

# Ideas



# Ideas

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It is with great pride, enthusiasm, and anticipation that we invite you to read the eighth 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 8th Volume (2022-2023) 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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# **The Heart is the Mouth: Coriolanus's Choice between Traitorism and Patriotism**

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Prominently, Coriolanus has been noted for his excessive pride. And the adage, 'Pride brings fall' can be applied to him. The text also gives evidence that Coriolanus earned this proudness from his mother, Volumnia. So, there has developed a thick component of psychoanalytical criticism about his dependency on his mother. Besides, *Coriolanus* has been well vindicated as a play contemporizing the events of ancient Rome in the context of early modern England, particularly in the equivalence of the Romans' uprising against the practice of usury to the Midlands Riot of England for corn in 1607, and Coriolanus's refusal to show his wounds to the people to earn their votes for his consulship has been connected with the antitheatrical movement of the 1590s, and King James's natural resentment of the publicity agenda. In addition to all these accepted interpretations, this essay would like to argue the case that it is Coriolanus's deep sense of patriotism that finally defines him despite the odds that he infamously becomes a traitor. Coriolanus is unwilling to show his wounds not because of exceptionality, but because of a perception of the uselessness of such a self-flaunting act, when he has done nothing else but serve his country to defend it against its enemies. After the single-handed victory against the Volscies by Coriolanus, Cominius in praise of him says that even the plebeians by going "against their hearts" (1.9.8) shall say that " 'We thank the gods / Our Rome hath such a soldier' " (1.9.8-9).<sup>1</sup> Coriolanus would like to

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<sup>1</sup> All references to Shakespeare's plays are to this edition: *The Arden Shakespeare: Complete Works, Revised Edition*, eds. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott Kastan; Consultant Editor Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen Drama, A & C Black Publishers Ltd, 1998)

ask how the wounds do matter—twenty-seven or whatever! Can the number of wounds—fewer or more—ever translate his patriotism? Coriolanus’s situation is like that of Lear when he is baffled by the quantifying stand of his two elder daughters regarding the number of his retinue he can keep if he was to be given shelter by them: Goneril: “What need you five and twenty? Ten? Or five?” (2.2.453). Regan retorts: “What need one?” (2.2.454) at which Lear breaks out into his famous rant: “O, reason not the need!” (2.2.456)

In developing a quest into Coriolanus’s true motive, I shall take note of certain philosophical and historical transactions that the play is contextually amenable to, while at the same time I shall come out with the conclusion that despite the ironic overture, Shakespeare does lend the heroic attribute to Coriolanus for being a character whose heart resides in his mouth rather than one with a heart away from the mouth. That is, the compromising self that Coriolanus attempts to develop in his temporary Corioles days but that yet fails does not change in our minds the image of the hero portrayed as uncompromising in the first part that consists in the phase from the beginning of the play to the time before his banishment in Act 3, scene 3, as is explained by Eve Rachele Sanders: “Yet as a reversal [referring to his allegiance with the Volsces], this one is short-lived; we are left with the last glimpse of Coriolanus that mirrors our initial one.”<sup>2</sup>

Hamlet’s “some vicious mole of nature” (1.4.24) that he says exists in people “in their birth” (1.4.25) of which “they are not guilty” (1.4.25) suggests that there is something latent in human nature that “passes show” (1.2.85). Coriolanus, likewise, possesses a mole of nature for which it becomes difficult to identify the prime impulse that motivates him. Aufidius, for instance, when he is trying to pinpoint what it was that turned Coriolanus into a traitor ponders on several factors: “Whether ‘twas pride” (4.7.37) or “defect of judgement” (4.7.39), or “nature / Not to be other than one thing” (4.7.41-2) but does not specify one.

While I will argue for establishing Coriolanus’ patriotism as the overweening impulse over all other allied qualities, I will discuss how

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<sup>2</sup>Eve Rachele Sanders, “The Body of the Actor in ‘Coriolanus,’” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Winter, 2006, Vol. 57, No 4 (Winter, 2006), 387-412, Published by: Oxford University Press, Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/4123493>, p. 391.

this sense of pride goes against a Machiavellian dictum that a ruler has to know how to fake to win a bargain. I want to focus on the essentiality of faking not to say that Coriolanus should be like this, but to say that this is a requirement that very much seems to be a discussable idea in the context of the play.

The structure of the play is ironical because when Coriolanus refuses to keep the gap between the heart and the mouth, he is adjudged a traitor by the tribunes and the plebeians in Rome, and when he practices this merging of heart and mouth in Corioles, he again is called a traitor, and thus the traditional sayings like ‘honesty is the best policy’, or ‘truth finally prevails’, seem to lose their efficacy. In 3.1., when all attempts by the patricians fail to desist Coriolanus from speaking harshly to the people, Menenius grimly observes: “His heart’s his mouth” (3.1.257). “What his breast forges,” continues Menenius, “that his tongue must vent” (3.1.258). Even Brutus will say in a later scene that Coriolanus “speaks / What’s in his heart” (3.3.28-9).

The play, however, posits that the mere ‘heart is the mouth’ policy does not pay. What is necessary is to have the required guile to lead oneself in society. The thrust of the play is that guile prevails over candidness. So, I will now bring up for discussion the various stages where Coriolanus is faced with the choice either to take recourse to guile or to be candid and, thereby, to be condemned for his choice, whatever it is, in a socio-political sense, but not in a spiritual sense.

In terms of the historical Coriolanus, who lived in the 5th century B. C., Nicolo Machiavelli’s ideas about statecraft as a constitutive part of the prince’s character are postdated, but if we judge the Coriolanus as drawn by Shakespeare, we see that many of the observations made by the political scientist can be noted to comprehend what Volumnia has said about her son that he does not use his brain: Volumnia, “I have a heart as little apt as yours, / But yet a brain that leads my use of anger / To better vantage” (3.2.29-31).<sup>3</sup>

When in 3.1., a heated altercation takes place and the angry mob is about to take over the control, the First Officer cries out that it will

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<sup>3</sup>After the expulsion of king Tarquin the Proud shortly before 500 BCE, Rome became a republic. So, Coriolanus came to fame in the early years of the 5th Century BCE.  
<https://www.livius.org/articles/person/coriolanus-gn-marcus/>



“unbuild the city, and . . . lay all flat” (3.1.198). Sicinius replies, “What is the city but the people?” (3.1.198). Then, all the Citizens shout out, “True, / The people are the city” (3.1.198-99).<sup>4</sup>

In a very perceptive essay, James Kuzner argues that the concept that “The people are the city” springs from a false notion about the law. Kuzner refers to Sicinius’s denial of access to the law for Coriolanus: “law shall scorn him further trial” (3.1.268). He calls it unjustified as it “exposes [Coriolanus] as bare life, as life that can be killed without reference to usual legal channels.”<sup>5</sup> Taking Coriolanus’s contribution to society into cognizance, Kuzner argues that penalizing Coriolanus is an odd decision, though it becomes possible only because the tribunes hold a kind of authority that emboldens them to disregard the law as they are commanding the mob, whose physical exertion has to be reckoned with.

Given his prestige and preternatural record of service, Coriolanus seems an unlikely candidate for such exposure; that Brutus and Sicinius succeed so easily shows that in the emerging republic, even citizens once of great value to the republic may not be far from being made into bare life.<sup>6</sup>

At such a juncture what Coriolanus is failing to understand is what Machiavelli clarifies by saying that it is better for the prince to side with the people as he can always manage them for their guilelessness, whereas the nobility will have factitious fronts and will deter him from achieving his objective:

. . . one cannot by fair dealing, and without injury to others, satisfy the nobles, but you can satisfy the people, for their object is more righteous than that of

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<sup>4</sup>Stephen Greenblatt has mentioned these lines as proof that in *Coriolanus* Shakespeare has implicitly supported a pro-people stand against all types of tyranny, including that of Coriolanus’s. See, his book, *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics* (New York and London, W. W. Norton and Company Ltd., 2018), Chapter Ten: “Resistible Rise,” pp. 155-182, and the book ends with the line from Sicinius: “What is the city but the people?” (3.1.198)

<sup>5</sup>James Kuzner, “Unbuilding the City: ‘Coriolanus’ and the Birth of Republic Rome,” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Summer, 2007, Vol. 58, No. 2, pp. 174-199. Published by Oxford University Press; Stable URL: <https://w.w.w.jstor.org/stable/4624974>. Page 185.

<sup>6</sup>Kuzner, 185.

the nobles, the latter wishing to oppress, while the former only desire not to be oppressed. It is to be added also that a prince can never secure himself against a hostile people, because of there being too many, whilst from the nobles he can secure himself, as they are few. The worst that a prince may expect from a hostile people is to be abandoned by them; but from hostile nobles he has not only to fear abandonment, but also that they will rise against him; for they, being in these affairs more far-seeing and astute, always come forward to save themselves, and to obtain favours from him whom they expect to prevail.<sup>7</sup>

Drawing on the above passage as providing an analogous paradigm may be considered slightly superfluous, as while Machiavelli's protagonist is a prince in a kingdom, Shakespeare's Coriolanus is a patrician in republic Rome, where the absolute rule by the prince was denied.<sup>8</sup> Besides, in *Coriolanus* the nobility is portrayed as loyal to Coriolanus all through, and nowhere has there been any noticeable sign of betrayal from them. Still, this Machiavellian perception should be held correct that technically Coriolanus would have better survived by siding with the tribunes or/and the mob than with the patricians. And, further, while Machiavelli makes no mention of the role of the middle-placed negotiators, in *Coriolanus* the tribunes, Sicinius and Brutus, play the vital role of setting the people on against Coriolanus. In 2.2., after the patricians have selected Martius as their candidate for the consulship, he only needs to "speak to the people" (2.2.134). But Coriolanus demurs that he "cannot / Put on the gown, stand naked, and entreat them / For my wounds' sake to give their suffrage" (2.1.136-38). That is, he will not display his wounds to beg the common Romans for their votes. As King Richard II shows the ineptness of the deposed king, not being able to genuflect to the new king, Henry IV, his usurper: "I hardly yet have learned / To insinuate, flatter, bow, and bend my knee" (4.1.164-65), so does Coriolanus not know how to woo the plebeians. On his first arrival on the stage, he addresses the

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<sup>7</sup>Kuzner, 185.

<sup>8</sup>Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. W. K. Marriott, The Project Gutenberg EBook [series], Release Date: February 11, 2006 [EBook # 1232], Last Updated: August 26, 2016., p. 34.

plebeians as “dissentious rogues” (1.1.163), whose servant he would rather be in his way, “Than sway with them in theirs” (2.1.204).

But sway he must if he wants to fulfill his mother’s recently uttered wish. Coriolanus’s return to Rome after the victory against the Corioles, Volumnia expresses her hope to see her son become the consul: “Only / There’s one thing wanting, which I doubt not but / Our Rome will cast upon thee” (2.1.200-02). Volumnia’s expectations are based on a personal sense of pride she has lodged in her son, and in reciprocation, Coriolanus performs heroically, as the First Citizen says, only “to please his mother” (1.1.38-9).

There is a passage in North’s Plutarch to support Coriolanus’s gratefulness to his mother:

In so much the Romaines having many warres and battells in those dayes, *Coriolanus* was at them all: and there was not a battell fought, from whence he returned not without some reward of honour. And as for other, the only respect that made them valliant, was they hoped to have honour: but touching Martius, the only thing that made him to love honour, was the joye he sawe his mother dyd take happie and honourable, as that his mother might heare every bodie praise and commend him, that she might allwayes see him returne with a crowne upon his head, and that she might still embrace him with teares ronning downe her cheeks for joye.<sup>9</sup>

A reckoning of Coriolanus’s wounds expresses Volumnia’s pride in her son’s battle feats. When Coriolanus comes back from his victory over Corioles, Menenius asks Volumnia in which area of his body was Coriolanus wounded. Volumnia replies that “I’t’h’ shoulder and I’t’h’ left arm” (2.1.146). Then she confirms that these wounds will be proved as “large cicatrices to show the people when he shall stand for his place” (2.1.147-48). Then a final count takes place. In the battle against Tarquin, Coriolanus had received “seven hurts” (2.1.150), and Menenius mentions another “nine” (2.1.137) hurts,

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<sup>9</sup> Plutarch, 317. “‘The Life of Caius Martius Coriolanus,’ from Plutarch’s *Lives of Noble Grecians and Romanes*, 1579 as in published in *Coriolanus, The Arden Shakespeare*, ed. Philip Brockbank (London, 1976).

which brings it to, as Volumnia says, “twenty-five wounds” (2.1.154), and Menenius arrives at the final reckoning: “Now it’s twenty-seven” (2.1.155). “Every gash was an enemy’s grave” (2.1.155-56), concludes Menenius.

Thus, the home for Coriolanus’s pride is his mother. Volumnia exhorts her daughter-in-law Virgilia for pining in the absence of Coriolanus. She argues that if Coriolanus were her husband rather than her son, she would enjoy his absence because “wherein he won honour than in the embracements of his bed where he would show most love” (1.3.2-4). That is, Volumnia’s honour code defines loving a husband in absence as more satisfying than in bed because the husband is engaged in a pursuit of honour on the battlefield. In her view, if a warrior is not stirred by fame, he would be as good as a hanging painting on the wall: “it was no better than, picture-like, to hang by the wall if renown made it not stir” (1.3.11-12). She relishes the idea that the “bloody brow” (1.3.35). . . “more becomes a man / Than gilt his trophy” (1.3.40-41). In one of Shakespeare’s most striking images, she presents Hector’s blood-smudged forehead resulting from his clash with the Greeks as brighter than Hecuba’s breast when she suckled him: “The breasts of Hecuba / When she did suckle Hector, look’d not lovelier / Than Hector’s forehead when it spit forth blood / Grecian sword contemning” (1.3.41-44). Janet Adelman expounds the vista of the image succinctly saying that for Volumnia: “Blood is more beautiful than milk, the wound than the breast, warfare than peaceful feeding.”<sup>10</sup>

Critics have also mentioned Coriolanus’s dependency on his mother as having developed a blind sight in him. Volumnia raised her child on the heroic honour code, the valiantness, but never on the other meaning of virtue which includes non-battle qualities like compassion and diplomacy. Katharine Eisaman Maus in her introduction to the Norton text of the play distinguishes the valiantness as belonging to the Herculean type of valour, that is pure military prowess, which in Shakespeare’s time was typified by magnets like the Earl of Essex, and virtue that she explains as belonging to a more compassionate and civil kind of practice enshrined by such group of people as the Cecils and Francis Bacon:

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<sup>10</sup>Janet Adelman, “ ‘Anger’s My Meat’: Feeding, Dependency, and Aggression in *Coriolanus*,” in John Drakakis, ed. and Intro., *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Longman Critical Readers, 1992), 355.

