pragmatic

meaning that they should have closed the door immediately. Thus interaction becomes meaningless if one type of meaning is taken for another type (Crystal, 1987).

Learners' tendency to take spoken variety of language to be as syntax oriented as the written variety is also a problem for them. Everywhere they are ready to hear grammatically complete sentences. They do not know that in a classroom interaction, which is a living variety of spoken language, extra-linguistic information, shared knowledge, the topic being discussed, speaker's body language, eye contact, gestures, facial expression, vocal tone, pauses, loudness, speaker hearer relationship, context, etc should be brought into consideration. They should be aware of the fact that the more the context is clear, the less grammatical the sentence/utterance needs to be. So, expressions highly dependent on context for meaning are problems for the first year language learning students at Gono Bishwabidyalay.

The author observes that learners also have problems with those expressions of English which are capable of giving a complete sense but deviate from the normal norms. For example, NONSENSE (eg *The jokes he makes!* and *She and her comments!* which all express disapproval.), IRREGULAR SENTENCE (eg *A: Who will cook dinner today? B: Cathy, How come you are so exhausted?* etc), FRAGMENTARY (eg *Now about human mind., Sorry.* etc), FORMULAIC EXPRESSION (eg *That's OK. , Exactly.* etc) and BLOCK LANGUAGE (eg *English Department, No vacancy, Manuscript ready, print in January,* etc). These are all minor types of sentences which frequently occur in classroom interaction. The very features these types of sentences have in common are that they cannot be analyzed always into clause elements and that they lack the constituents obligatory for the regular syntactic patterns. As the learners, the author observes, do not have good command over the diverse types of sentences and their discourse functions, they feel embarrassed when they encounter these types of sentences in the class. They cannot be benefited from the teacher's discussion, because they cannot relate these irregular structures with their conceptual meaning.

The teacher's standard variant of pronunciation, intonation, stress and accent are also problematic for the learners, because they are not familiar with them. Most of them even don't know how to look for a word in a dictionary let alone stresses in words or connected speech. When a word is pronounced with actual stress and intonation, it seems totally unknown to them.

Correction by the teacher is a major part of classroom interaction. But the teacher faces different problems in their correction phase. First of all, learners commit different types of error in the realm of pronunciation, grammar, choice of words, phonology, style, word-formation, information processing, acceptability, conversational maxims, etc whose correction is obviously a time consuming matter, and it often leaves little or no time for practice in the class. The few corrective feedbacks the teacher can provide in the class are effective only to a few students, not to the huge number of students in the class.

Besides, when the teacher corrects the error of one student, other students who have committed the same type of error do not pay attention to the teacher. So the teacher needs a long time to correct each and every student's individual errors, which is not possible practically. Moreover, in a large classroom not furnished with scientific equipments, the teacher's voice cannot reach the back benchers. As a result, they cannot be benefited from teacher's discussion, instructions and explanations. Learners vary in the ways the teacher gives feedback. Another problem arises when the teacher wants to teach English as a means of 'social and intermental interaction' in the class (Brown and Rodgers, 2002) and designs his materials in the patterns of exchange. It is because learners maintain social interaction in varying degrees. A social context in the class may be known to one student but unknown to another.

The standard variant of English—American or British is also a problem in classroom interaction. If the variant chosen by the teacher differs from that of learners, they cannot be benefited from the teacher's lectures. This variant prevents the learners from learning by interacting with the examples thoughtfully designed by the teacher to show how English is used to communicate in different situations. The lexemes, grammatical rules, usage, social context, meaning and intension, stylistic element, etc in one variant may differ in another. For example, *Five book(British)* vs *Five books(American)*, *Chat show(British)* vs *Talk show(American)*, *There was a lorry(British)* vs *There was a truck(American)*, *The class is/are interested in old English literature(British)* vs *The class is interested in old English literature(American)*, *I am going to school (excluding colleges and universities)(British)* vs *I am going to school(including colleges and universities)(American)*.

It is true that most of the first year students of Gono Bishwabidyalay are weak in English, even the basics of English are often unknown to them. It means when the teacher needs to express a required meaning and uses a relevant structure which deviates from normal word order, they get confused. For example, FRONTING ( eg *His expertise (object) we (subject) appreciated (verb) but his character(object) we (subject) could not admire(verb)*--where object has taken the initial position.) and INVERSION (eg *Went(verb) away his dream(subject), Nothing(object) did(operator) I(subject) say(verb)*--where verb or operator takes the initial position). Moreover, the learners sometimes have the wrong idea that sentences, say, *I saw him go* and *I saw him going*, *She forgot to write me* and *She forgot writing me* have the same meaning. Such wrong idea about many other structures which are traditionally known to be the alternative structures among the Bengali speaking learners keeps the required meaning away from them.

Another type of problem occurs in classroom interaction when learners speak irrelevantly. Of course a teacher asks questions in the class and expects correct and precise answer. But most of the time it is seen that students, while answering a question or talking on a topic do not stay on the right track. They cannot realize that they are diverting. It causes boredom to other students and they do not pay heed to the teacher. Irrelevant talking also misguides other students. They cannot decide whether their mates are talking true or false. It also confuses them with their knowledge. In addition to that, irrelevant talking prevents students from organizing the conversation well (Bussmann, 1996).

Monopolization creates interactive problem. The students of Gono Bishwabidyalay are mostly from Bengali speaking schools and colleges. So they are hardly accustomed to English conversation and conversational maxims. One of the conversational maxims, for example, is to not monopolize. The students often do not realize that if they monopolize, the teacher would lose the scope to repair their parts in the interaction. Monopolization often prevents interaction from being informative. It has another problem too. When one student monopolizes in the class, others become inattentive, make a noise or violate the teaching learning environment. It is because they are not interested to learn from their fellow mates whom they think equal to them. Not that one does not speak true or thoughtful or informative while monopolizing, the hearers may blame the

responsible person (here the teacher), who is controlling the interaction environment, for preferring the speakers. As a result the teacher is thought to have the fault of being biased towards a particular student, which is a negative criticism of the teacher, and the teacher does not take it easy.