“like Hotspur in Shakespeare’s *1 Henry IV*, [that] seems to embody a conception of aristocratic excellence whose historical moment, for better or worse, has already passed.”<sup>11</sup> Phyllis Rackin provides a more sinister view on Coriolanus’s understanding of the concept of virtue that shuns compassion: “for the ideal of *virtue* that animates him does not include love or loyalty to anything beyond itself.”<sup>12</sup>

To understand valiantness mixed with compassion, an episode from the play *Macbeth* can be mentioned, where when Ross informs Macduff that his whole family has been slaughtered by the order of Macbeth, he becomes very upset. Malcolm urges him to “Dispute it like a man” (4.3.220). That is, to forgo his present grief and fight like a man. But Macduff softly replies, “I shall do so; / But I must also feel it as a man” (4.3.220-21). That is to say, for Macduff heroism is inclusive, and not exclusive of compassion. But this Macduff-kind of manliness is not what has been taught by Volumnia to Coriolanus, as Rackin says: “she has created neither a patriot nor a man but a monstrous prodigy, so obsessed with his manhood that he betrays his country and destroys himself to assert it.”<sup>13</sup> Like Macbeth and Antony, Coriolanus’s courage is dependent upon the approval of an influential woman, his mother Volumnia.

Another aspect of Coriolanus’s hatred for the people is vindicated through his refusal of distributing corn free to them. Critics have identified that by shifting the emphasis from usury to corn as the cause of the people’s uprising, Shakespeare has deviated from his source, Plutarch, to contemporize the issue by referring to the Midlands Revolt of 1607.<sup>14</sup> Shannon Miller notes that “usury is

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<sup>11</sup>Maus, 940. In *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition: Tragedies*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. (New York. London. W.W. Norton & Company, 1997).

<sup>12</sup>Phyllis Rackin, “‘Coriolanus’: Shakespeare’s Anatomy of ‘Virtus,’” *Modern Language Studies*, 1983, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Spring, 1983), 68-79. Published by: Modern Language Studies; Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3194489>. This reference is at page 75.

<sup>13</sup> Rackin, 73.

<sup>14</sup>Finding the correspondence between *Coriolanus* and the Midland Revolt of 1607 forms a major critical bulk of the play. I have consulted the following textual introductions to the play’s several editions and a singular article: Philip Brockbank, ed. *Coriolanus: The Arden Shakespeare*, 1976, pp. 36-37; Katherine Eisaman Maus, ed. *Coriolanus in The Norton Shakespeare: Tragedies*, (1997), eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al., pp. 938-39; Lee Bliss, ed. *Coriolanus*, (The New Cambridge Shakespeare, 2000), pp. 17-20; and Peter Iver Kaufman, “English Calvinism and the Crowd: Coriolanus and the History of Religious Reform,” in *Church History*, Jun., 2006, Vol. 75, No. 2, pp. 314-42; here pp. 323-24; Published by the

stripped of its plot significance and mentioned only once in the play.”<sup>15</sup> The First Citizen cries out: “[The patricians] make edicts for usury, to support usurers (1.1.72).” In Shakespeare, as Miller further notes, “Complaints of food shortages unite the people from the outset.”<sup>16</sup> Maus writes that in contrast with Plutarch, “Shakespeare’s plebeians . . . make only fleeting references to usury. Their main complaint is simple hunger: a familiar grievance to an English audience in 1608.”<sup>17</sup> Peter Iver Kaufman says that while in Plutarch the mob “objected to greedy creditors,” in *Coriolanus* the mob is hungry “and agitate ‘for corn at their own rates’.”<sup>18</sup> Janet Adelman says that “In Plutarch the people riot because the Senate refuses to control usury; in Shakespeare they riot because they are hungry.”<sup>19</sup> Critics have also connected Coriolanus’s despising of the people with King James’s attempt to suppress the Midlands riots. Miller writes: “both men attempt to suppress rebellion. James through his proclamation against the Midlands uprising and Coriolanus in his response to the demands of rebelling plebeians.”<sup>20</sup> But whereas King James could exert his royal authority, says Miller, “Coriolanus is unable to reverse the tribunes’ words as James could reverse Coke’s.”<sup>21</sup> Adelman and many other critics note that the riot for corn and the anti-enclosure movement threatened the social protocol of England.<sup>22</sup> Positioning Shakespeare as a rising landowner Lee Bliss

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Cambridge University Press on behalf of the American Society of Church History; Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27644767>.

<sup>15</sup> Shannon Miller, “Topicality and Subversion in William Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*,” in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Spring, 1992, Vol. 32. No. 2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama, pp. 287-310. This citation is from pp. 295-96. Published by Rice University. Stable URL : <https://www.jstor.org/stable/450737>.

<sup>16</sup> Miller, 296.

<sup>17</sup> Katherine Eisaman Maus, ed. *Coriolanus* in *The Norton Shakespeare: Tragedies*, (1997), eds. Stephen Greenblatt, et al., 938.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Iver Kaufman, “English Calvinism and the Crowd: Coriolanus and the History of Religious Reform,” in *Church History*, Jun., 2006, Vol. 75, No. 2, pp. 314-42; here p. 324; Published by the Cambridge University Press on behalf of the American Society of Church History; Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27644767>.

<sup>19</sup> Adelman, 354.

<sup>20</sup> Miller, 295-96.

<sup>21</sup> Miller, 305.

explains why Shakespeare could not be very warm about the popular rising.

Shakespeare doubtless had at least some personal knowledge of the rioters and their demands. His family still lived in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire and he had begun amassing property and local influence in 1597 by buying one of the town's finest houses. In 1602 he invested in a sizeable acreage of land, both arable and pasture, north of the town, and in 1605 one-half interest in a lease of tithes which brought him a yearly income of 1 60.

Shakespeare was possibly in Stratford at the time of the Midland Revolt for his daughter Susanna's marriage to John Hall on 5 June 1607; the Warwickshire riots both to the north and south of Stratford, had just taken place.<sup>23</sup>

Kaufman suggests that Shakespeare's real estate interests may not have extracted a sympathetic view from him of the rioters:

The playwright spent much of his time in London, yet as one of the leading cornholders in his home county he almost certainly kept an anxious eye on developments there. . . . For Shakespeare's cargo of corn should have kept him on the senate's side of controversies he scripted.<sup>24</sup>

Though the plebeians' demand is specifically for food, the patricians have a different view. The plebeians consider food as necessarily a given quantum, a fixed quantity. If it is not shared equally, then the imbalance will occur: "our suffrance is a gain to them" (1.1.20-1), says the First Citizen, who would like to consider the transaction of food grains through mathematical calculation. If the patricians take more, they will get less. On the other hand, food for

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<sup>22</sup> Adelman, 354.

<sup>23</sup> Lee Bliss, ed. *Coriolanus*, (The New Cambridge Shakespeare, 2000), 19-20.

<sup>24</sup> Kaufman, 324.

the patricians is an optional necessity, a substitutable item. When Menenius invites Volumnia over supper, she refuses it by saying: "Anger is my meat, I sup upon myself" (4.2.50). No solid food to enter the stomach but the passionate anger. Or food for the patricians is a form of appeasement as when Menenius plans to meet Coriolanus in exile, he waits for the time until Coriolanus is fed a good dinner so that his anger will be appeased, and so that he will not treat him the way he did Cominius: "but when we have stuffed / These pipes and these conveyances of our blood / With wine and feeding, we have suppler souls / Than in our priest-like fasts" (5.1.53-56). Or food can be used by the patricians as an item to play a trick with. In his belly fable, Menenius maintains that the belly is the distributor of sustenance to the other organs of the body, just as the senators are the protectors of the plebeians, to which the First Citizen, being unconvinced, says that the "head," "eye," "heart," "arm," "leg," "tongue," and "other muniments and petty helps," (1.1.115-18) of the body cannot but be equally important as the "cormorant belly" (1.1.120). Phyllis Rackin suggests that by ignoring those body parts which are "the emblems of authority, the vision and the compassion," Menenius presents a fallacious argument.<sup>25</sup>

This brief sociological background explainshowShakespearecontemporizes an event of Rome nearly two thousand years ago from his time into an early modern England scenario concerned with the demand for grain by an agitating mob. Thus, food is prioritized in the play both in its essentiality and its optionality.

Apart from food, the other vital theme of the play is pride, which like food also has a historical connection. We have already mentioned, through Miller, James I's uncompromising stand on the issue of condescending to people's rights. He let Sir Edward Coke, the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas realize that "the King protecteth the lawe and not the lawe the King."<sup>26</sup>

In enumerating Coriolanus' royal sense of pride, two further interpretations can be taken note of: one is the Pauline view and the other one is the Medieval and Renaissance concept of the king's two

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<sup>25</sup>Rackin, 69.

<sup>26</sup> Miller, 294.



bodies. In the Pauline view, it has been pointed out that the body is a thoroughfare to the ideal immersion with Christ. But the moment the body is disconnected from that ideal basis, it becomes a sinful agent. In this light, Robert McCutcheon explains that “By itself, the body is no more than its constituent flesh; grafted into the spiritual body, it is the opposite of flesh, incorruptible and coherent.”<sup>27</sup> This interpretation explains well the belly tale analogy by Menenius, where he emphasizes the coordination between the body parts for their sustenance, though in a prioritized manner by equating the stomach with the senators as the storehouse: “Because I am the storehouse and the shop / Of the whole body” (1.1.132-33). Asserting the integration of the body parts, “Paul exhorts believers,” as McCutcheon writes, “to discern their callings [the body parts’ separate functions], ‘Lest there should be any division in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another’ (1 Cor. 12.25).”<sup>28</sup> Sanders quotes Stanley Cavell as seeing a parallel between Coriolanus and Christ, though while Christ showed his wounds to his disciples, Coriolanus does not: “Coriolanus not so much as imitating Christ as competing with him.”<sup>29</sup>

The second interpretation says that the king’s two bodies consist of his body natural, that is, his physical body and his body politic—that is his ideal body, the symbolic representation of what the king stands for. When the king perjures himself, it means he has deviated from his body politic and exercised his body natural.

Further, this has been well noted by critics that Shakespeare departs from his source, Plutarch, by making Coriolanus unwilling to show his bodily scars to the people for their votes. In Plutarch, Coriolanus shows his wounds to the people: “Now Martius following this custome, shewed many woundes and cuttes apou his bodie, which he had received in seventeene yeres service at the warres, and in

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<sup>27</sup> Robert McCutcheon, “The Call of Vocation in ‘Julius Caesar’ and ‘Coriolanus,’” *English Literary Renaissance*, Spring 2011, Vol. 41. No. 2 (Spring 2011), pp. 332-374. Published by: The University of Chicago Press; Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43447965>. This reference to p. 346.

<sup>28</sup> McCutcheon, 346.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted by Sanders, 389.

many sundrie battells, being ever the foremost man that dyd set out feete to fight.”<sup>30</sup>

But Shakespeare makes a definitive departure here from Plutarch by making Coriolanus refuse to oblige the tradition. Miller mentions that when Charles I was executed in 1649, it was meant to be taken as attacking the body natural to defend the body politic.<sup>31</sup> Coriolanus might therefore refuse to display his wounds because he does not want to reduce his body politic to the body natural—the abject physical condition, where the body, as Sanders says, becomes “utterly passive, a body that receives wounds rather than inflict wounds,” or as McCutcheon identifies Othello’s tragedy occurring when he “in his frenzy, . . . reduces the body to ‘Noses, ears and hips’.”<sup>32</sup>

Adelman’s analysis of Coriolanus’s refusal to show his body wounds states that he is afraid that it would take away his exceptionality or he would not remain *sui generis*, that he would become a democratic equal with the commoners: “For the display of his wounds would reveal his kinship with the plebeians in several ways: by revealing that he has worked for hire (II.ii.149) as they have (that is, that he and his deeds are not *sui generis* after all).”<sup>33</sup> The same emphasis on Coriolanus’s sense of exceptionality is stressed by Madelon Sprengnether, who says that for Coriolanus to show his wounds “is to expose his incompleteness, his implicitly castrated condition,” and by R. B. Parker who says that Coriolanus’s refusal to display his wounds attests to “the denial of vulnerability on which his sense unique ‘aloneness’ is built.”<sup>34</sup> Arthur Riss is quoted by Sanders for seeing a correspondence between Coriolanus’s sense of privacy and the early seventeenth-century land closure system: “The play . . . establishes a correspondence between the impulse to enclose public

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<sup>30</sup>Plutarch in Brockbank, 332.

<sup>31</sup>Miller, 306.

<sup>32</sup>Sanders, 403, and McCutcheon, 346.

<sup>33</sup>Adelman, 361.

<sup>34</sup>Both have been quoted by Sanders, 389.

land and Coriolanus's urge to enclose his body, a body that the dominant ideology demands be made available for public use."<sup>35</sup>

Pointing out a sexual dimension in what Coriolanus says to a plebeian: "I have wounds to show you, which shall be yours in private" (2.3.76-77), Sanders comments that "the offer is one of promised bodily closeness, a fulfillment of the plebeian fantasy of intimacy with him ('We are to put our tongues into those wounds' 2.3.6-7)."<sup>36</sup> Sanders forwards an opinion given by Cynthia Marshall and Zvi Jagendorf that "Coriolanus himself is disturbed not so much by any meaning inherent in his wounds as by the indeterminacy of their meaning in a commercial arena."<sup>37</sup> As argued earlier, if Coriolanus would not like to put his sense of patriotism in any transactional terms, then it is the least likely that he would exhibit his wounds in the marketplace.

In another critical development, as regards the 'wounds', drawing on an English context, Sanders suggests that Coriolanus's refusal to exhibit his wounds corroborates with the antitheatrical debate that started at Oxford in 1592. She discusses the divergence of opinions between three professors of Oxford, William Gager, Alberico Gentili, and John Rainolds respectively. While the first two named were protheatrical, the third professor was an antitheatricalist, who vehemently argued against the theatre as it encouraged falsification, dissimulation, impersonation, and transgression.<sup>38</sup> Emphasizing that Coriolanus must "take on the role of an actor," she refers to Gentili, who though spoke in favour of acting, had also mentioned Plato's reservations against acting at the early stage of an actor's life as detrimental to the actor's health and character.<sup>39</sup> Miller also says that Coriolanus shares his antitheatrical attitude with King James who had a "personal distaste for performance."<sup>40</sup> She also mentions Shakespeare's use of the positive role of the theatre in an earlier

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<sup>35</sup>Quoted by Sanders, 389.

<sup>36</sup>Sanders, 390.

<sup>37</sup> Sanders, 390.

<sup>38</sup>Sanders, 398.

<sup>39</sup> Sanders, 387.

<sup>40</sup>Miller, 293.

play, *Hamlet*, where Hamlet emphasizes “the power of the theatre to extract confession.”<sup>41</sup>

As the play progresses, what becomes remarkable is that Coriolanus’s willy-nilly position regarding exhibiting his wounds is structurally built against the combined villainy of the pair of tribunes, Sicinius and Brutus, whose subtle maneuvering shatters Coriolanus’s, his mothers’ and the patricians’ desire to see himself as the consul, the top administrative post of Rome. According to Plutarch, the Senate of Rome approved of five magistrates yearly, called *Tribuni Plebis*, to defend “the poore people from violence and oppression,” and “Junius Brutus and Sicinius Vellutus were the first Tribunes of the people that were chosen.”<sup>42</sup> In *Coriolanus*, Martius (not yet the eponymous hero) says: “Five tribunes to defend their vulgar wisdoms, / Of their own choice. One’s Junius Brutus, / [and the other is] Sicinius Velutus” (1.1.204-05). As part of the administrative structure of the Roman republic would admit it in the 5th century BC, which was just at an emerging stage when Coriolanus was vying for the consulship, the tribunes became a powerful institution, and they here orchestrate to banish Coriolanus from Rome by terming him a traitor. Plutarch had also mentioned the tribunes’ seditious role against Coriolanus: “So Junius Brutus, and Sicinius Vellutus, were the first tribunes of the people that were chosen, who had only bene the causers & procurers of this sedition.”<sup>43</sup>

How this confrontation between the patricians and plebeians is dramatized in stages can be examined to show that it is not only Coriolanus’ pride that becomes responsible for the disastrous outcome, but the tribunes’ villainous role is also equally responsible. Thereby what becomes apparent is that Coriolanus is forced to assume the role of the traitor, but because of his innate sense of patriotism he cannot but refuse that role, and, finally, loses his life as a patriot.

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<sup>41</sup>Miller, 388.

<sup>42</sup>Plutarch, “The Life of Martius Coriolanus,” from *Lives of Noble Grecians and Romanes* as printed in *Coriolanus*, ed. Philip Brockbank (The Arden Shakespeare, 1976), in “Appendix,” 320.

<sup>43</sup>Plutarch, 320.

In 1.1., after somehow taming the rebellion, Menenius departs the stage, which is then taken over by Sicinius and Brutus, the two recently elected tribunes to apparently speak on behalf of the plebeians. In their conversation (1.1.251-78), however, the tribunes not only discuss Coriolanus's valour as having arisen from his pride but insinuate that they know how to work Coriolanus up with anger: "Being moved, he will not spare to gird the gods" (1.1.255).

After Cominius declares Martius to have gained the title of 'Coriolanus', "For what he did before Corioles, call him, / . . . Martius Caius Coriolanus. (1.9.62-4), the senators then march to the Capitol for voting Coriolanus for the consulship. But Sicinius and Brutus remain on the stage and from their conversation, we come to know that things are going to take a direction against Coriolanus. When Sicinius says to Brutus that he cannot but see Coriolanus as the consul: "On the sudden / I warrant him consul" (2.1.222-23), Brutus sharply replies: "Then our office may / During his power go sleep" (2.1.222-23). That is to say, if Coriolanus becomes the consul, they will be jobless, which they cannot allow. So, the conspiracy must be set on to dislodge Coriolanus from his expected elevation. How will they do it? Brutus knows what and how to do it. Coriolanus's known resentment to show his wounds in public, a tradition which had been honoured by all past aspiring consuls, he now wants to defy. Brutus says: ". . . I heard him swear, . . . [not to show] his wounds / To th' people, beg their stinking breaths" (2.1.231-36).

The tribunes show their villainous streak by turning a latent dislike for publicity into an expression of hatred of the people. So, Brutus says, "We must suggest the people in what hatred / He still hath held them," (2.1.245-46) and if he got the power, he would treat them like "mules" (2.1.247) and "camels" (2.1.251). Then the final ploy would be applied. When Coriolanus would become angry--his "soaring insolence" (2.1.254) roused by the people's behavior--that would be the moment for the tribunes to grab him with the opportunity to "set dogs on sheep" (2.1.257).

In 2.2., Sicinius and Brutus declare that the people are ready to accept Coriolanus's bid for consulship only if he gives "A kinder value of the people than / He hath hereto prized them at" (2.2.57-8). The amenableness of Coriolanus would be proved if only he displayed his body scars received in the battles for his country. Coriolanus leaves the Capitol house in anger saying that he would

“rather have my wounds to heal again / Than hear say how I got them” (2.2.68-9). But Menenius advises him to follow the custom: “Pray you, go fit you to the custom . . . / as your predecessors have” (2.2.142-43). Coriolanus explains that it is a role he will blush to play as it is more insulting than agreeing to please the people. Both Brutus and Sicinius, on the other hand, are infuriated by Coriolanus’s attitude, and Brutus says that they will “inform them [the people] / Of our proceedings here” (2.2.158-59).

But for Coriolanus even to imagine that he will have to get his patriotism verified by these “dissentious rogues” (1.1.163) is unthinkable for him. Feeling trapped, he enters the marketplace (2.3) wearing “the gown of humility” as the Stage Direction says at 2.3.39. The Third Citizen, however, plays out the strategic ploy that Brutus had implied he would teach the people. Instead of making a gathering, the people will stand “by ones, by twos, and by threes” (2.3.42-3). Coriolanus has to demean himself by asking each of them individually for the vote, and he (the Third Citizen) asks of Coriolanus: “Tell us what hath brought you to’t” (2.3.63). That is, why have you come here, or what has brought you here? Coriolanus makes a terse reply saying that he has come not out of his own desire: “No, sir, ‘twas never my desire yet to trouble the poor with begging” (2.3.64-5). The Fourth Citizen, thereby, accuses Coriolanus of not loving the people: “You have not, indeed, loved the common people” (2.3.90-1).

In reply, Coriolanus speaks out a passage in which once again he makes it clear that his heart is not with him in what he has been performing now: “since the wisdom of their choice is rather to have my hat than my heart, I will practise the insinuating nod and be off to them most counterfeitly” (2.3.96-9).

But counterfeiting is exactly the thing he cannot practise for the life of him. “Better it is to die, better to starve” (2.3.112) than to crave for the votes of any “Hob and Dick” (2.3.115) with wearing “this wolvisish toge” (2.3.105), utters Coriolanus in a short soliloquy.<sup>44</sup> As if making a reply to Menenius’s insistence on observing the custom, he says: “Custom calls me to’t. / What custom wills, in all things should we do’t [?]” (2.3.117-18). Custom keeps the truth hidden under the

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<sup>44</sup> “this wolvisish toge” is what F has printed. The Norton (ed. Greenblatt, et al) edition prints “this womanish toge,” which is equally applicable to suggest Coriolanus’s hatred of faking.

“dust” (2.3.118) of “antique time” (2.3.118) that remains “unswept” (2.3.118) and “mountainous error . . . [is thereby] highly heaped / For truth to o’erpeer” (2.3.111-12). That is, the truth will remain hidden under the heap of lies. He cannot suppress the truth, which is his inborn hatred of the masses. So, he should rather give up on his bidding for consulship: “Rather than fool it so, / Let the high office and the honour go / To one that would do thus” (2.3.120-22). However, Coriolanus does succeed in getting the people’s support at this stage, on which Sicinius confirms that people have admitted him and are “summoned / To meet upon your approbation” (2.3.142-43). The approbation, that is, the final affirmation of his consulship will be made in the senate-house. Coriolanus hurriedly departs from the place, finding repose in the fact that he can now throw off his “humble weeds” (2.3.143) for “knowing myself again” (2.3.146)—that is, coming back to his true self. We note, however, that the words “humble weeds” are used by Brutus to tauntingly suggest that Coriolanus has decided to change.

After Coriolanus leaves, Brutus and Sicinius take up the stage again and they instantly become successful in changing the opinion of the people against Coriolanus. In this long conversation between the tribunes and the Citizens what the former makes the latter understand is the fact that Coriolanus had merely faked his love for the people. Brutus charges the Citizens as to why they did not speak as they were “lessoned” (2.3.175) that Coriolanus was their enemy, who “ever spake against / Your liberties and the charters that you bear / I’th’ body of the weal” (2.3.178-79). Brutus further stresses that they could have tested Coriolanus by asking him to “Translate his malice towards you into love” (2.3.187). Sicinius also expresses his frustration at the Citizens’ not having acted as they were “fore-advis’d” (2.3.189). Moreover, he says that the people had missed out on using the main strategic ploy that they were taught. That is to say, they did not push him to rage, by doing so they could have turned him back empty-handed: “So putting him to rage, / You should have ta’en th’ advantage of his choler / And passed him unelected” (2.3.195-97).

Now the tribunes give another twist to the conspiracy. If another encounter occurs in the future, the tribunes advise the Citizens on what they should do in such a case. The Citizens should pretend to make the situation appear as if they were against selecting Coriolanus as the consul had not had the tribunes prevailed on them—a ploy they should make clear to Coriolanus. That is to say, he is not the people’s

natural choice, but the tribunes had pursued them to choose Coriolanus, and so the tribunes were on the side of Coriolanus. Brutus does it magnificently by first telling the people that if Coriolanus came to power, he would treat them even worse “Than dogs” (2.3.214). Still, they would state that the tribunes compelled them to “Cast your election on him” (2.3.227). Sicinius adds that they should say that they have chosen him “More after our commandment than as guided / By your own true affections” (2.3.228-29). Brutus adds further spice by telling them that they should inform Coriolanus that the tribunes had “read lectures to you” (2.3.233) on his life as a noble Roman, that he belongs to the noble family “o’th Martians” (2.3.236), of “Ancus Martius, Numa’s daughter’s son” (2.3.237). And Sicinius concludes the planned two-pronged anti-Coriolanus attack by saying that they should tell him that the tribunes gave them a clear idea about Coriolanus’s well-honoured pedigree, knowing which yet they found him their “fixed enemy” (2.3.248), and decided to “revoke / Your sudden approbation” (2.3.248-49). Having enticed the people to change their decision, Brutus becomes sure that the people’s refusal to vote for him will work like “mandragora”<sup>45</sup> on Coriolanus, who will be then angry and impetuous, which is exactly what the tribunes conspire to achieve: “If, as his nature is, he fall in rage / With their refusal, both observe and answer / The vantage of his anger” (2.3.247-49). That is, when Coriolanus is pushed to extreme anger and utter blasphemies, they will then take advantage of the situation.

In 3.1., Coriolanus is baffled by the tribunes’ information that “The people are incensed against him” (3.1.32). Coriolanus says if these people can change their minds like that, should they have any voices? Coriolanus suspects rightly that it is the tribunes who set them on: “Are these your herd?” (3.1.33) If the tribunes are in control of the plebeians, why they do not control them, Coriolanus asks in great bafflement. So, Coriolanus understands that it is a “purposed thing” (3.1.38) . . . “To “curb the will of the nobility” (3.1.39). Brutus replies that it is not anything the plot but that Coriolanus has angered them by calling them--as he now craftily reports--“Time-pleasers, flatterers, foes to nobleness” (3.1.44-5). Coriolanus then declares that whatever his stand was on the question of corn will remain so: “Tell me of corn? / This was my speech, and I will speak’t again” (3.1.61-

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<sup>45</sup>Iago mentions this plant for the poisonous effect it can figuratively force on Othello not letting him sleep. (*Othello*, 3.3.333).



2). A few lines later, he will confirm it again: these people for the kind of service they have offered “Did not deserve corn gratis” (3.1.125). He makes his grounds clear by saying that he does not flatter because by doing so the nobles have already lost their control over the plebeians and opened the gate for “The cockle of rebellion, insolence, sedition” (3.1.70).

Then Coriolanus raises a solid structural question, which is that by allowing so much power to the people through the tribunes, the senators have allowed “double worship” (3.1.142) that threatens the social hierarchy: “. . . when two authorities are up, / Neither supreme, how soon confusion / May enter ‘twixt the gap of both and take / The one by th’ other” (3.1.109-12). So, when two classes of society are in conflict it is the hierarchy that is made unbalanced. In such a situation, what should be done? Coriolanus conceives of the action in the form of a metaphysical surgery: “at once pluck out / The multitudinous tongue” (3.1.158-59). Instead of sweet let the plebeians lick poison, otherwise, the nobles will exacerbate the ill that they were supposed to control. Coriolanus is even clear on the premise that in an abnormal time the hierarchies probably do not matter, but in a normal time “Let what is meet be said it must be meet,” (3.1.170) and so “throw their power I’th’ dust” (3.1.171). At this, the chaos goes out of control, and Coriolanus does what the tribunes were so much wanting him to do—to lose his temper. In extreme anger, Coriolanus terms the people as “barbarians” (3.2.238), who might litter the streets of Rome.

This obdurate anti-people attitude cannot sustain as it will not only deprive Coriolanus of his intended consulship, nor will it enable Volumnia to realize her dream of seeing her son become the consul. As the situation now prevails, and as it is thought that despite the initial setback, Coriolanus must not give up but pursue his campaign, the Machiavellian idea of the need to display “a happy shrewdness” comes in relevance.<sup>46</sup> When Coriolanus speaks in surprise that he does not understand why his mother wished him “milder” (3.2.14), his mother, as Danielle Clarke says, acting in the mode of the classical ideal mother *matrona docta* Cornelia, mother of Gracchus, replies that he needs to get the power first, before he can

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<sup>46</sup>Machiavelli, 33.

play with it.<sup>47</sup> As if drawing on the dependency culture Coriolanus feels he needs to be tutored and asks: “What must I do?” (3.2.35) Menenius replies, “Repent what you have spoke” (3.2.37), to which Volumnia adds the idea that even Coriolanus had uttered in the past that in a crisis honour and policy can reconcile with each other: “I have heard you say / Honour and policy, like unsevered friends, / I’th’ war do grow together” (3.2.41-3). Honour is the heart, and policy is the tongue. She suggests to Coriolanus that as it was required of him to talk to the people for votes, he must understand the division between the tongue and the heart, and instead of putting his heart in his mouth, must isolate them and pretend to say what he does not mean to say: “but with such words / That are but roted in your tongue” (3.2.55-6). His words need to be rooted in his tongue, not in his heart. They shall be like “Bastards and syllables of no allowance / To your bosom’s truth” (3.2.56-7). That is, following the code of verbal irony, Coriolanus must make his tongue a stranger to his heart. Then she guides him through an illustration as to how such guiling with words be accompanied by an appropriate physical gesture: “. . . here be with them-- / Thy knee bussing the stones—for in such business / Action is eloquence” (3.2.74-6). His knees bussing, that is touching the floor in supplication—this is the image Volumnia conceives for her son to follow in his bid to win the election. And Menenius pinpoints the requirement: “Only fair speech” (3.2.96). And Cominius assents to the ploy: “I think ‘t will serve, if he / Can thereto frame his spirit” (3.2.96-7).

Can Coriolanus ever “frame his spirit”? As it seems, the critical apparatus is rather silent about the vicious role of the tribunes, which occupies such a central place in the play. It is because of their strategic villainy that Coriolanus despite himself is pushed to the position of the traitor. As it began in 3.1. and continued in 3.2., we even observe in 3.3. the continued efforts of the tribunes to frustrate Coriolanus in reaching his goal. The various stages through which the two tribunes flare up the people against Coriolanus are rather

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<sup>47</sup> Danielle Clarke, “Renaissance eloquence and female exemplarity: Coriolanus and the matron docta,” *Renaissance Studies*, February 2014, Vol. 28, No. 1 (February 2014), pp. 128-46. Published by: Wiley, Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24423869>, p. 132: She quotes from a source on Cornelia: “virtuous Cornelia, mother to the victorious Gracchus; who as she was an Exemplar or Mirrour of goodnesse and chastity, so by the improvement of her Education to her children, she exprest her selfe a noble Mother, in seasoning their unriper yeares in the studies of History, Poesy and Philosophy.”

noteworthy for their sharp political acumen—a property blatantly absent in Coriolanus. The tribunes put ideas into the people’s heads. Brutus, for instance, prescribes what the citizens should do: “In this point charge him home: that he affects / Tyrannical power” (3.3.1-2). And Sicinius propels the issue forward: “If I say ‘Fine’, cry ‘Fine!’ if ‘Death’, cry ‘Death!’” (3.3.16). And Brutus is more sanguine about how it will be possible to unnerve Coriolanus, just to enrage him beyond any control: “Put him to choler straight.” (3.3.25) And the outcome for Coriolanus will be disastrous: “Being once chafed, he cannot / Be reined again to temperance. Then he speaks / What’s in his heart, and that is there which looks / With us to break his neck.” (3.3.27-30).