In a grammar teaching class, grammatical task based instruction is quite common. But there arises problem when this instruction engages learners into motivational and interesting activities to teach grammar. As learners vary in their interests, it is difficult for the teacher to involve them into the same type of motivational and interesting activities. This variable---students' varying interests---makes unproductive the teacher's 'instructionally modified input'(Ellis, 1994).

In language teaching class the teacher instructs and interacts in the target language, which aims at teaching the learners how to use the language. But if the teacher instructs or lectures in the native language on the same topic immediately after he has done so in the target language, he fails to teach the target language through instruction, because once the learners know that instruction in target language will be immediately followed by the instruction in native language, they are unmindful to the instruction in the target language. As a result, their exposure to the target language in the class is useless to them (Ur, 2012).

In the language learning class the teacher asks questions for a diverse variety of reasons, such as whether the students have any idea about the topic he is going to teach, whether the students can memorize a particular lesson, whether he has been able to stimulate the learners to a topic("Teacher Questioning and Student Participation") or to know their competence level. No matter whatever the teacher asks, but what matters is that the teacher is to wait, most of the time, for a long time for the answer. In other words, the teacher is to waste important class time. Sometimes there is repetition of answer, and the teacher is to listen to the repetition as long as possible. Not only that, he is to give corrective feedback, too. These all leave little time to practice the target language in the class. Many times the teacher is to go through a chaotic environment because while some students learn much from practice, others from explanations (Davis and Pearse, 2016).

As mentioned earlier, language classes at Gono Bishwabidyalay consist of many students. The medium of instruction in these classes is English. The very purpose is to turn the act of learning

English into a ‘product of interaction of the linguistic environment’ in the class and the ‘internal mechanisms of the learners’ (Ellis, 1994). But it is often very difficult for the teacher to maintain a language learning and teaching environment in grammar classes in Gono Bishwabidyalay. Here, students’ competence level is too poor to comprehend lectures in English. As a result, the teacher cannot ‘guide learning through classroom interaction’ (Goodwyn, 2011).

For students’ understanding or better understanding, the teacher, here, sometimes uses native language, Bengali, though immediately after a while he comes back to the target language, English. This shifting from target language-native language-target language is against the language learning theory that to learn a language is to say things in that language. Moreover, as classes consist of lots of students, the teacher cannot reach the internal mechanism of individual students. So, students’ faulty or inappropriate mechanisms go unrepaired. When the teacher wants to contextualize English grammatical rules, the Bengali speaking learners find it difficult to visualize the English culture based contexts. The teacher finds students with amusing ‘language habits’ which can be improved but through accomplishing guided language works under the intensive care and supervision of the teacher (Morsey, 1965). But the teacher has not so much time to concentrate his efforts on improving only one side of the students. He has pressure to do many other works. As a result, the learners do not feel intellectually motivated to grammar classes, and their knowledge of English just becomes confined to its prescriptive rules.

As literature helps students to understand other culture and as it exposes them to the fresh and unexpected use of language (Lazar, 2019), language teacher uses literary texts as language learning material. The teacher asks students to discover different meanings in them, to identify their stylistic elements, to describe the way their language is processed to stimulate them as readers, and to express their feelings and opinion in well-formed sentences or structures. That is, the teacher wants the learners to feel that the grammatical processes they are taught are necessary and important to make textual as well as interpersonal meaning. Above all they should feel that the grammatical processes they are taught facilitate communication in all modes. But this method, as the author experiences, has some problems. For example, students who are not interested in the theme/topic of the materials selected, do not give importance to discussion. They just pass their time, and follow

the teacher's instruction negligently acquiring nothing. Not only that, in such a situation, the teacher can judge the answers neither as real nor as unreal, because students might copy from each other.

#### **(IV) Conclusion**

Interaction as a foreign language skill development strategy is all inclusive. Most importantly, it gives EFL learners a scope for being familiar with the norms and regulations of all modes of a language. It accelerates language learning by involving learners in practical situations. The author, as a teaching professional, experiences in his own institution, Gono Bishwabidyalay, when and how classroom interaction fails to fulfill expectation. Though the article has some limitations, it focuses on some practical grounds which need further research to draw a conclusion on effectiveness of classroom interaction to learn a language.

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## Appendix I

First year language courses

### **Eng-101: Basic English Grammar (1<sup>st</sup> semester, 1<sup>st</sup> year)**

This course is intended to help students acquire essential ideas of and sufficient practice in the basic categories of English Grammar. Hence, she/he is expected to improve his/her general proficiency in framing and producing correct sentences.

- a. Word classes and their interchange
- b. Phrases, clauses and types of sentence
- c. Verbs and tenses
- d. Functions and positions of adjectives and adverbs
- e. Use of prepositions
- f. Subject-verb agreement
- g. Use of linking devices
- h. Active and Passive structures
- i. Direct and Indirect speech
- j. Combining, expanding and transforming sentences

**Eng-102: Reading Comprehension (1<sup>st</sup> semester, 1<sup>st</sup> year)**

This course is designed to provide students with considerable practice materials for improving her/his reading ability covering the comprehension of the linguistic, literary and thematic aspects of diverse texts.

- a. Understanding meanings of words and sentences
- b. Understanding of texts organization
- c. Understanding figures of speech and idiomatic expressions
- d. Comprehending the meaning of the whole text
- e. Comprehending the gist /summary of the text

**Eng-103: Spoken English (1<sup>st</sup> semester, 1<sup>st</sup> year)**

The course purports to expose students to the basics of listening and speaking skills, and hence let her/him get her/his competence in the skills improved through sufficient practice. It encompasses practice in RP accent, expressing varied functions and communicating in real life situations.

- a. Listening to stray words/utterances and repeating them
- b. Listening to mini-dialogues and role-playing
- c. Expressing different attitudes, feelings, emotions and opinions
- d. Making dialogues in different situations
- e. Speaking in different situations

**Eng-107: Advanced Reading and Writing (2<sup>nd</sup> semester, 1<sup>st</sup> year)**

This course is intended to improve the student's reading and writing ability to the extent that would help her/him read, comprehend, analyze and appreciate diverse texts of different genres as well as reproduce ideas in forms of compositions.