But still, a Machiavellian analogy may explain the problem from a psychological perspective that Coriolanus is not fulfilling the condition of enabling himself to be acceptable to the people. As speech, rather the fake speech, or the dominance of the tongue is recognized to be a better motivating device, this is where we want to bring up the second Machiavellian intervention that can be applied to Coriolanus’s situation to understand not what he is doing but what he is not doing. That is his refusal to make a false speech act would not be estimated by Machiavelli as a positive virtue for a person desirous of assuming supreme power.

Chapter XVIII is said to be the most controversial in *The Prince* as Machiavelli has advocated that the prince must combine the strength of the lion and the shrewdness of the fox as “it is necessary to be a fox to discover the snares and a lion to terrify the wolves.”<sup>48</sup> But a big chunk of the passage closely anticipates what the Shakespearean Coriolanus needs to do but is not doing—faking his emotions.

But it is necessary to know well how to disguise this characteristic, and to be a great pretender and dissembler; and men are so simple, and so subject to present necessities, that he who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived. One recent example I cannot pass over in silence. Alexander the Sixth did nothing else but deceive men, nor ever thought of doing otherwise,

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<sup>48</sup> Machiavelli, 53.

and he always found victims; for there never was a man who had greater power in asserting, or who with greater oaths would affirm a thing, yet would observe it less; nevertheless, his deceits always succeeded according to his wishes, because he well understood this side of mankind.

Therefore, a prince doesn't have to have all the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is very necessary to appear to have them. And I shall dare to say this also, that to have them and always to observe them is injurious, and *that to appear to have them is useful*; to appear merciful, faithful, humane, religious, upright, and to be so, but with a mind so framed that should you require not to be so, you may be able and know how to change to the opposite.<sup>49</sup> (emphasis mine)

The dictum, “to appear to have them” is not what Coriolanus can do. For him, nothing appears to be but is.

Then he is banished. From his banishment to his death, Coriolanus has gone through a reversal of his life mode, from a hero he turns into a traitor by becoming an ally of the Volsces. In a short soliloquy (4.4.13-26) he ponders on this sudden fluctuation of fortune in human life, and he normalizes it by saying that friends may turn into enemies and enemies friends. Just standing at the gate of Corioles he utters: “My birthplace hate I, and my love’s upon / This enemy town” (4.4.23-24). His allegiance has shifted from his own country to a would-be adopted country.

But he enters the enemy town in disguise as a beggar, and on this Sanders forwards this cogent reason, which was implied by Machiavelli in the quoted passage above, that even the half-done performance during his campaign in Rome in a tattered gown had taught him that one can assume a role outwardly at any given time, keeping it distant from his heart: “outward signs of identity are variable rather than fixed.”<sup>50</sup> The very Machiavellian idea of playing

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<sup>49</sup> Machiavelli, 54.

<sup>50</sup> Sanders, 391.

to the public which he had resented earlier, he is willingly assuming it now as he is going to meet the Volscian leader Aufidius.

Even at this crucial time of his life, however, when he needs to be an accomplished Machiavellian by allowing his heart to stray away from his tongue, he seems to be immensely undecided or he cannot but be undecided. Is his heart not in his mouth any longer? Here is what we want to say by slightly deviating from Sanders's (or for that reason from Machiavelli's stand on faking) that even here Coriolanus fails to be pretentious. Not only does he introduce himself to Aufidius as "My name is Caius Martius" (4.5.68), but also explains to him in plain language that he has not come to take shelter under him but to help him to destroy his (Coriolanus's) banishers: "but in mere spite / To be full quit of those my banishers / Stand I before thee here" (4.5.85-7). Maurice Hunt has said that both Coriolanus and Aufidius stand for amity in rivalry, as he has found more similarities than differences between them. Like Othello and Iago, Hunt says, Coriolanus and Aufidius are each other's alter egos.<sup>51</sup> John D. Cox writes that "he seeks out Aufidius, the man he thinks is closest to being his equal."<sup>52</sup> This perhaps is a correct reading because when Aufidius listens to Coriolanus's offer to fight for him against Rome, Aufidius does not only embrace Coriolanus deeply but defines their relationship in a nuptial image as if they are more like husband and wife than two males: "Thou noble thing, more dances my rapt heart / Than when I first my wedded mistress saw" (4.5.119-21). That is, this chance meeting with Coriolanus has stirred his heart more greatly than when he met his wedded wife on the nuptial night.

But this imposed impression of conjugality does not stand for long as Aufidius's jealousy or competition in rivalry sharpens to the extent of ruefully asking one of his soldiers whether the Volscies are running after Coriolanus: "Do they still fly to th' Roman?" (4.7.1) So

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<sup>51</sup> Maurice Hunt, "Violent'st Complementarity: The Double Warriors of Coriolanus," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Spring, 1991, Vol. 31, No.2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (Spring, 1991), pp. 309-325. Published by: Rice University. Stable URL: <http://w.w.w.jstor.org/stable/450813>. Hunt writes: "Understanding the hitherto undescribed degree of Coriolanus's and Aufidius's complementarity involves grasping the resemblance between their relationship and that of Othello and Iago. Through their confederacy, Coriolanus and Aufidius become one with each other in two distinct but related senses." P. 310.

<sup>52</sup> John D. Cox, "Shakespeare and the Ethics of Friendship," *Religion and Literature*, Autumn 2008, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Autumn 2008), pp. 1-29, Published by: The University of Notre Dame; Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25676841>. P. 19.

Coriolanus in conformity to his uncompromising warrior character has started leading the Volscian forces, thereby pushing Aufidius to a secondary position. Aufidius, as Hunt implies, has an Iago-like policy up his sleeve.<sup>53</sup> He will tolerate Coriolanus until his main agenda of destroying Rome is achieved, and after that, he (Coriolanus) will have to account for that “he hath left undone” (4.7.24).<sup>54</sup>

But Aufidius does not have to wait for long as the opportunity presents itself in the form of Volumnia’s leading an embassy of women and a child to plead to Coriolanus to show mercy on Rome. The Coriolanus who violently rebuffed Menenius that he did not know any “Wife, mother, child” (5.2.81), that Coriolanus is now giving admission to a representation by the embassy led by his mother.

It has been noted that Volumnia’s plea for rapprochement is subtly woven with emotional blackmailing. That is, in her arguments, she subtly shifts the premise from the man-dominated war fronts to female-dominated domestic fronts. She bows to her son--an act which slightly moves Coriolanus--but he is still adamant in his decision: “Let the Volsces / Plough Rome and harrow Italy!” (5.3.33-34). He refuses to act like a “gosling to obey instinct” (5.3.35). Virgilia approaches (perhaps on a hint from Volumnia) Coriolanus; Coriolanus is a little more moved and confesses that he is failing to keep to his role of playing a traitor: “Like a dull actor now / I have forgot my part, and am out” (5.3.40-41). This means Coriolanus has yet remained the old Coriolanus with his heart in the mouth, the unchangeable, and the patriotic soul of Rome. Sensing this rising of patriotism in Coriolanus, Volumnia is intelligent enough to gear it up not along the line of patriotism of a general sort, but on a familial line. Further intensifying her move, she first kneels to him, then showing his son to him, says, “This is a poor epitome of yours” (5.3.68), and then declares: “Even he, your wife, this lady [Valeria], and myself / Are suitors to you” (5.3.77-78). But Coriolanus still

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<sup>53</sup> Hunt, 312: “Her utterance incidentally predicts that Coriolanus (Honour) and Aufidius (Policy) will join as a single fighting machine (‘unsever’d friends) against Rome.”

<sup>54</sup> I agree with Brockbank that it is not explained what Coriolanus had left undone. See Brockbank, p. 273: “The source does not, however, make it precisely clear what, at this stage, he has *left undone* [sic].”

persists in his decision: "Desire not / T'allay my rages and revenges with / Your colder reasons" (5.3.84-86).

At this point, Volumnia explains her trauma in concrete terms. From her end, it is an either/or situation: a mother's private crisis of allegiance between her son and her country: "Alack, or we must lose / The country, our dear nurse, or else thy person, / Our comfort in the country" (5.3.109-11).

Coriolanus cannot agree, and he is about to leave. Then Volumnia comes up with an extraordinary solution that peace not war must be sought between the warring nations. Volumnia's advocacy for 'reconciliation' is almost like a modern version of peace terms: "... our suit / Is that you reconcile them: while the Volscies / May say 'This mercy we have showed', the Romans / 'This we received', and each in either side / Give the all-hail to thee and cry 'Be blest / For making up this peace!" (5.3.139-42) Then only does Coriolanus relent, but with a fatal anticipation: "O mother, mother! / What have you done? . . . / Most dangerously you have with him prevailed, / If not most mortal to him" (5.4.185-6; 191-2). That is, he has succumbed to his mother's logic while exposing himself to mortal danger. And very naively rather he asks the only witness to the interview, Aufidius, whether he would act differently if his mother did approach him: "Now, good Aufidius, / Were you in my stead would you have heard / A mother less, or granted less, Aufidius?" (5.3.194-96). In reply, Aufidius says in an aside that "I am glad thou hast set thy mercy and thy honour / At difference in thee" (5.4.201-02).

Aufidius implies that Coriolanus has shown mercy to the Romans but insulted the honour of the Volscies. The embassy of Volumnia returns to Rome happily, but Aufidius feels betrayed. And Coriolanus sounds absurdly hollow when he gives the news of peace to the Volscian senators: "Hail, lords! / . . . We have made peace / With no less honour to the Antiates / Than shame to th' Romans." (5.6.71; 79-82).

But Coriolanus's acclaimed peace appears as nothing but a farce to the Corioles. As he presents the peace paper to the lords, Aufidius, who has already formed a clique of conspirators, straightway calls Coriolanus "the traitor" (5.6.85), warns them not to read it because Coriolanus has "For certain drops of salt" (5.6.93) "whined and

roared away your victory” (5.6.98). Demanding immediate reprisal on Coriolanus, Aufidius demolishes all his sense of honour for himself by calling him a “boy of tears” (5.6.101).

The best-recognized hero of the known world suddenly turns into a ‘boy of tears’, a pitiable “naked new-born babe,”<sup>55</sup> or as Hamlet says about Polonius: “That great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling-clouts” (2.2.383-84), or as Thomas Anderson says, “more like the comic Falstaff spitting playful aspersions from his mouth than Hector spitting blood from his head.”<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, Kent R. Lehnhof comments that being called a boy upsets Coriolanus for a wrong reason because every young child will biologically grow into an adult in course of time: “Though there is much to say about these unmanly identities, the figure of the schoolboy is of particular interest, for his insufficiency is only a temporary condition. Whereas women and eunuchs will never become men, schoolboys are not only eligible for this advancement but are also, presumably, well on their way.”<sup>57</sup> In a very different context, Hamlet also indicates as much when he comments on the child actors as they inevitably grow into adult actors.<sup>58</sup>

After Coriolanus is killed by Aufidius and his peers in conspiracy, Aufidius ends the play with a speech saying, “My rage is gone / And I am struck with sorrow” (5.6.147-48). There is scope to think that Coriolanus is given the last honour by his opponent and his body is carried for “a noble memory” (5.6.158), which can be assumed as his burial.

North’s Plutarch renders a eulogical narrative on how the mourning on Coriolanus’s death was observed in his city of Rome:

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<sup>55</sup>Macbeth, 1.7.21.

<sup>56</sup>Thomas Anderson, “Cute Coriolanus,” *Journal for Early Cultural Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Summer 2016), pp. 46-59. Published by University of Pennsylvania Press; Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/jearylmodcultstud.16.3.46>; this reference to page 55.

<sup>57</sup>Kent R. Lehnhof, “Acting, Integrity, and Gender in *Coriolanus*,” *Shakespeare Bulletin*, Vol. 31 (Fall 2013), pp. 353-73). Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press; Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26354966>. This reference to page 356.

<sup>58</sup> Hamlet, 2.2.364-68: “Will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players—as it is most like, if their means are no better—their writers do them wrong to make them exclaim against their own succession.”



The Romaines understanding of his death, shewed no other honour or malice, saving that they graunted the ladies the request they made: that they might mourne tenne moneths for him, and that was the full time they used to weare blackes for the death of their fathers, brethren, or husbands, according to *Numa Pompilius* order, who established the same, as we have enlarged more amplie in the description of his life.<sup>59</sup>

Thus it may be seen that though it is his inordinate pride that has undone him, Coriolanus yet died as a patriot, not as a traitor. His last-minute decision to withdraw from attacking Rome, his native country, cannot be viewed simply as being solely prompted by the domestic plea of his mother but because of the innate presence of love for his country that he could take his mother's advice as a ruse to respond to his latent love for his country. The villainous ploy of the tribunes is discussed at great length to vindicate this as mainly responsible for turning Coriolanus into a traitor, who goes against his own country. We further recognize that though the play does not present a solid premise to consider Coriolanus a patriot *per se*, we can note the following speech by Coriolanus made before the attack on the Volsces in the earlier part of the play: "If any think brave death outweighs bad life, / And that his country's dearer than himself, / Let him alone, or so many so minded, / Wave thus to express his disposition / And follow Martius" (1.7.71-75). But through experience, Coriolanus has shifted his ground and grabs the opportunity of listening to his mother's advice to attempt to reconcile the warring parties. Thus, it indicates that by the end of the play Coriolanus has switched from the *virtus* of military valiantness to *virtus* of compassion.

That is to say, while Shakespeare was drawing on his sources for writing a play on Coriolanus, he also responded to the current demand of his own country wherewith ascension to the throne by a non-English monarch was causing upsets, things were getting out of hand, and the play was written with the agenda to found peace amidst enmity. Perhaps, an earlier historical play will substantiate our argument that Coriolanus is characterized as a figure by Shakespeare

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<sup>59</sup> Brockbank, 368.

to promote peace over chaos, to annul bloodshedding, as Prince Hall in *Henry IV, Part I* speaks in terms of reducing the size of battle to a duel between himself and Hotspur: “to save the blood on either side, / Try fortune with him in a single fight” (5.1.99-100).

That is a kind of patriotism built on pacification rather than on enmity that has finally shaped a vision that Coriolanus highlights at the end of the play.

Patriotism, therefore, is an all-out effort, “a brave death that outweighs bad life,” and that can get intermixed with compassion to achieve a fuller expression.

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# Writing Error Free Scientific Research Paper

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## Abstract

This paper guides researchers into the world of academic writing. The goal is to provide learners with a practical and efficient approach to learning the skills, strategies, and knowledge that are necessary for writing error free research articles. Writing without any error is an essential step in the research process. But many researchers are never taught how to write an error free, publishable scientific paper. This article explains and reviews some grammatical rules emphasizing the importance of developing a voice as a writer, and provides helpful proofreading strategies to enable researchers to identify—and correct errors and weaknesses in their writing. Finally, this paper highlights the most common errors in writing scientific research papers. The findings of this qualitative research show some common pitfalls and recommend strategies to avoid them.

**Keywords:** Errors and weaknesses, Proofreading strategies, Voice as a writer, Scientific writing

*"If you don't have time to read, you don't have the time (or the tools ) to write. Simple as that."- Stephen King*

Writing is an art. But many writers face difficulty in writing as there are so many problems in doing that, whether it is a thesis or a research paper, or just a paragraph. But the good news is that it can be acquired through practice like other skills. Writing is a circuitous process with three distinct stages: Pre-writing / Writing / Re-writing ( “The Writing Process”, 2022) . Your motivation and passion are enough to master this art. In “On Writing”, Stephen King writes, “If you don't have time to read, you don't have the time (or the tools) to write. Simple as that” ( Gotham Writers, n.d.) Reading

allows you to witness the possibilities of the craft. As you read, you accumulate knowledge about what has been done and how it has been done. You gain an understanding of the diverse approaches to the craft and the effects of those choices on the reading experience. All of this observation sharpens your writerly and editorial eye, which is useful when you turn it back to your own work.

This paper guides researchers into the world of academic writing by providing learners with a practical and efficient approach to learning the skills, strategies, and knowledge that are necessary for writing error free research articles.

The key to great writing is great revising. But what if you're not sure what to look for? Or how to begin? Luckily, you don't have to be a linguistic scholar to be a competent writer or editor. With just enough grammar and a few easy strategies, you will be well on your way to some effective revising—and some great writing—soon.

Motivation and passion are enough to master this art and there is no shortcut or royal road to learning. There is only one magical formula for mastering a skill – hard work , hard work , and hard work.

The first part of this paper reviews some grammatical rules emphasizing the importance of developing a voice as a writer, and provides helpful proofreading strategies to enable researchers to identify—and correct—errors and weaknesses in their writing. The second part of this paper would highlight the most common errors in writing scientific manuscripts and research papers.

Some common grammatical errors plague manuscripts (Writing a Better Research Article, 2017). The researchers can avoid the following grammatical errors easily.

- Essential punctuation marks
- Subject-verb agreement
- Nouns and pronouns
- Fragments and run-on sentences
- Active versus passive voice
- Plurals versus possessives

- Coherence, cohesion, and unity
- Easy proofreading strategies

## **Punctuate accurately**

Using commas, periods, colons, semi-colons, quotations, and parentheses accurately is an important skill to have. It requires years of study and practice in English to punctuate sentences perfectly. Consult an experienced editor whenever you are doubtful about the use of punctuation in your manuscript.

## **Article**

Accurate article usage is extremely important for clarity and readability. Authors who are not comfortable with English tend to use articles incorrectly often. It is important to understand the difference between indefinite articles (a and an) and definite articles (the). One should know when to use which article. The definite article, "the", is used to refer to somebody or something that is the only, normal, or obvious one of their kinds such as body parts, countries, and decades. (For example, The President of the United States of America, The 1980s, The heart was harvested from an animal). "The" is also used before superlatives and ordinal adjectives such as "the fastest", "the highest", "the first of its kind", "the third replicate".

An indefinite article, "a/an", is used to refer to somebody or something that is not unique but rather just one among many. For example, "A student of medicine" or "An apple from New Zealand".

## **Spelling**

Always check the guidelines of your target journal. Some journals prefer the use of American English and others prefer British English. Many spellings, formats, and conventions vary between American and British English. Although document creation software such as MS Word gives you the option to choose an English convention, employing the services of a native English-speaking editor is the best way to ensure that your manuscripts conform/ follows all the guidelines of the target journal.

## **Coherence**

Coherence in writing means that all the ideas in a paragraph flow smoothly from one sentence to the next sentence. With coherence, the reader has an easy time understanding the ideas that you wish to express.

## **Cohesion**

All the supporting sentences connect to the topic sentence.

## **Cohesive Devices**

- connectors: and, but, so, when, in addition, before
- definite articles: the
- personal pronouns: he, she, they
- demonstrative pronouns : this, that, these, those

## **Unity**

Unity means that one paragraph is about only one main topic. That is, all the sentences -- the topic, supporting sentences, the detail sentences, and (sometimes) the concluding sentence -- are all telling the reader about one main topic. If your write-up/ paragraph contains a sentence or some sentences that are not related to the main topic, then we say that the write-up /paragraph "lacks unity," or that the sentence is "off-topic."

## **PROOFREAD**

The best way to avoid typographical errors and awkward sentences are to proofread your manuscript thoroughly before submission. Print out your document and proofread each sentence with a pencil in your hand. Errors in sentence construction can be spotted easily by reading the manuscript backward, one sentence at a time. Although the spell-check tool built into MS Word also functions as an English sentence corrector, it is not reliable, especially if your manuscript contains a lot of scientific languages. Reading out the entire manuscript aloud can also help you identify the incorrect placement of punctuation.

## **What is proofreading?**

To proofread a document is to carefully read it to find any errors in spelling, punctuation, or grammar, so they can be corrected before publishing (“How to Proofread”, 2019).

### **Why should you proofread?**

Proofreading is important for several reasons, but most importantly for ensuring clarity of meaning in your finished text. You want to make sure your information is clear, and your message is understood – there should be no room for misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

You also want to make sure your reader is not distracted by errors. Having a lot of grammatical errors or spelling mistakes in a piece of writing is not only distracting but can also be seen as a poor reflection of your knowledge and expertise in a subject – even when your actual content is great.

Unfortunately, even minor errors in your writing can negatively affect your reputation and undermine the weight of your arguments, which is especially important if you're writing because you want to be an influencer and be recognized as an expert in your field (“How to Proofread”, 2019).

### **Proofreading Techniques**

Get your content right first. Proofreading is the final check of your writing. Write your content and make sure you've included all your ideas and arguments, and that you have the right structure for your type or genre of writing. Carry out overview editing to check for things like: do your paragraphs flow well from idea to idea and guide your reader through your writing?

if you're writing an essay, thesis, article, etc., does your title and your introductory paragraph let your readers know what to expect?

Is your formatting correct? e.g. titles, subtitles, contents page, headers, footers, etc.

Check for whatever's relevant to your piece of writing. Then when that's done, you can begin your proofreading.

**Write first, proofread last.**



Leave your proofreading until you've finished writing. Writing and proofreading/editing use very different mental processes and trying to proofread as you write can break the flow of your writing, the creative process of writing, and your chain of thought. However, this is general advice only, as many people much prefer to proofread (and edit) as they go along.

### **Print a copy.**

Print your document out for proofreading. It helps you see errors you might have missed when proofreading digital versions. Change how it looks. If you're reading on a screen, change the font size and type.

### **Work on one section at a time.**

If you have a very long document to proofread, break it down into sections and work on one part at a time. This way, what could be an overwhelming task becomes much more manageable. You will be able to concentrate more fully on each section and will be less likely to miss errors.

### **Take your time.**

Read everything through slowly and carefully. Try tapping or pointing to each word with a pencil. Leave time between finishing your writing, and proofreading. For example, two or three days if you can for things like articles, essays, and ebooks, so you can look at them with fresh eyes. Check for spelling errors. Most writing tools have spell-checkers built in. Depending on your audience, if you're writing in English check you're using the correct spelling variations e.g. US or British/UK.

### **Check for punctuation.**

Especially punctuation that commonly causes problems such as semicolons and colons. A labor-intensive but effective way to identify any punctuation errors is to pick out every single punctuation mark with a red pen.

### **Check for missing words.**

These are very easy to miss as our brains automatically fill in the blanks, and we read what we expect to read.

## **Proofread for only one error at a time.**

It helps you to focus and not miss proofread anything.

## **Identify your weaknesses in your writing, and focus on checking for these.**

Every writer has them. If you know you tend to over-season your writing with semi-colons and exclamation marks, or you know you sometimes have trouble with subject-verb agreement, make a point of checking for those. When you get feedback on your writing, note down any recurring errors you make so you can hunt them out the next time you proofread.

## **Try reading aloud.**

Very often it's easier to pick out missing words and misspellings when you have to slow down and pay attention so you can read your writing aloud. However, much as you do when you're reading your writing to proofread it, there's a chance you may also read aloud what you're expecting to read/say. So for an important document, you could get a friend, family member, or colleague to read it aloud for you instead. Or you could even try text-to-voice software.

## **Read it backward.**

Try something different and start at the end of your text and read it backward! It might sound strange, but it's effective because it forces you to focus on just one word at a time.

## **Have someone else check your writing.**

Ideally, you need to have more than one pair of eyes looking over your work. For things like emails that need to be sent immediately, it's not realistic to do this of course, but for RESEARCH PAPERS/longer pieces get at least another two pairs of eyes to look over your work if you can. It's not always easy to find someone to check your work, but perhaps you could partner up with someone and reciprocate.

## **Use Online Proofreading Software.**

Online proofreading software is a very useful tool for picking up a variety of issues in your writing and suggesting ways you improve it.

Remember to keep in mind not to rely on it, as it won't identify some common grammatical errors.

### **Hire a Professional proofreader.**

If precision and clarity are vital for an important document, and if your budget allows, you can have a professional proofreader check your work. There are many sites offering proofreading services online, and finding one to suit your budget and time frame is straightforward. You can even find proof-reader who specializes in different areas. For example, academic proofreading to check for errors in your essays and research papers, or proofreading for medical, legal, or business writing.

There is a warning to the proofreading techniques suggested above - no matter how carefully a document is proofread, something will slip through the net. Who hasn't spotted a typo or two in a published novel that's probably gone through multiple stages of professional proofreading and editing?

If you have something to say that you feel strongly about, it would be a great pity if you didn't write it because of the fear that someone might call you out on your mistakes. The best way to improve your writing is to practice – keep writing, keep learning, and get into the habit of proofreading your work.

It is worth spending the extra time to make sure your writing is the best it can be, and that you're giving the best impression of yourself and your writing that you can. But don't let fear of making errors put you off writing. Every writer makes mistakes and even professionally edited and proofread documents are sometimes published with odd typos, missing words, and grammar blunders.

### **The Most Common Errors in Writing a Paper**

#### **INTRODUCTION SECTION**

Researchers “often underestimate the 'Introduction', the first section of a manuscript, in both its relevance and its complexity”( “How to Write and Publish a Research Paper”, 2020). .

The most common mistake is to write a too long 'Introduction'. There is no specific size limit for the Introduction, but a rule of thumb is to

limit the word count to about 10% of the total number of words in the manuscript.

The second most common error is a lack of coherence. Sometimes studies focus on many different questions, and their rationale is unclear. The Introduction often begins with a paragraph that contextualizes the theme of the study and presents the state of the art of what is under analysis. Authors should gradually guide the reader's thoughts to the objectives of the study, which are always described in the last paragraph of the Introduction. However, ideas should be organized so that, immediately before reading the objective, the reader understands the relevance of the topic and anticipates which gap in knowledge has to be filled.

The number of references should be limited to what is necessary. The most innovative studies tend to list few references, and an excessively large number of quotes harms the most qualified readers, as it suggests that the study does not bring anything new to the literature.

These are the most common shortcomings when writing the Introduction section. When there is any question about how to approach what and when, remember the KISS acronym: Keep It Simple, Scientist (“How to Write and Publish a Research Paper”, 2020).

### **Recommended Guidelines**

1. Be concise: no one wants to read excessively long studies.
2. As a rule, the Introduction should not be longer than 10% of the total length of the manuscript.
3. Pay special attention to text coherence and cohesion.
4. Do not present long reviews of the literature; use the literature to set the context for the problem under study.
5. Avoid sentences in which the authors of articles are the subject.

### **MATERIAL AND METHODS SECTION**

The Material and Methods (MM) section often has errors that originate from its construction. It is written at several phases of the study and different points of its generation. Therefore, writing

atavisms are frequent. All the MM sections should be written in the past tense because methods refer to what has been done, not to something that will be or is currently being carried out (“How to Write and Publish a Research Paper”, 2020).

Incomplete data are also frequent. Lack of information often results from the fact that authors have such a profound knowledge of their investigations that no information left out will affect their manuscript comprehension. However, such a gap will affect its understanding by other readers. Such inconsistencies must be avoided.

Additionally, authors often submit incomplete descriptions of their studies, which harms their reproducibility. A scientific study must always be reproducible. It should include information about the materials used, such as the active agents, manufacturers, and place of manufacture.

Finally, a very common error is not including a detailed description of statistical methods. Such a description should be at the end of the MM section. Several factors may explain this absence. The most important may be that most authors have a limited knowledge of statistics, which complicates the preparation of this manuscript section.

### Recommended Guidelines

1. Write all the sections in the past tense.
2. Where necessary never forget to include IRB [Institutional Review Board] approval.
3. Describe all methods thoroughly.
4. Include all the materials used, as well as information about their manufacturers.
5. When conducting the statistical analysis of your study data, ask the statistician to describe all methods as they should be published.

Do not fail to include a detailed description of those methods in your manuscript.

## RESULTS SECTION

The Results section is often inadequately short. Some authors may summarize findings insufficiently and then only refer to tables and graphs. Paradoxically, authors are also often verbose and show data in tables and graphs that repeat what has been described in the text. Tables are usually great means of showing results. However, authors have to be familiar with how to organize data in tables.

A useful tip is to check how other authors have shown their results and get inspiration to prepare your findings. An interesting format for the presentation of results is to write about the most important points in the text and then refer to graphs and tables that show findings in detail (Ten Simple Rules for Structuring Papers, 2017).

Tables are usually richer than graphs, but graphs may be a good tool to show results. However, some graphic presentations should be avoided whenever possible, such as, and especially, bar and line graphs. Figures in scientific communications are extremely relevant because they visually and intuitively show data that otherwise would have to be read. Some images are worth more than words, and this resource should be used wisely and creatively in scientific manuscripts. However, bar graphs are seriously limited when data have to be detailed. In this type of graph, different distributions may have the same graphic distribution. An alternative is boxplots, as they clearly show the distribution of data and use visual resources to present results

Another difficulty in being accepted for publications is the poor quality of illustrations in general.

### Recommended Guidelines

1. Do not be too concise.
2. Avoid being verbose. Briefly report the most important findings and then refer to tables and graphs.
3. Avoid bar and line graphs.
4. Include professional-quality illustrations.

## **DISCUSSION SECTION**

The Discussion is the heart of all scientific studies and the section where the authors should express their interpretative creativity and capacity. Several cases of “relevant scientific results have gone unnoticed by the scientific community because their authors failed to interpret the results” (“How to Write and Publish a Research Paper”, 2020). This means that data should be interpreted. Authors do not have to follow other authors' claims to argue in favor of an idea. This section is where the authors may be bold, make propositions and suggestions, and explain results; in other words, this is where they may introduce innovative interpretations. At the same time, this is where criticism of other studies that have noteworthy flaws should be made.