**Reading**

- a. Reading strategies- skimming, scanning, average reading and study reading
- b. Text - organization, coherence and cohesion
- c. Style in writing
- d. Purpose of writing
- e. Writer's voice or tone in writing
- f. Reader-writer relationship Writing
- a. Paragraphs
- b. Letters
- c. Reports
- d. Paraphrases

e. Essays

**Eng-108: Advanced Speaking and Listening (2<sup>nd</sup> semester, 1<sup>st</sup> year)**

The course is intended to provide students with adequate materials of and practice in both the speaking and the listening skills of the English language so that she/he can further improve her/his fluency as well as accuracy in the skills.

- a. Monophthongs - writing, identifying, listening and pronouncing
- b. Diphthongs - writing, identifying, listening and pronouncing
- c. Consonant phonemes - writing, identifying, listening and pronouncing
- d. IPA transcription of words and connected speeches
- e. Weak-form and strong-form words - listening and pronouncing
- f. Stress and intonation - listening and pronouncing
- g. Dialogues - listening and role-playing
- h. Speaking in real-life situations
- i. Speaking with fluency and accuracy

# **Enhancing Students' Interest in English Grammar: A Crucial Stride on the Way to Develop Communicative Competence in ESL**

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## **Abstract**

Grammar has always been an X factor in attaining communicative competence in a foreign language. Nevertheless, its importance has often been underestimated in mastering a second language. Failure to visualize the efficacy of grammar from a wider angle and the narrow outlook that grammar is nothing but teaching of structures can be held responsible in this regard. In the arena of English language teaching, skipping grammar is a tragic reality in almost all the educational institutions in Bangladesh. This research explores the underlying reasons of the students' lack of interest in grammar lessons in a university of Bangladesh. Besides, the researcher aims to find out the ways to enhance the students' interest in grammar. This research is a teacher-led, classroom-based research which tries to convert monotonous English grammar lessons into interesting, exciting, innovative and communicative ones so that the language learning of the students can be positively influenced and accelerated. In this paper the research process and the subsequent developments in the students' perceptions of English grammar classes will be highlighted.

**Key Words:** *Research, English Grammar, Language Teaching, students*

## **Introduction**

It cannot be turned down that grammar is one of the crucial tools for success in second language learning. In the light of this reality, there is

an important question for the language teachers that is really worth answering: “What does it really mean to teach grammar and how does it influence language learning? In reality, it is undoubtedly very hard to explicate the meaning of teaching English grammar in a particular way since it is a complicated idea which varies as per the instructors’ theory of practice in their language teaching contexts. However, the issue can be analysed from a common standpoint as Wilcox said that grammar can be defined as “a system of rules which allows the users of the language in question to create meaning”. Grammar is ordinarily referred to in the dictionary as “the rules about how words change their form and combine with other words to make sentences” (Wilcox, 2004, p.23).

The definitions mentioned above imply that grammar is generally regarded as the structures, rules or forms of a language, which, in turn, lead to the misinterpretation that teaching grammar should highlight on merely forms and rules. However, the innovative paradigm changes in second language learning and teaching have put a lot of light on the meaning and the ways of how grammar should be taught. Contrary to the prevailing ideologies and approaches to grammar and teaching grammar, it has already come to the realization to many linguists and educators that expertise in grammar is also a part of communicative competence. That is why, numerous researches have already been conducted on the applications as well as the functions of grammar and its importance in real life situations. In the opinion of Takala grammar is “an important tool for successful communication.”(Takala, 2016, p.10 )

The significance of grammar in regard of upgrading communicative competence cannot be overlooked anymore. At the same time, the misconception that grammar serves no other purpose than merely burdening the brains of the learners with forms and structures should be removed and corrected. Furthermore, time is indeed ripe to modify the traditional ways of teaching grammar. If it is done, it will go a long way to galvanize the students which will subsequently pave the way to a greater success in attaining communicative competence with the help of English Grammar.

Unloading an avalanche of all the grammar rules and forms on the learners is an obsolete strategy now. It is far more fruitful and prospective to train the students how to apply the rules in their day to day lives. Teaching grammar rules mechanically for the language development of the students is not likely to bring much success. A study conducted by Fotos and Ellis (1991) says, “It

is possible to integrate the teaching of grammar with the provision of opportunities for communication involving an exchange of information”.  
(p.605)

According to Zhang (2009) “Grammar is often misunderstood in the language teaching field. The misconception lies in the view that grammar is a collection of arbitrary rules about static structures in the language. Further questionable claims are that the structures do not have to be thought, learners will acquire them on their own, or if the structures are taught, the lessons that ensue will be boring.” (p.184)

### **Purpose of the Study**

The related reviews have laid stress on some significant facts which are germane to teaching grammar in the classroom. With these points in mind, the purpose of this research is to study and analyse the reasons of students' lack of interests in grammar lessons and try to find out what an instructor can do to develop his/her students' interests in grammar lessons. The following research questions can be taken into consideration:

- 1.What are the underlying causes of the students' dearth of interest in grammar lessons?
- 2.What is the potential role of an instructor to increase her students' interests in grammar lessons?
3. Is it necessary to modify the methods and strategies of teaching grammar to suit it to real life purposes?

### **Methodology**

As the current study is an action research in nature, a group of 45 students who enrolled themselves in different departments of a university in Bangladesh were selected for this study. The researcher spent three hours a week with the students to teach them grammar. The study was carried out from 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021 to 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2021 encompassing Summer and Fall Semester of the academic calendar of the university. There were a midterm and a final examination at the time of research activities. Initially, the research activities began with an open-ended questionnaire and ended with a semi-structured interview. The open-ended questionnaire was designed to collect data on the students' understanding and perceptions of grammar

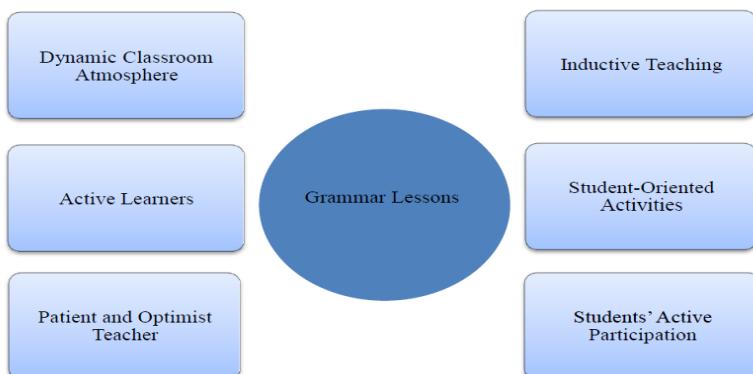
lessons. It also aimed to find out the underlying causes of their lack of motivation in the activities and lessons pertaining to grammar. Then, the researcher tried to change the long-held mindsets of the students to grammar lessons and arouse their interests with the help of an action plan and a syllabus accompanied by a variety of innovative and interesting grammar related activities. Following this, a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to the students in order to derive their feedbacks of grammar lessons. On the basis of the results found from the questionnaire and interviews, students' motivations, comprehensions, perceptions and opinions about the grammar lessons before and after the execution of the action plan were compared and analysed.