The most common error in this section is writing it as a literature review. The Discussion section should not be a review of the literature; it should compare and contrast findings with those reported by other authors and explain their differences and similarities.

Another frequent shortcoming is failing to include a presentation of the study's limitations. Honesty in clearly presenting limitations shows that the authors analyzed their study comprehensively. Failing to include limitations may convey the idea —often correct— that the authors simply did not understand the exact scope of the study that they have conducted.

Finally, any published study has to deal with all the results presented in the Discussion section. As a rule, if a set of data was presented, it must be discussed. Not included in this rule are minor details, such as data distribution normality and error of the method, which are discussed only when they have a such relevant impact on data that they deserve specific consideration.

### **Recommended Guidelines**

1. Do not make a review of the literature: use the literature to compare your results with those of other studies.
2. Make clear what the study limitations are.
3. All results reported should be fully discussed in the manuscript.

## CONCLUSION SECTION

The Conclusion section should be simple. The most common problem in this section is not addressing all the objectives listed at the beginning of the study (“How to Write and Publish a Research Paper”, 2020). The second most common problem is the presentation of conclusions that are beyond the scope of the study design.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of this article is to improve the quality of manuscripts that authors submit to scientific journals. Following the suggestions described above will increase the chances of acceptance for publication as the "only way to get a thing done is to start to do it, then keep on doing it, and finally, you'll finish it..." (Huges, n.d.) However, “authors should be aware that writing a scientific manuscript demands careful attention and many hours of work. Even experienced authors write and review their manuscripts several times before submitting them to a journal”(“How to Write and Publish a Research Paper”, 2020). In science, as in literature, an author's reputation is not shaped by the number of publications, but by the quality of what is produced.

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# **Lolita's Fiery Rebelliousness Prods to Binoy's Growth as Reflected in Tagore's *Gora***

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**L**ike Anandamoyi and Sucharita, Lolita contributes to the development of a male character in the novel *Gora*—Binoy—by creating a nurturing space through love, sacrifice, loyalty, and devotion. While she is encouraging and supportive of Binoy, her fiery rebelliousness prods Binoy's growth beyond the shadow of Gora's influence. Even then, her defiant spirit finally finds its destination in marriage, which the patriarchal ideology judges to be essential to complete womanhood. Often the essentialized feminine values are embodied through the social institution—marriage, the typical cultural destination of women.

Binoy - Lolita's love and inter-communal marriage manifest several messages: a woman's rebellion against conservative social custom, gender equality, and liberal-humanist practice. When the novel was written, inter-communal marriage was almost impossible because of religious and ritualistic differences. Lolita, a Brahmo, falls in love with Binoy, a Hindu, and after overcoming tremendous social obstacles, they marry. It is a radical step for a

single woman to entertain a marriage proposal from a man to whom marriage is not socially acceptable. The message that the Lolita-Binoy subplot conveys is that marriage is a bond of two human hearts

beyond caste and creed. Lolita and Binoy's marriage contradicts the mutual suspicion and hostility that their two sects bear against each other. The conflict resulting from inter-communal

marriage of a Brahmo and a Hindu captures the tension between narrow sectarianism and liberal humanism in this novel.

But there are other aspects that trouble the interpretation of the Binoy Lolita inter-communal marriage as an example of progressive minds. The need for their marriage is also driven by the matter of chastity, revealing a vulnerability of women in a male-dominated society. When Lolita leaves the English magistrate's house alone in protest of his tyranny and returns to Calcutta with her family friend Binoy, her action provokes much controversy in the Brahmo community. Lolita's regular meetings with Binoy at her father's home and, finally, her chaperone-less night journey by steamer with Binoy transgress the socially determined interaction limits between men and women. Scandalous rumor against Lolita spreads throughout the Brahmo community and profoundly damages her reputation. Thus, Lolita suffers the assault that patriarchal society inflicts on a woman's individual choices by questioning her chastity. To stop Lolita's reputational crisis, the narrator chooses the option of marriage when Anandamoyi advises Binoy that by marrying Lolita, he can "easily save her from the clutches of such a rumour" (*Gora* 253). However, while the false scandal itself is offensive, the solution to the scandal—marriage—is disturbing. Her marriage to Binoy, undertaken to stop the scandal, emphasizes that marriage is the ultimate harbor for a woman's honor.

One may argue that the marriage is never a gross compromise on Lolita's part, because the love that grows between her and Binoy drives the couple to be united through marriage. But the narrator provides eyewash for Lolita's social

vulnerability by hiding it under the guise of love. The text through which the

narration depicts the love problematizes Lolita's liberal and feminist image. In the following, I illustrate this argument through some

quotations. We will also see that though the purpose of the narration originally is not to devalue Lolita, an implication of her being underestimated is always present in the text.

The narrative voice refers to the idea of a male God in chapter 30 where it narrates the experiences of the night journey. The narration directly compares

watchful Binoy guarding sleeping Lolita in the steamer cabin with a male God,

the "ever-awake Bridegroom, who watches over the universe" (*Gora* 154). In the romantic setting of the riverbank and the woods, the metaphor of the bridegroom is connected with the growing love and care for Lolita that is in Binoy's heart. But by relating Binoy to God, the comparison also raises Binoy's status to that of the supreme protector for Lolita in her vulnerability. More broadly, it is disturbing to see Rabindranath's narrative device draw an analogy between the husband's position and God's. The metaphor raises the husband's position to the level of divinity while the potential bride or Lolita is subordinated to the position of an object. It should be noted here that Lolita is compared to a natural element—the "pearl in its shell." The husband here is not an equal companion but rather a superior being, the Highest Supreme Self, the *Purusha* keeping vigilance to protect Lolita or the potency of the *Prakriti* or Nature. Thus, although the narrative voice extols the love that is growing in Binoy's heart, it actually determines a dependent and lower position for Lolita, who believes in and aspires to gender equality. The metaphor continues: Lolita, the "untameable girl," (*Gora* 153) the one who has inspired the development of Binoy's character, now lies in a crouching position in her sleep. The narrator writes, "Like a pearl in its shell, Lolita lay wrapped in the silent darkness, enveloped by the starry heavens ..

(*Gora* 154).

Lolita, the exceptionally courageous girl, who has accepted Binoy as her special companion during this night journey, must be as valuable as a pearl to

the fascinated Binoy. But the metaphor is problematic, confining, as it does, the space of this "pearl" within the constraints of its shell. She is now "wrapped" in a "silent darkness," and even the limitless "starry heavens" confine her. This constrained space, predetermined for her, is marriage, and within that shell she is to be protected, a pearl for her male companion, to be sheltered, guarded, and appreciated as a passive thing of value. Even her core trait of fiery rebelliousness cannot save Lolita from her fate of being constricted and suspended in this way, and the narrator is complicit in this process.

In the same chapter, the narrator describes Lolita's love for Binoy when, in the morning, after waking up from sleep, Lolita stares at the tired Binoy sleeping on a deck chair:

Immediately she [Lolita] slipped back to her cabin with tremulous footsteps and, standing at the door, gazed on Binoy ... —his [Binoy's] figure, for her, becoming the centre of the galaxy of stars which watched over the world.

As she looked on, her heart filled with an indescribable sweetness and her eyes brimmed over with tears. It seemed as though the God whom her father had taught her to worship, had come to-day and blessed her with outstretched hand; and, at the sacred moment when, on the slumbering bank of the river, cosy under the foliage of its dense woods, the first secret union of the coming light with the departing darkness took place, the poignant music of some divine *vina* seemed to ring through this vast star spangled chamber of the universe. (Gora 156)

In the narrator's language, two beings exist in this setting—the *Purusha* or God who manifests himself through the sleeping Binoy, and the rest of the universe, the outward nature, the *Prakriti*, consisting of woods, river, sunlight, and Lolita. The divine music pervades nature of which Lolita has become a part. The union of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* reminds us of an ideal Hindu marriage which, from a symbolic perspective, establishes harmony between God and a human being.

However, the harmony created between Binoy and Lolita through love places the male partner in a divine, high, and overpowering position while determining the role of a passive receiver for the female partner as the text notes God condescends to bless Lolita.

The description continues to prove patriarchal, restraining Lolita's subjectivity, as we are told, "For it had come to this pass, that the thought of

Binoy had taken complete possession of her mind" (*Gora* 224). Apparently, by the word "possession," the narration denotes that love for Binoy completely

occupies Lolita's heart. However, the use of the word "possession" in the sense of control or ownership also suggests that Lolita loses her self-control and Binoy now "owns" her heart. In this latter view, Lolita, whom critics always praise for her subjective decision to control her own life and actions, is in the narrative's language in fact an object to be owned or controlled. Once again we return to the argument of Lolita's marginalization in the text which is my key concern in this section.

In chapter 52 we find the description about Binoy's secret rapture at the prospect of his probable union with Lolita: "Had not this flood of abuse which

had overwhelmed Lolita taken her and floated her to the secure refuge of his

heart? He could not banish from his mind the image of Lolita borne by this flood away from her own society towards him ..." (*Gora* 249). Society is uncompromisingly pitiless with Lolita, and Lolita has no place to go except the "secure refuge" or "hridayer danga"<sup>15</sup> that Binoy can offer. By using the phrase "secure refuge," the text ensures Binoy's love for Lolita and indicates that only Binoy's marriage proposal can secure a place of safety for her. Apparently in this presentation we sense the implied narrator's implicit joy that human feeling triumphs over societal division. Nevertheless, here the image of Lolita is disturbing. It presents her as a helpless and distressed

woman; she is like floating straw struggling for a stronghold possibly in marriage with Binoy. Lolita, who has been fighting against social taboos and endeavoring to establish identity, is shown as rootless and dependent, like a piece of straw floating on a flood of abuse. The very word "refuge" denotes several meanings connected with shelter or escape. Binoy's love is the only secure anchorage on which she can depend.

In the same chapter, Lolita and Binoy's inter-communal marriage is predicted favorably:

There was no true obstacle to the union of Lolita and Binoy. God, the inner Lord of both their hearts, knew how ready Binoy was to sacrifice the whole of his life for her welfare and happiness—was it not He who had drawn Binoy so close to her from the very first?

—there was no obstacle in His eternal decrees. Was the God who was worshipped in the Brahmo Samaj by people like Panu Babu

some different Being? Was He not the Ruler of human hearts?

*(Gora 251)*

By the "eternal decree" of God, these disciples of two different sects fall in love with each other. Again we find the narrative voice identifying inter-communal love as a unifying and permissive societal force. But, in its language, at the agency of a male God, it is Binoy's life that is to be "sacrifice[d]" by rescuing the damsel in distress. The sacrifice is seen as being Binoy's, even though, in reality, Lolita too made a similar sacrifice by risking her good name. Thus the use of the word "sacrifice" cannot escape the partial perspective of the narrator. More disturbingly, the god is here patriarchal because, instead of proving Lolita's innocence, he decrees refuge in marriage for her uncommitted deviance. Lolita is accused of transgressing social propriety. The overall tone of the narrative indicates that the Brahmo community doubts her, suspecting that she was unchaste during her night journey with Binoy, even though she actually slept in the steamer cabin all through the night.

Rabindranath envisages a secular space—religiously tolerant and essentially humanistic—for emerging India, as I discussed in chapter 1. When his narrative device presents Lolita's inter-communal love and marriage in a positive tone, Rabindranath's vision is reflected through it. However, as I discussed above, the narration itself marginalizes Lolita, the educated New Woman, through text and situational irony. As the narrative mechanism in many places mirrors Rabindranath's subjective notions about nationalism and gender, he cannot escape the responsibility when his device indicates a subordinate position for Lolita in the text.

It is undeniable that Sucharita's intellectual depth and patriotic commitment, Anandamoyi's unprejudiced motherhood, and Lolita's non-sectarian love are some exemplary key-steps to create Rabindranath's cherished humanistic national state. Nevertheless this is not their only presentation. On the whole, the gender issue in *Gora* unsettles it as a homogenous narrative of a nation distributing equal importance between male and female agency. The nationalistic discourse, through its literature, seeks to liberate the dependent identity of the colonized; however, in the case of its own women, the same discourse applies hegemonic force to ensure women's dependence. Likewise, the text of *Gora* enfeebles the subjectivity of the main woman characters—Anandamoyi, Sucharita, and Lolita.

## Notes:

1 For the phrase "new women" see Partha Chatterjee (627-28). Also see it as quoted in Geraldine

Forbes (28-29). The "new women" referred to modern, educated and purdah-free Indian women

emerged in colonial Bengal. 66



2 To know about Hindu Revivalism and Brahmoism see Syed Akram Hossain (61-63). Also see

Forbes (12-13) to understand colonial reasons and insistence for Indian women's modernization.

3 For details see Partha Chatterjee's article cited and discussed in section 2.2. Also see Keshab

Chandra Sen's "The Reconstruction of Native Society" in *Keshub Chunder Sen's Lectures in*

*India* (299-320), Rajnarain Bose's *Se kala ara e kala*, and Bhudeba Mukhopadhyaya's essay

"Lajjairlata" in *Bhudeba-racanasambhara* (453-56). Rajnarain Bose, the Brahmo-nationalist and

modernist regretted that contemporary native women lacked the traditional virtues such as

affection, kindness, and devotion to husband ((87-88). Keshab Chandra Sen, the dynamic Brahmo

reformer and leader, was alarmed to find that the contemporary female education was incomplete

as it failed to train the native women to "please" their husbands and parents (313-14). In other

words, these intellectuals recognized these attributes as the distinguishing features of their own

women.

4 See Anderson's "Imagined Communities" in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (123-25).

Anderson defines the nation as an "imagined political community" (124).

5 The subsequent quotations from the English novel are taken from Rabindranath Tagore's *Gora*

published by Macmillan. For details see Work Cited.

61 find Humayun Azad's criticism of Rabindranath useful. From a feminist perspective, Azad

analyzes some of his poems and essays. Like Chatterjee's, Azad's work also depends on the

home-world theory. It provides the theoretical basis of some parts of this dissertation which

concentrate on Rabindranath's two novels that are hardly discussed in Azad's work. Azad's

argument is that based on Victorian home-world concept, Rabindranath's gender notion confines

women into home and ensures male domination over her (116-44). However, some paragraphs

from Sucharita and Anandamoyi sections will show that unlike Azad, I do not see the supposedly

feminine virtues essentially negative attributes. Rather these can be interpreted in more than one

way.

7 For the Bengali term see *Gora* (Tagore, *Rabindra-racanabali* 6: 236).

8 For the Bengali term see *Gora* (Tagore, *Rabindra-racanabali* 6: 238).

9 See *Gora* (Tagore, *Rabindra-racanabali* 6: 240).

10 For the Bengali term see *Gora* (Tagore, *Rabindra-racanabali* 6: 471).

11 For reference to the expected distinction between educated New Women and other native

women, see Partha Chatterjee's article cited in section 2.2.

12 Rabindranath wrote "duff krodadebata" for "two idols" in Bengali *Gora* (*Rabindra-racanabali*

6: 327).