### **Action Plan**

An action plan was adopted on the basis of the inferences from the students' responses to the open-ended questionnaire in order to find out the solutions to the existing problems in the classroom. Without much exceptions, the students' responses all revolved around the methods and techniques of instruction in the classes based on the grammar lessons. They all pointed out that the teachers invariably followed a traditional method in grammar classes leading to the draining of their interests in grammar. That is why, lectures become monotonous and they become bored in grammar lessons. The students also indicated that the teachers are generally the ones who speak all the time during teaching these lessons and they had hardly any scope of interaction with their teachers. They all claimed that teachers always delivered grammar lessons presenting different types of rules and abstract structures which the students had to take for granted without having any opportunity for asking for clarification if required. Apart from this, they did not get the opportunity to apply the rules into exercises such as filling in the blanks and so on. Keeping these issues in mind, a syllabus was prepared with a view to boosting the students' interests with more innovative methods and techniques. The researcher was also mindful of displaying himself as a facilitator in the classroom and paid attention to the fact how the positive attitude of the teachers can influence the motivation and participation of the students to the lesson.

In this regard, the researcher decided to deliver grammar points by going for inductive methods in lieu of deductive ones. In addition to this, many more student-centred tasks and assignments were incorporated in the syllabus with the goal of creating a dynamic environment in the class where

students would have the opportunity to become active participants of the language learning process which would enable them to enjoy both themselves and the lesson. Then, the next step of the action plan was to increase the active participation of the students and make them more vocal. Usually, the grammar classes are not that much interactive. The teachers keep delivering their lecture mechanically and students remain merely passive listeners. They don't ask any questions and tend to just accept whatever their teachers tell them. This inertness of the learners is one of the reasons why grammar classes do not become effective and enjoyable. Within this framework, it was found that communicative and interactive grammar classroom contributed largely to arousing interests of the students. Innovative and communicative assignments helped to increase active participation. Several group works were also assigned to them bringing some novelty in learning grammar. Last but not the least, it was understood from the feedback through questionnaire that the attitude and approach of the teachers exercised a great influence on creating interests in the students. Actually, the patience and positive attitude of the teachers about the mistakes committed by the students is quite instrumental in ensuring a welcoming classroom environment. Such a positive class environment makes the students feel that they can make mistakes which in turn inevitably enhances students' confidence. On the basis of the findings from the questionnaire and students' perceptions of grammar classes the following diagram has been developed for the action plan highlighting the solutions that seek to raise students' interests in grammar lesson.



**Figure 1:** Grammar Lessons (based on the action plan)

#### **4. Findings**

The results showed a striking difference in the perceptions of students for grammar lessons. Moreover, the findings of the study support the view that the level of interest for learning grammar was enhanced by means of implementation of creative and student-oriented tasks. However, the following modifications have been made during the research process in the class:

##### **Step 1: Inductive Teaching**

In this step, the students were taught grammar in context. The forms, structures and rules of grammar relevant to the topics in the syllabus were assigned to the students implicitly so that they were not exposed to isolated meanings. Then, a particular activity called ‘Grammar learning through songs and movies’ was administered to the students in groups. The integration of songs and movies with grammar was a unique idea to the students. It created a remarkable enthusiasm among the learners. Learning and playing with grammar in context contributed to the learning of the structures in a holistic way. Because of this inductive teaching/learning strategy, the learners had the opportunity to discover grammar in a new way and they all pointed out that they liked to learn grammar rules in context. Moreover, they all strongly agreed that grammar rules and structures can be more meaningful and concrete when they are presented in context. However, the students opined that grammar lessons were too abstract to understand when these structures were taught without any context.

##### **Step 2: Student-Oriented Activities**

In this step, instead of going for a teacher-oriented approach and choosing teacher-centred activities, student-oriented activities were designed with a view to increasing the participation rate which is closely related to students’ interests. For this purpose, “think- pair- share” activities, individual tasks, pair works and group works were administered to the leaners. During these activities, a significantly crucial difference was observed in students’ motivation and participation. The results of the interview supported this increase.

### **Step 3: Active Learners**

The incorporation of more student-centred activities in the syllabus drew more active students in the classroom, and this idea was supported by the interviewed students' statement that they were able to learn more when they became a part of the lesson. On the basis of these responses, it was conjectured that students' declarative knowledge turned into procedural one which means knowing how to apply the rules in real life context instead of just knowing what they are.

### **Step 4: Dynamic Classroom Atmosphere**

This step aims to create a lively classroom atmosphere in lieu of indulging in an inert one. So, contrary to a traditional grammar classroom which is based on 'teach-the-book method', authentic materials such as texts about current issues were brought to the class. When the students were provided with the texts, discussions about those topics were made along with the analysis of grammar related to the topics of those weeks in the syllabus. When the activities came to an end, the students seemed to like the texts which had been used in the lesson. Based on the results of the interview, it was stated that trying to do something new out of the coursebook and not following only a coursebook enhanced the students' motivation and enthusiasm. When asked, the students implied that they had the scope to use their knowledge of grammar in real life situations which was undoubtedly a fruitful sign for their language development.

### **Step 5: Students' Active Participation**

In this step, the researcher intended to reduce the time that a teacher usually takes to deliver his lecture. The results of the questionnaire were kept in mind in this regard. The questionnaire revealed the students' description of grammar classes as the places where teachers spoke all the time. Therefore, a communicative and interactive grammar classroom environment was created in this step. The students were motivated to express themselves more which, in turn, maximized their interest. Apart from assigning "think-pair-share" activities, individual works, pair works and group works to the students, a particular task labelled as 'Grammar Media Project' was designed with the goal of enhancing the level of enthusiasm and students' talk time. Within this step, the students, in groups, were instructed to focus on a grammar point and to present a short film to be acted by themselves on the basis of an authentic scenario. On the day of the project presentations, the

whole class watched their classmates' videos with a great enthusiasm. The interview results also supported this significant difference in the students' perceptions. That is why, all the students' views indicated the notion that grammar could be a tool for facilitating communication, not just a set of rules and structures in minds that impede their speaking performance or not a burden on their shoulders that causes the worries of committing mistakes anymore.

### **Step 6: Patient and Optimistic Teacher**

In this set up, the target was to imprint a new model of grammar teacher in the minds of the students. Therefore, the teachers demonstrated more patient and optimistic attitude in the classroom. The results of the interview showed that students were motivated when the teacher did not correct their errors instantly and gave them the opportunity to find out their errors themselves or by the help of their peers. At the same time, it was also found that the optimistic attitude of the teachers influenced their motivation in the lesson positively, which directly increased their success in the lesson as well. Moreover, their self-confidence also underwent a significant improvement in these grammar lessons which was empowered by creative, innovative and communicative tasks.

The increase in the level of eagerness for learning grammar was also reflected in the comments of the students during and after the study. Some of these comments were as follows:

“Grammar never attracted me; however, I liked grammar lessons with such brilliant activities such as ‘Grammar Media Project’ and ‘Grammar through Songs & Movies’ because they helped me understand grammar better.” Another student said “The grammar projects and tasks that we were supposed to submit were entertaining and attention-grabbing because we were expected to come up with something creative. I liked them because they were much different from the grammar lessons that I had taken before.” “Grammar activities were very good for us. While learning grammar structures, I also enjoyed myself. For me, grammar was a hard lesson to understand in the past but these tasks helped me overcome this grammar phobia and cover the topics easily.” “When a lesson becomes interesting, students' attention goes up naturally. Consequently, these activities enhanced my interest and level of understanding.” Thus several students expressed their opinions about grammar positively.

## **Conclusion**

With the help of this action research, it can be deduced that the learners irrespective of their ages and levels have an inclination to learn in a joyful way in today's educational system. According to Nunan (1998)

"In textbooks, grammar is very often presented out of context. Learners are given isolated sentences, which they are expected to internalize through exercises involving repetition, manipulation, and grammatical transformation".

As teachers, it is very imperative for us that we engage our students in various tasks that ignite their interests. We must think out of the box to remove the inertness of the students in the grammar classes and make them more active and vibrant there. The importance of grammar cannot be overlooked in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. Moreover, there is no doubt that students enjoy themselves more in language classes facilitated and conducted with the help of innovative methods and strategies along with various communicative tasks involving the grammar lessons. At the same time, the teachers should always apply updated strategies in teaching to make the grammar classes far more effective.

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# **External Factors in Bangladesh Foreign Policy: An Appraisal**

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## **Abstract**

Foreign policy of a country is primarily a projection of its socio-economic and political compulsions in international politics. Bangladesh's foreign policy is determined by certain basic factors which have impact on foreign policy formulation. It is stark reality that every aspect of Bangladesh's foreign policy is in some way conditioned or influenced by external factors. All external factors are not equally important for every aspect of foreign policy. Some of the factors may be more dominant than the others in a particular stand and vice-versa. Stark realities, domestic factors, external factors and facts of geography have combined to render the fashioning of Bangladesh foreign policy. Foreign policy has played a vital role in forming public opinion in international politics. The paper concludes that these external factors are dynamic and they keep changing with the foreign policy posture of Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Foreign policy, Domestic Factors, External Factors, International Politics, State

**Introduction:** Making foreign policy is thus a difficult and complex art. Each of its three phases of conception, content, and implementation needs careful attention, but conception, because it is strategic in nature, is most critical. In the astuteness of its perceptions, conception must bridge the natural gap between a nation's resources and its desires, and the reality of the world outside (Hartmann, 1978: 84). Foreign policy of a country is primarily a projection of its socio-economic and political compulsions in international politics (Bhardwaj, 2003: 1). The foreign policy of any country at any point

of time is a product of its history, experience, compulsions and challenges. It is also moulded by the conscious preference for actions the country, its people and the government have opted for to secure vital national interests (Khan, 2004: 59). Bangladesh's foreign policy is determined by certain core factors which have shadow on foreign policy formulation. Foreign policy is not stagnant. It is a dynamic process and the decision-making process would invariably take into account the changing realities both in the domestic and international milieu. Foreign policy objectives of a particular state are derived mainly from national interests, geopolitical setting and perception of global environment having bearing on domestic development concerns (Mostafa, 1986: 32). Foreign policy is the most significant aspect of conducting international politics.

Like other countries of the world Bangladesh foreign policy also conducted and influenced by external factors. Foreign policy is to be formulated consistent with the national wishes and aspirations. Bangladesh's foreign policy needs to be formulated on an objective assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. In this regard, rational policy making and prudent appreciation of the regional and present world order are imperative. Besides domestic compulsion, external factors are consequential for Bangladesh. Recently, there is a growing interdependence of states in world affairs, each country is unique in its own way and this implies that foreign policy will not often be the same for countries in the region. However, in an inter-dependent world, it may mean that almost all issues will, to a greater or lesser extent, be considered from both domestic and external factors. Indeed, every aspect of Bangladesh's foreign policy that is in some way conditioned or influenced by external factors.

**Methodology of the Study:** This article is qualitative in nature. Content analysis is done in this research work. Data are collected from secondary sources such as books and different articles etc. The collected data are then processed and analyzed in line with the objectives of the study to reach a dependable conclusion.