13 Chattejee's and Azad's discussions help me to formulate this interpretation.

14 As Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan note, in the prevailing post-colonial view, colonization is

represented through masculine metaphors (102-103).

15 See the Bengali phrase in Bengali *Gora* (Tagore, *Rabindra-racanabali* 6: 406).

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# **The Treatment of Trauma and Memory in the Dramatic Art of Eugene O'Neill**

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## ***Abstract:***

Memory and trauma appear to play a very significant role in thematically connecting many of the plays by American Nobel Laureate playwright Eugene O'Neill. In many of his plays, O'Neill (1888–1953) attempted to reflect on trauma and memory, and was essentially and predominantly concerned with subjective/individual, not collective, memory. When diverse aspects of O'Neill's plays have been appreciated and analyzed, his reflection on trauma and memory has not been adequately analyzed and appreciated. This paper intends to explore the playwright's preoccupation with memory and trauma in creating his characters through an intensive reading of *Strange Interlude* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*. The paper also intends to show how O'Neill's treatment of memory and trauma is virtually different from that found in Greek or Shakespearean plays. The paper finds that trauma in O'Neill's characters, essentially modern and urban, is categorically different from that in the Greek or Shakespearean plays, especially tragedies, and that O'Neill's plays lack the catharsis, or therapeutic strength, that marks the Greek and Shakespearean plays.



**Keywords: Modern American Drama, Memory, Trauma, Psychosis, Tragedy**

Memory has long remained one of the central themes in any discussion of modern literary texts and aesthetics. Literary critics have also connected discussion and discourse on memory with both modern and post-modern aesthetics, especially with late twentieth-century literature. They have also examined and emphasized the centrality of memory in contemporary plays. Critic Jeannette R. Malkin, for example, argues in *Memory Theatre and Post-modern Drama* (1999) that a significant number of theatre texts written since the 1970s "exhibit an exceptional preoccupation with the questions of memory, both in terms of their thematic attention to the remembered or repressed pasts, and in terms of the plays' "memorized" structures: structures of repetition, conflation, regression, echoing, overlap and simultaneity". The treatment of memory in modern and post-modern theatre, however, varies substantially, and the treatment has undergone a phenomenal change in its nature and operative mode in contemporary theatre.

The changed view of memory in post-modern theatre is expressed by a set of new characteristics. In post-modern theatre, voice and image are given precedence over narrative and character in post-modern theatre, the collective over the individual, and the interactive over the self-contained, intact text. In this reformed reality, the question of who is doing the remembering is problematic too. Unlike the treatment of memory as a theme in the modernist play, "where a protagonist, or group, is the explicit source of remembrance, post-modern drama has no psychologically endowed character who can act as locus of call", the post-modern memory theatre, Malkin continues, involves explicit, and usually loaded, evocation of collective past, and that too "without order, causality, direction, or coherence...." (Malkin 7-9).

In modern memory theatre, there is an emphasis on individual memory, which comes from, among others, the vitalist philosophy of Bergson, Proust's idealizing of involuntary memory, Joyce's stream of consciousness, and, the psychology of Freud (Malkin 6). Malkin also refers to Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Chekhov, and Strindberg while speaking of memory in modern theatre. Malkin goes

further to stress the connection between memory and trauma and to assert memory to be performed as traumatized. Malkin also associates the urges to repeat the unhappy past as essentially “psychotic” and an indication of post-traumatic stress disorder. (Malkin 21)

Memory as traumatized remembrance is essentially a post-modern experience and characteristic. Malkin sees three components of such traumatized remembrance: a) it is always “provoked by external events” and it never integrates with the personality of the sufferer; b) it always expresses itself “belatedly” and is, therefore, “displaced”; c) the trauma of a historical event becomes the pathology of the history itself. Memory that sets in as trauma, therefore, generates disorder which eventually results in a wide set of psychological problems — “from memory loss and depression to psychotic urges to return to , and eternally repeat the traumatic past.”(Malkin 29)

How an individual’s life is affected by the past and how the past creates a traumatic present has been a central topic for many psychologists and psychoanalysts, including Sigmund Freud, who attempted to explain how complexes developed in childhood shape an adult’s later life, memory and trauma. Freud, for example, regards trauma as any excitation from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield, disturbing the functioning of the organism’s energy, that would continue to live in the individual for his entire life.

Trauma, to put it in other words, cannot be explained by events that caused it; it rather is defined by and consists in, as Cathy Caruth, in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, says, “the structure of its experience or reception: the event is not assimilated fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it, to be traumatized is to be possessed by an image or event” (Caruth 172).

Why trauma has become a pivotal subject connecting so many disciplines from literary studies to historiography is a question that has been engaged and been explored by many critics. James Berger, in *Trauma and Literary Theory* (1997), probes possible reasons for such absorbing interest in trauma among literary and cultural theorists (Berger 571). A greater exposure to family dysfunction, social disintegration, wars, aggression, and catastrophes is believed to have created extensive consciousness of the traumatic events and their

impacts, making theorists turn to concepts of trauma as tools of analysis. Berger also connects the conceptions of trauma and the problems of representation since trauma theory attempts to deal with the event that “destabilizes language” and provokes denial, amnesia, delayed memory.

A central statement of trauma theory is, says Michelle Balaev, that trauma creates a shock that splits or destroys identity, (Balaev 149). A defining feature of trauma literature is that it conveys profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels, a loss or fear that enables the transformation of the self, ignited by an external, often terrifying, experience.

It is in this context that this study intends to analyze the treatment of memory and trauma in O’Neill’s *Strange Interlude* and *Long Day’s Journey into Night*. The study takes a critical and analytical methodological approach and refers to a number of O’Neil’s plays, besides *Strange Interlude* and *Long Day’s Journey into Night* to see the playwright’s treatment of memory and trauma in a larger context.

The role of the past as a defining element in the thematic structure of O’Neil’s plays has been pointed out and discussed by many. But little attention has been given to the dramatist’s reflection on trauma and traumatized memory. To begin with, O’Neil’s plays, especially *Strange Interlude* and *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, are predominantly concerned with personal memory, not collective memory. Moreover, memory in these plays is heavily charged with elements and vestiges of trauma and the impact it has on the behaviors of the characters. The impact of trauma on O’Neil’s characters is essentially regressive in nature that makes the characters get fixated on certain points in the past. As a result, O’Neil’s characters appear to be in an affected state, overwhelmingly depressive, repetitive, anxious and, at times, nihilistically inclined towards death. What is also quite unique too, and modern/post-modern in spirit in O’Neil’s characters, is that they do not come out of their trauma or do not come to terms with it, as is the case in Greek or Shakespearean plays.

Much of the intensity of O’Neil’s treatment of the past, memory and trauma, as critics Lurin R. Porter and Doris Alexander comment, come from his personal life, which was fraught with a sense of mammoth loss. Creativity in O’Neil is, as Porter argues, a traumatized

response to the deep sense of loss. His plays are a strategy for him to make sense of the loss, to make up for a resentful past. Alexander also comments in the same vein: “For Eugene O’Neill, a play was an opportunity to confront and solve pressing life problem, and the order in which he tackled plays, and the arousal in his mind of a particular configuration of memories and ideas to shape them”, writes Doris Alexander in *Eugene O’Neill’s Creative Struggle: The Decisive Decade 1924-1933*(Alexander 109).Alexander, moreover, blends autobiography and psychoanalysis to such an extent as to read *Strange Interlude* as a play about O’Neill’s oedipal and sexual conflicts portrayed through the personas of Charlie Marsden and Nina Leeds.

Another critic Stephen A. Black, in *Eugene O’Neill: Beyond Mourning and Tragedy* (2002), finds and emphasizes the close connection between the playwright’s traumatized loss and their creative urges. The traumatic experience of the loss of an entire family (brother, father and mother), and the plays written in the remaining two decades dealing with the confrontation with loss. However, O’Neill’s confrontation with loss was in the spirit of acceptance of loss, which is hardly present in the characters of his plays. “Through the exploration of the family portraits and themes, O’Neill does the work of mourning that goes on at a glacial pace and encompasses most of the playwright’s working life. But it does progress. One can follow in the plays his resistance to grief and his erratic progress toward accepting his losses.” (Black 2)

Referring to the use of memory in *Long Day’s Journey into Night*,J. Chris Westgate, in his essay titled “Tragic Inheritance and Tragic Expression in *Long Day’s Journey into Night*”, argues that memory plays a vital role in the life of the entire persona. Westgate argues that memory in *Long Day’s Journey into Night* is a force that “disrupts the linearity of their lives” (Westgate 8). In a rather different approach, John Henry Raleigh, in his article “Communal, Familial, and Personal Memories”, sees communal, familial, and personal memories particularly in *Long Day’s Journey into Night*: “The Human memory, on one of its many levels, manifests itself in three overlapping categories: the historical; the familial and social; the autobiographical and personal. At one end of the scale is the constellation of collective memories, given by one’s socio-economic class ethnic background, education, religion, the historical period of one’s nationality, and so

on. At the other end of the spectrum, in a purely private shrine in one's unique ego, there are those individual memories that no one else, past, present or future, will ever share or know." (Raleigh 205)

Collective memory in *Long Day's Journey into Night* is exhibited through the presence the Irish factor in this catholic American family, which in turn generates such levels of morbidity in the Tyrone family that finds reflection in their sense of "not belonging, a kind of cosmic loneliness"(Raleigh 206). This collective memory, writes Raleigh, is also reflected in a number of other plays like *Emperor Jones*, *The Iceman Cometh*, and *A Touch of Poet*. But what fascinates the readers is not the collective in memory, but the personal/the subjective that excites so much indulgence by the characters in *Long Day's Journey into Night* that is pervasive and timeless. Largely, the form of traumatic experience in O'Neill springs from some personal mistakes, loss, and grief, the experience that is repeated consistently and compulsively to create Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

In *Strange Interlude* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*, readers come across the dramatization of Freudian oedipal dynamics at work in the personal life of the characters that leaves them preoccupied and creates a sense of mourning for the loss of the desired object (mother). This kind of sense of loss leaves the sufferers psychotic and neurotic, where each character suffers, to varying extent, from the trauma whose origin lies in the individuals' past experiences. In some other plays like *Desire under Elms* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*, the characters suffered on account of the absent mother figure makes a very predominantly traumatic appearance in forms such as incest, lust which create propensity to put life to an end. As such, the past appears to be linked with the present through dark desires and drives of incest, adultery, even murder.

This paper, however, examines the traumatic effect of past and traumatized behavior in areas other than Freudian.

In accordance with the modernist, and to some extent the post-modernist, stance on memory and trauma, O'Neill is essentially concerned with the personal/subjective and not the collective memory. Secondly, the memory is burdened with traumatic effect, and the characters in *Strange Interlude* and *Long Day's Journey into Night* are examples of trauma. The past here offers little that can help the individual in excruciating life conditions in the present. The

traumatized responses in O’Neil’s characters vary but are categorically degenerating and take on a psychotic impulse for repetition that gets in the way of a harmonious integration between the self and the others. The analysis will conclude with the observation that the plays do not offer strategies for coping with trauma, as is typical of classic and Shakespearean theatre.

### **Trauma and Memory in *Strange Interlude***

A powerful and absorbing character Nina Leeds in *The Strange Prelude* (1928) shows an obsession with a traumatized personal past that centers on her dead fiancé, Gordon Shaw, who was shot to death before they could get married. Leeds’ behavior reflects an underlying stress disorder apparently caused by death of her fiancé and the disorder appears to have settled into a fixed behavioral pattern, characterized by a constant attempt to contest the past. Tamsen Wolf writes “In *The Strange Interlude*, audiences were watching the characters’ repeated, constrained attempts both to contest and reinforce the causality of the past.” (p, 234). Gordon’s death casts a shadow over the entire life of Leeds and, at times, pushes her to punish herself. Since the first appearance of Nina Leeds, she strikes the readers with pain and grief that has engulfed her. The play introduces her as a woman having eyes that are “beautiful and bewildering, extraordinarily large and a deep greenish blue”, but since Gordon’s death those eyes “have become a terrible enigma”, with signs of deep wounds and resentment. She appears to be strained, hectic, nerve wrecked, torn by a terrible tension of will to maintain self-possession. (p, 13)

She is desperate for Gordon, for his physical touch and sensuality, as is evident in the aside that reveals the behavioral pattern she is going to acquire: Ashes!... oh Gordon, my dear one!... oh my lips, oh strong arms around me, oh, spirit so brave and generous and gay!... ashes dissolving into mud!... mud and ashes!... that’s all!... gone!... gone forever from me!... (p, 17).

A sense of betrayal is set deep in her and the sense is traumatic and tortuous and hard to shrug off. It also sets sort of a neurotic streak in her personality. Gordon’s death, in short, has split her beyond repair, and has embittered her towards her family, especially her father, whom she considers responsible for her predicament.

Her utterances, fraught with remorse and resentment, come like this: "I gave him? What did I give him? It's what I didn't give! That last night before he sailed — in his arms until my body ached — kisses until my lips were numb — knowing all that night — something in me knowing he would die, that he would never kiss me again — knowing surely yet with my cowardly brain lying, no, he'll come back and marry you, you'll be happy ever after and feel his children at your breast looking up with eyes so much like his....but Gordon never possessed me! I'm still Gordon's silly virgin! And Gordon in muddy ashes! And I have lost happiness forever all that last night I knew he wanted me. I knew it was only the honorable code-bound Gordon, who kept commanding from his brain, no, you mustn't you must respect her, you must wait till you have a marriage license!" (p, 19).

This "Gordon fixation" perhaps "helps her to atone in her mind to Gordon", writes Virginia Floyd. (Floyd 340) This fixation is present as a constant in her consciousness. A number of things would emerge clearly in Leeds's character in such an affected state: the pain and her sense of betrayal to Gordon, her traumatized remembrance, and a sense of motherhood that becomes evident in her mourning and her desire to return to Gordon.

The men — Marsden, Darrel, and Sam Evens — that enter her life after Gordon's demise are reciprocated by her with reference to the dead fiancé. These men "possess different personality traits and forms in her disoriented mind a composite picture of her romantic ideal, Gordon Shaw' (Floyd 349). Leeds's desire to be a nurse in a military hospital can also be seen as her attempt to punish herself.

Nina Leeds outbursts: "I must pay! It's my plain duty! Gordon is dead and what use is my life to any one or me? But I must make it of use by giving it! (Fiercely) I must learn to give myself for a man's happiness without scruple, without fear, without joy, except in his joy.... Don't you see? (p. 18)"

The men who understand her plight also feel helpless as "Gordon's spirit", Nina feels "followed me from room to room" (p. 71). Her marriage with Sam and affairs with Darrel, from who she wants a baby, represent Nina's persistence in having a baby, a healthy baby that could resemble the strength of Gordon. The child is eventually conceived, nourished and given birth in remembrance of dead

Gordon. The ecstasy of giving birth to a child has an obvious impact on Nina, who shows a “triumphant strength about her expression, a ruthless self-confidence in her eye” (90). The child is named Gordon, to Darrel’s irritation. The young Gordon, to Nina, resembles neither Darrel nor Sam, but the dead Gordon — “... little Gordon... he does remind me of Gordon... something in his eyes... my romantic imagination?(p. 111)”, and “He reminds her a great deal of his namesake”(p 141).