**Regional Factor:** In the present modern world, regional peace and developments depends on the cooperation of nation states in various areas. A relation of complex interdependence of nation-states may promote international and regional progress and peace in diverse manner (Chowdury,

2001: 217). Regional Cooperation has become a characteristic phenomenon of post Second World War international relations. Nation States are sovereign entities. But the circumstance of their existence and function necessitate mutual interactions. Since it is not possible, as yet, to develop worldwide institutions which can substitute presently constituted decentralized international system, nation states have frequently embarked on a policy of mutual cooperation at less than global stage (Samaddar, 1997: 155). The United Nations (UN) from its very inception has promoted regional economic cooperation throughout the world. Geographically, geopolitically, historically and culturally, South Asia is rather well-defined, but it has not functioned effectively as a regional system or subsystem, and parts of it (Palmer, 1975: 888-889).

Regional context has increasingly become crucial as nations react and are sensitive to threats in their immediate neighborhood. Regional environment also has a certain urgency which the global structure may not have, though, in the long run, the international level is more important as it has greater ability to induce changes in the regional environment (Akhtar, 1995: 49). Regional structure is generally dominated by one or two actors. In the present world order, asymmetrical regional balance of power forces smaller states to seek assistance from extra-regional powers to the great dislike of the regional power. The asymmetry between India and its South Asian neighbours in terms of size, geopolitical location, resources, population, economy and military power places India in a position of advantage in the region, which has created a feeling of insecurity among the small South Asian neighbors (Ahmed, 2002: 45). Actually an Indo-centric structure in South Asia based on a structural imbalance of power and bilateralism in its relations with the smaller neighbors. But it is reality that geographically Northeastern region is more aligned with Bangladesh, Myanmar and China than its mainland (Hussain, 2017: 7). Indeed, geography is an imperative for its economy to seek greater regional integration. In fact, the Northeastern land borders with Bangladesh are more accessible and cost effective than the borders with China and Myanmar.

Bangladesh, which came into being in December 1971 by successfully seceding from Pakistan, has added an important element in the South Asian diplomatic configuration (Rizvi, 1986: 131). Bangladesh, the emerged nation

state in international scene was able to create a sense of affinity among other smaller partners of this region. As a result of the initiative of Bangladesh President Ziaur Rahman in May 1980, in proposing the idea for South Asian Regional Cooperation, a ray of hope, though feeble, for greater amity found its way into the regional politics (Hussain, 1988: 203). Bangladesh gives the highest priority to South Asia region with regard to establishing foreign relations. South Asia comes first if issues like geographical location, common historical background, economic condition, and, above all, territorial integrity and the security issues are taken into consideration (Hussain, 2004). Bangladesh is significant because of the complex scenario that has emerged due to India's strategic alliance with the USA and USA's concluded Strategic Partnership with Bangladesh, to contain China and its rivalry with Pakistan for regional supremacy (Mantoo: 2013: 51). China has a strategic advantage over India in this South Asia region. Between Sikkim and Bhutan lies the Chumbi valley, a dagger like allies of Tibetan territory. In an all out attack, India may be vulnerable to any Chinese strike southwards from this vantage point (Hussain, 1989: 98). China would be interested in maintaining close relations with Bangladesh, keeping in mind its past record of antagonism with India. Relations between the two neighboring giants are likely to remain basically antagonistic in nature because of the unresolved outstanding bilateral issues. A situation such as this is fraught with the possibilities of creating a web of complex relations between the U.S., China and India and even Japan in this region in which Bangladesh's strategic location can count a lot (Kalam, 1996: 199).

As a small state and an initiator of regional co-operation in South Asia, Bangladesh would like to see a kind of South Asia where there will be fewer conflicts, more co-operations and more of human development. First of all task before Bangladesh is to revive and gear up the SAARC process (Afroze, 2003: 68). Bangladesh believes that more and more confidence-building measures (CBMs) need to be designed at the bilateral and multilateral levels in South Asia. President Ziaur Rahman was interested for a role for Bangladesh in world and regional politics. He conceptualized a regional organization for South Asia that ultimately became a reality with the birth of SAARC in 1985. It was due to the foreign policy initiatives of President Zia's government that Bangladesh won a seat in the UN Security Council for 1979-80 terms, defeating handsomely a country of the stature of Japan.

Begum Khaleda Zia came to power for the second time in 2001. This tenure Bangladesh took ‘Look East’ policy, maintained and reconstructed relationship with China, Myanmar and Bangkok. This government also sought to maintain cordial relationship with the Muslim world. In January 2003, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has said her government is now looking to the East as part of a new foreign policy focus. She contended that, this is for the benefit of the country and its people, but she insists her government will maintain good relations with its neighbors and Western countries. Bangladesh has conducted and is conducting an open policy of friendship, mutually advantageous co-operation, and equal and beneficial bilateralism with neighbors. Bangladesh should work with its neighbors in South Asia to build a climate of durable trust and understanding in the Region. All South Asian countries can contribute vigorously in making South Asia secure and prosperous by resolving the differences, by strengthening economic links, and by being mindful of each other’s sensitivities.

In the recent of years, the Bangladesh foreign office has given special consideration to its Look East Policy. It has given more emphasis to diplomatic and economic ties with the countries of East and Southeast Asia, compared to the traditional links with India and the other South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations (Hussain, 2005: 2). Regionally Bangladesh is committed the positive momentum of cooperation and enhancing the credibility of SAARC, to promoting its socio-economic mandate and creating a broad-based climate of confidence building so that regional tension can be reduced. The most compelling security challenge in South Asia is promotion of the sustainable growth, working towards swift reform and development.

**Islamic World Factor:** Islam acts as an influencing factor on the foreign policy and diplomacy of most of the Muslim countries. The degree of its role in the foreign policy may vary from country to country depending, on the state existing ideology (Tajuddin, 1994: 58). Foreign Policy and Religion is a very important and sensitive issue. Throughout the history of Islam, there have been many occasions when one Islamic state fought against the other Islamic state. In a situation like that, an attempt to make Islam a guiding principle for state policies is practically impossible. How could we use Islam

in establishing and improving our relations with other Islamic countries? Islam did not prevent the war between Iraq and Kuwait. It did not prevent the war between Iran and Iraq. It did not even prevent the breakup of Pakistan (Alam, 2002: 11-12). Bangladesh had emerged as an independent nation state discarding the two-nation theory which was the basis of India's partition in 1947, having realized that religion could not be the sole factor determining the status of a national entity. The majority of the population is Muslims. They are sentimentally tied with Islamic Umma (brotherhood) and wish to maintain special relations with Islamic countries. So, the religious identity of the population played a very important role in the formulation of Bangladesh's foreign policy.

Bangladesh foreign policy is conspicuously known for its close linkages with the Muslim countries. This aspect of Bangladesh foreign policy is unique for several logical reasons. Geo-political reality of Bangladesh does not necessitate her closeness with the Muslim World. But Bangladesh is having closer ties with Muslim countries (Ahamed, 2004: 110). Islam is one of the important religions; it has a great bearing on a vast number of people in the world. Islam is a vital factor for the foreign policy of Bangladesh. The process of opening up of bilateral relations with the Islamic countries was formulated by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, which grew and matured during the post-Mujib regimes, and is maintained on the same pattern under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (Tajuddin, 2001: 76).

Religion is another determinant which placed its impact upon Bangladesh foreign policy very effectively. Islamic factor acts independently as a determinant on the foreign policy and diplomacy of Bangladesh. At the beginning, Bangladesh was a secular state and still it is, but at the reign of Ziaur Rahman, the status was changed to the Muslim nation by the amendment of constitution because of it will have to be favored by the Muslim world. And by another amendment it was abolished. So the religious identity of the people plays a very important role in the formulation of Bangladesh foreign policy. At the beginning, Bangladesh was a secular state and still it is, but in the 1980s, the status was changed to be a Muslim state by the amendment of the Constitution because of the will to be favored by the Muslim world. And by another amendment it was abolished.

The Zia government did not abandon the policies of ‘opposition to imperialism, colonialism, and racialism’ which were put in the Constitution by the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib government as part of the country’s foreign policy, but nevertheless adopted a policy of establishing relations with the Muslim countries on the basis of Islamic solidarity through appending a new clause (Article 25(2)) to the Constitution (Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 1979: 9-10). The Zia government repealed Article 12 of the Constitution which upheld secularism, and added instead ‘*Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim*’ to the preamble of the Constitution. Zia emphasized an Islamic rather than ethno-linguistic identity of Bangladesh. He succeeded in establishing closer relations with Arab countries including Saudi Arabia, which also recognized Bangladesh only after removal of Sheikh Mujib from the scene (Huque, 2002: 208). Next, the Ershad government declared Islam to be the ‘State religion’ through the eighth amendment in the Constitution. Apart from the objective of enhancing the acceptability of the government to the majority of people, the intention was predominantly to attract the Muslim countries especially the Arab states. Khaleda Zia came to power for the second time in 2001. This government also maintained good relationship with the Muslim world.

The Islamic world saw the liberation struggle of the people of Bangladesh with suspicion and Pakistan was able to prejudice their views on the crisis. The freedom struggle of the people of Bangladesh was perceived by them as the disintegration of Islamic Ummah (brotherhood) under the influence of ‘Hindu’ India and therefore they had great reservation on the armed struggle of the people of Bangladesh against Pakistan (Rashid, 2001: 28-29). Even in the foreign policy of Bangladesh, the Islamic ideals were invoked in order to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity (Bhardwaj, 2008: 64). Bangladesh has lent its support to minimize differences between and among the Muslim countries, to institutionalize their mutual relations and to enhance vibrant economic relations. Bangladesh is also an important part of the Islamic world. Bangladesh has in the past demonstrated its ability to maintain considerable influence in the decision making of the Islamic countries; it is only natural that the country, known for its moderate and pacific policy

profile, will be favorably viewed in the West while dealing with these countries.

**Economic Factor:** For most countries foreign policy objectives tend to be derived largely from their domestic compulsion. By their nature, these compulsions tend to be largely economic in nature. A large part of these economic factors influencing the fate of the polity derive from the nature of the society, its inner dialectics and its interaction with the current economic structure (Sobhan, 1989: 51). Because of the relative lack of resources available for foreign affairs, the small state must seek methods of interaction that are less costly and more economical (East, 1973: 560). In fact, the importance of economic factors in small-state foreign policy is demonstrated.

One of the vital determinants of Bangladesh's foreign policy is its economic backwardness. Successive colonial rule over the territories stunted its industrial development and left the country's agriculture stagnant. Then the country was heavily ravaged by almost a year liberation war. Speedy economic development and maintaining the supply of food grains and other essential goods have therefore remained so far the central issue before the successive governments of the country (Chakravarty, 1994: 13-14). The common characteristic of the economic power policy of a State is to overthrow the status quo by changing the power relations between the States concerned by way of economic control (Fatmi, 1971: 8). If economic activities expand in the rest of the world, it may act as a favourable factor in developing trade relationship of a particular country.

Foreign policy aims at achieving economic prosperity, as only an economically prosperous nation is to play more assertive role in international politics. That is why Bangladesh is endeavoring to gear up the pace of its economic progress and to attain economic prosperity. It is usually the keen desire of each state to establish, strengthen and widen its economic ties with other states (Gimba & Ibrahim, 2018: 124). Status and prestige of a state can be secured only if the state is economically stable and prosperous. In the process, the state has to diversify its trade and economy in order to make it resilient enough to come up to the challenges of the competitive world.

The main object of Bangladesh's foreign policy is to create around us an environment of peace, trust, and stability which would permit optimum utilization of our natural and man power resources for economic, social, and cultural advancement. Our foreign policy has to be formulated and executed in such a way that would ensure maximum flow of external resources for economic development and at the same time increase our options and maneuverability in our foreign policy behavior (Hafiz & Khan, 1986: 250). In a period when international economic relations are becoming more and more hierarchical and rigid, Bangladesh over the years has come to depend on outside aid for its economic survival. Bangladesh's dependency on foreign aid began at the dawn of its independence in December, 1971, when different international agencies and relief organizations started their works in a war ravaged Bangladesh. Of course, a peaceful and stable Bangladesh will facilitate major economic opportunities for the people in the region and whole world. The present inequitable international economic order also poses both direct and indirect threats to the security and survival of the developing nations like Bangladesh.