Young Gordon grows up, showing a marked affinity with the dead Gordon and even Sam realizes the similarity between the young and his namesake. But the resemblance now makes Nina cling to the son so much as to grow a fear of losing him constantly. Any idea of the young Gordon leaving her is unbearable to her and she even cannot tolerate her son’s affair with Madeline. Nina’s growingly compulsive behavior results in a situation that ultimately distances her from Marsden, Darrel, Sam and the young Gordon. Thus, the memory and trauma of her past defines her whole life and dictates the way she lives and perceives things and relationship.

### **Trauma and Memory in *Long Day’s Journey into Night***

*Long Day’s Journey into Night* (written in 1941 and published in 1956) also centers on traumatized memory that grips the central characters of the play. The play, which has many autobiographical elements, opens with the family of Tyrones well placed, happy and composed. But the impression fades away as the tension starts making its presence felt in the Tyrones’ words, gestures and equivocal feelings towards each other. All the principal characters eventually come to give the impression of having had a traumatic past and having post-traumatic stress disorder. Traumatized memory is what comes out aplenty in their thoughts, behavior and expressions. It is as if trauma has put them in a position of permanent psychological impasse.

The play that takes place on a single day in August 1912, from morning to midnight, portrays a family struggling to come to terms with their past, their failures and their present. When the play portrays the family’s enduring emotional and psychic stress, it largely focuses on the mother, Mary Tyrone, psychosis due to a traumatic past and an



addiction to morphine and the father's miserliness and sense of deep regret.

However, even though the four Tyrones are connected not only as a family but also having an identical past, their individual memory matters the most and sets them apart. It seems O'Neil's suggestion is that memory is something that can hardly be generalized and that memory always remains specific. Critics like John Henry Raleigh read communal factors in the memory of the characters, but he also admits that it is private memory, or subjective memory, that provides the element of interest in the play. At first, the play focuses on the preponderance of the past, repeated semantically and psychologically. Whereas Gordon Shaw's death determines the life, thoughts and behavior of Nina Leeds and the resultant reaction of the male characters around Nina in the *Strange Interlude*, in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, instead of a person, the word 'past' appears to have the deterministic influence on the major characters. And each character has a different reaction to the past that otherwise seems identical. The past is never distanced; rather it is the present and, in fact, it is the future too. The preponderance of the past is abundantly expressed by Mary Tyrone thus: "The past is present, isn't it? It is the future, too. We all try to lie out of that but life won't let us" (p 87).

Mary's words stand in contrast to what James Tyrone had said in response to her eloquent talk of his scandal with a mistress, who actually had sued him as well: "James Tyrone: For God sake, don't dig up what's long forgotten. If you're that far gone in the past already, when it's only the beginning of the afternoon, what will you be tonight?" (p 86).

The almost neurotic repetition of the past in James' words — "for God sake, forget the past" (p 87), and, "can't you let our dead baby rest in peace?" (p 87) — suggests that no part of their past could be laid in peace, or forgotten. James cannot deny that the past has tortured their life and existence so far and would continue to haunt them in their future too. The past is beyond the confines of time and pervades the present and the future and continues to capture their entire psychic beings.

Mary's memory is particularly agonizing and centers on her post-marriage exposure to the world of pain, loneliness and homelessness that she had to face following her marriage with James, a professional

theatre actor. After marriage, she had to go through much and suffer poverty and predicaments. Mary often refers to these experiences in her talks and reverie. For example, In Act III, she remembers: “I had waited in that ugly hotel room hour after hour.... I got on my knees and prayed that nothing had happened to you” (p 113). In a similar vein, she goes: “I didn’t know how often that was to happen in the years to come, how many times I was to wait in ugly hotel rooms” (p 113).

In many other instances, Mary comes to repeat her experiences, suggesting a deep and developed sense of loneliness and homelessness that has set in her. Her bursting like “Oh, I’m so sick and tired of pretending this is a home!... You never have wanted one — never since the day we married! You should have remained a bachelor and lived in second-rate hotels and entertained your friends in bar rooms!”(p 67) also highlights her sense of homelessness and loneliness that she acquired in the initial days of her marriage to James and the sense has never left her. Such a sense is more unsettling as Mary idealizes the home, her father’s home and she left to marry James.

Even though James negates Mary’s idealization of her father’s home, the early experiences and the sense therefrom of homelessness and loneliness are engrained in Mary, causing a sort of trauma. The sense of loss of home comes more pronouncedly to upset Mary’s inner world after the birth and death of her babies. What also contributes to Mary’s sense of guilt is her leaving the children with their grandmother when she needed to travel with her actor husband. The death of Eugene turned out to be a moment of trauma for her. Mary comes to blame herself for the death as she could not take enough care of her child— “blame myself. I swore after Eugene died I would never have another baby. I was to blame for his death. If I hadn’t left him with my mother to join you on the road, because you wrote telling me you missed me and were lonely, Jamie would never have been allowed, when he still had measles, to go in the baby’s room” (p 87). It is evident that Mary had grown a psychic condition where she cannot come to terms with her past, with her sense of having failed to protect her children.

The birth of the next son, Edmund, at a cheap dirty hotel under the supervision of a quack, who introduced Mary to morphine, was

another major incident that led Mary to become addicted to morphine. The addiction, needless to say, exacerbates Mary's condition.

In such a situation, the memory of marriage and the married life of James and Mary are fraught with traumatized memory. Mary, who abandoned all her aspirations to be the wife of James — "I forgot all about becoming a nun or a concert pianist. All I wanted was to be his wife." (p 105) — is now faced with a life and a past that she can neither tolerate nor discard. Similarly, James, who has a drinking problem, is beset with a sense of regret and failure. Even when Mary and James try to console each other and show love to each other, their past and their traumatized memory stand in their way.

Besides Mary's traumatized remembrances, the play also focuses on the traumatized reactions of other personas, especially the two sons, Jamie and Edmund. They fail to cope with society and pursue a career. Born and brought up in a strained family environment, the two brothers find themselves pushed to a paranoid state of anxiety, fear, and even firm faith in life's ultimate insignificance and triviality.

All four of the family, it seems, have come to develop irrational and irritating quality that eventually becomes a consistent pattern of ambiguous love for and repulsion against each other that is upheld throughout the play with terrible consistency.

It is thus that O'Neil dramatizes memory as a traumatized experience that continues to disrupt the life of the individual. Traumatized experiences or a disturbing past are nothing new in literature. In Greek and Shakespearean plays, one would easily find scores of characters who have had a difficult past. But the past, or the memory of the past, is not debilitating in those early plays. In a classical tragedy like *King Oedipus* or Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, there is redemption and denouement, even though both Oedipus and Hamlet have a past that is more unsettling than that of Mary Tyrone or Nina Leeds. Both King Oedipus and Hamlet come to terms with their past and their fate by being submissive to it and by accepting it, while O'Neill's characters look too absorbed in themselves to accept their past and their fate. Thus, O'Neil's characters appear to be incapable of overcoming their traumatic past and achieving a tragic transcendence.

In Eugene O’Neil, memory and trauma are disruptive, and the characters appear to have no mechanism at their disposal to come to terms with such memories or traumas or the consequent stress disorder. It is also worth noting that the playwright has not imposed such incapability on his characters; rather, it is inherent in them, the modern men and women who have lost their ability to cope with their memory and trauma. On the other hand, characters in Greek or Shakespearean tragedies appear to have some sort of therapeutic strength that enables them to submit to and accept their fate. Even though the trauma that King Oedipus or Hamlet or Macbeth experiences seems to be more debilitating and devastating than the trauma experienced by, say, Mary Tyrone or Nina Leeds, the latter find themselves in a psychological impasse they cannot overcome. As for readers and the audience, the Greek and Shakespearean tragedies, despite having such a colossal level of trauma, offer a resolution and they come out of the theatre with a sense of relief, while O’Neil’s plays, as J. Chris Westgate says in his *Urban Drama: The Metropolis in Contemporary North American Plays*, markedly peopled by modern, urban men and women, put them in an uneasy state.

Critic John Patrick Diggins, in *Eugene O’Neill’s America: Desire under Democracy*, also shares that O’Neill’s characters are burdened with the modern man’s inability to cope with their lives and accept their fate. Diggins writes, “Prisoners of the past, O’Neill’s characters can readily be interpreted in psychological terms as carrying in their psyches the imprint of personal traumas. But the social-political basis of O’Neill’s plays is just as telling” (Diggins 53). “O’Neill, Diggins continues, “saw past experience as traumatic, almost a struggle between life and death, with his subjects trying to deny what they cannot face.” It is with this denial that the modern and split men and women in O’Neill’s plays veer away from the larger-than-life tragic characters in Greek and Shakespearean tragedies.

Richard B. Sewall, in his article “Eugene O’Neill and the Sense of the Tragic” comments on O’Neill’s tragedies while comparing them with Greek and Shakespearean tragedies thus: “To one coming to the play with a traditional Aristotelian view of tragedy, the experience is something of a shock. The materials are unpromising. Where is the tragic hero? What about catharsis? There is pity, perhaps, but where is the terror? As to the ‘tragic flaw,’ the stage is littered with flaws, but

are they tragic—dope? alcohol? miserliness? Here is a wrangling family (as it looks) of born losers seemingly with no other purpose than to chew each other up. Where is the ‘magnitude’ that Aristotle found in true tragedy?” (Sewall 75)

In O’Neill’s plays, the “disturbing ambiguities remain. O’Neill does not resolve them, either in bitterness or in soothing sentiment.” (Sewall 83)

In short, O’Neil’s plays lack the therapeutic strength—the catharsis—that could allow his protagonists to cope with their crises. The final impression, therefore, is of a psychological impasse that the protagonists cannot pass through. It is as if O’Neil attempted to set up a new idiom of tragedy where the tragic lies, unlike in Greek or Shakespeare’s classics, in the absence of conventional closure and takes the reader back to where it started.

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# **Alienation In American Drama: A Marxist Reading Of O'Neill's *Desire Under The Elms***

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## **Abstract**

This paper is an attempt to investigate American Classic Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* (1924) through the lens of the Marxist concept of alienation in the capitalist cultural climate. It identified that drama has been studied for years through Freudian psychoanalysis or the disintegration of families in American drama. This study revealed a considerable gap in conducting systematic research in conducting a Marxist interpretation of the drama whereas it contains interesting elements to be studied. In investigating the drama, this study employed the theory of alienation by Marx and Braun and Clarke's method of thematic analysis. It further resembled the Marxist idea of the capitalist factory, workforce, and production in the individuals of the text. Exploring the themes, plot, and characters, it has found the alienation in the capitalist mode of production as Karl Marx suggests.

**Keywords:** Marx, yearning, alienation theory, capitalist, materialism

## **Introduction**

This paper examines the manifestation of ‘Alienation’ which primarily comes from a sociological term, that later has become a prominent literary theme as a representation of social reality that highlights an important social problem related to social isolation—can be defined as a mental state of an individual—to determine the sense of not belonging to other human or thing. “The word ‘alienation’ is used both in French and English which has a Greek origin. In the French language *alienate* and *alienation*, are used in the same sense as the English” (Mittal, 2008). Alienation is identified to be a social problem related to social psychology: “a condition in social relationships reflected by a low degree of integration or common values and a high degree of distance or isolation between individuals, or between an individual and a group of people in a community or work environment” (Ankony, 2015). This definition of alienation appears to be consistent in a different context that explains the feeling of estrangement from the other human, the separation in the institution, and the distance from communal society. Alienation is also discussed as an outcome of capitalism which could be perceivable mostly in Marxist theory. Marx theorized the terms from the consequence of a capitalist economy: “Karl Marx saw alienation as an outcome of a particular mode of production in which fundamental human relations are undetermined. In capitalist economies, Marks theorized, workers are separated from the products they produce, they do not control the production process...they are denied the natural benefits of engaging in meaningful work” (Reis & Sprecher, 2009, p. 84). In capitalism, capital itself is in highest priority. Here laborers are used just like other production-related instruments which can be replaceable. Laborers or workers are in a mode of production where the whole product is not visible due to the division of labor. Marx illustrates the condition of man as the producer/maker of the product but is denied an engaging and consequential affiliation with the product. In other words, wholly separation is expected. Marx has indicated that laborers are used as an instrument in the line of production, not treated as human beings. The workers are working in separate divisions too and they are not watching the full product as well, so it hinders the meaningful relation between labor and production.

As the father of American theatre, Eugene O’Neill’s masterpiece *Desire Under the Elms* (1924) depicts a crude picture of capitalist society in mid-nineteenth-century American society in New



England. The play illustrates the rising of a capitalist society that persuaded a materialistic individual to be shaped which eventually is forced to be alienated from family members and the socio-economic atmosphere. This depiction warns about the danger of capitalism, excessive greediness, and the declining family relationship among siblings due to individuals' utmost yearning and desire for personal possessions. Therefore, the depiction of a father is more concerned about losing property rather than losing his sons. It also represents the sons' wishes for the death of their father; along with the imagery of a young woman marrying the oldest man because of the inheritance of the farm which signifies the attraction to wealth and property. In another theme, O'Neill depicts the two elder son's decision to leave behind the family forever and head to California to chase the American Dream—chasing the gold and the opportunity to be someone rich.

This study suggests O'Neill's drama is a reflection of the Marxist concept of alienation since the setting of the play is in capitalist America and the family farm is functioning as a 'factory', family members represent both the owner and labor class. This study identified how capitalism generates alienation among the individuals in society. 'Alienation' of an individual can break the 'brick' of social structure as a unit of society because it alienates him from the family and society. Being a direct medium to the people, the theatre has the role to communicate with the audience and clarify the moral dilemma that confronts. This study suggests *Desire Under the Elms* (1924) is a replication of American society of the pre-modern age which reflects human alienation and its effect of it, endangered filial relationships, incest, and infanticide. What is presented on the stage is more intense, focused and effective for society. These issues were intensely portrayed suggesting the effect of capitalism in reality.

### 1.1. Literature Review

*Desire Under the Elms* 1924 is widely discussed for its comparatively exceptional plot which includes incest and infanticide and the vivid reflection of 19<sup>th</sup> century America. Recent writings on this play pervade the picture of a fractured family from a modern American cultural perspective. For instance, Nadia Ali Akbar's 'Disintegration family in Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* has focused on the phase of disassociation among the family members, the causes of this disintegration, the phase of an American family and the development of conflict among the characters. Her

paper has reconciled a deteriorated American family missing the expected family bond and warmth; the declining family tie is highly noticeable here. Nadia has drawn the capitalistic ideology to be linked with this family relationship and argued that post-war America witnessed the retreat of the traditional social values against the materialistic stance, the inhuman scale, and the mechanical rhythms, which Eugene O'Neill criticised in his realistic drama (Akbar, 2013, p. 575). Psychoanalytic theoretical interpretation is taken place here though she conveys, "the importance of O'Neill as social critic lies in the fact that he emphasises