**International Global System:** The international global system has a significant impact on the way the smaller states make their foreign policy choices. Analysts have traditionally explained that the nature of the international system and the relationship of the state to conditions that are prevailing in the system mainly determine the behavior of a state (Hossain, 1977: 29). In order to improve and enhance their position vis-à-vis other states, weak states rely on external sources of strength. Different types of international systems enhance or weaken their bargaining position or leverage, encourage or discourage them from seeking the aid of other states, or isolate them from other states within the existing system (Handel, 1981: 171). The concept of an international system based upon sovereign, equal states is largely a fiction and scarcely approximates the reality of the relations between the nations (Ghoshal, 1996: 158). In the fast-changing international system Bangladesh has to keep track of developments, anticipating to the extent possible the shape of any critical event, and be ready to act or react effectively keeping the national interest in mind (Saksena, 1996: 400). In relations between and among the nation states of the world various factors play a vital role in different periods of time.

Indeed, the relations among the super powers are very important for global stability and peace, good relations between two neighboring nations of larger or smaller sizes are also important for the regions.

The international political scene confronting the new nation of Bangladesh in 1971 was characterized by antagonistic and even confrontationist relationship between major powers of the world. Bangladesh has to charter the course of her foreign policy in a manner so as to protect her pulls and pressures of antagonistically divided international global world (Narain, 1994: 40). Bangladesh vision for greater engagement with the friendly countries of the Western World. The US, Canada and members of the European Union (EU) have been our intimate friends and development partners, making outstanding contribution to Bangladesh's development efforts.

Global peace is as important to Bangladesh as like regional peace. It is hardly possible for Bangladesh to contribute to the avoidance of global catastrophe. In this perspective G. W. Choudhary has said that "a country like Bangladesh can only react but not act on any major international issue." (Narain & Chakravarty, 1988: 21). But Bangladesh may seek to play a role in a selective and focused way through bilateral or multilateral diplomacy. Outlining the basis of Bangladesh's foreign policy Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman said, "We are a small country, we want friendship with all and malice towards none" Shamim, 1977: 54). The behavior of each nation in international environment is always conditioned by its foreign policy. The hard reality is that only through political and economic cooperation in the region we can strike a better balance and can hopefully strive to become partners and not clients in the new international order prescribed by the industrialized countries (Ahmed, 1993: 183). In fact, Bangladesh is perhaps one of the countries among the significant actors in the area of international global system which has so far failed to evolve an institutionalized mechanism for foreign policy making, planning and coordination.

**Conclusion:** The external factors of Bangladesh's foreign policy more or less influence the foreign policy behavior of Bangladesh. It is true that all external factors are not equally important for every aspect of foreign policy. Some of the factors may be more dominant than the others in a particular stand and vice-versa. Stark realities, domestic factors, external factors and

facts of geography have combined to render the fashioning of Bangladesh foreign policy. The rapidly changes in the present vibrant international economic systems have lessened the economic opportunities of Bangladesh. Almost five decades after its independence Bangladesh still has a diffident foreign policy that shifts depending on which political party is in power. Factors like power politics of the world powers regarding Bangladesh and its neighbors, economic aid by various countries and organization with and without prescription, presence and activities in international organization like UN, SAARC, NAM and others, direction of security plays very important role on the external dynamics of Bangladesh foreign policy.

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The Editorial team of IDEAS would like to **invite papers** from scholars for its seventh issue in **2022 -2023** (will be published in September **2022**). The focus of the journal includes but not limited to

- Literature
- Language
- Arts
- Culture
- Music
- Paintings
- Social Issues
- Human Studies, etc.
  - Deadline for manuscript submission: **12 June, 2022.**
  - Write-ups submitted elsewhere must not be submitted.
  - Authors must guard against **PLAGIARISM (will be checked through Review Software)**. Plagiarized writing would result in barring that particular author from submitting any article in subsequent issues.

➤ **Review process**

All articles will go through **a double blind peer review** process. The editorial board will take final decision regarding acceptance or rejection.

➤ **Editorial Board**

The editorial board of Ideas consists of renowned foreign scholars along with distinguished intellectuals and academicians from home.

➤ **Benefits for authors**

Authors of the published papers will receive **one** specimen copy.  
The journal will be published as hard copy and be available online  
on the website of  
IDEAS :<http://cell-englishliterarylounge.com>.

&

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- **Papers must be sent in duplicate (hard copy by post and softcopy through E-mail :[ideas.bangladesh@gmail.com](mailto:ideas.bangladesh@gmail.com)) to the editor at:**

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**Ideas: A Journal of Literature Arts and Culture**

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## **NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS (At a Glance)**

**Ideas: A Journal of Literature Arts and Culture** is an international peer-reviewed journal of scholarly articles and book reviews. *Ideas* is published annually by the **Institute of Advanced Studies**. IDEAS invites contributions from teachers, scholars, and anyone else interested in the field of Literature, Language, Arts, Culture, Music, Paintings, Social Issues, human Studies, etc.

Contributions should not have been previously published or be under consideration for publication elsewhere. All submissions must be in English and should follow the latest MLA 8<sup>th</sup> Edition (for literature) or APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition (for language/ social science) style for formatting. Articles should be 4000 to 6000 words long, although this limit may be reconsidered, at the discretion of the Editorial Board. All papers must be professionally edited before submission. Papers requiring extensive editing after acceptance by reviewers will be rejected by the Editorial Board. Acceptance letters will be provided on request after the Editorial Board's ultimate approval. Upon the final acceptance for publication, it is to be noted here that a processing fee of tk. 5000 will be payable. The processing fee is non-refundable.

**Manuscripts must be double spaced in 12 point Times New Roman font and must include abstract, text, tables, figures captions, and references in a single .doc and pdf file.** The full mailing address, email address, and contact number of the corresponding author should appear on the title page, with a one sentence biography (affiliation and designation). A short abstract (150 along with 5 **Keywords**) should accompany the article. American spelling should be used. Endnotes and footnotes are strongly discouraged. Contributors may incorporate all notes into the text or include under a subheading (**Notes**) before the **Works Cited (MLA)** or **References Page (APA)**.

Submissions are accepted throughout the year and should send both the **hard copy and soft copy** to:

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## Notes: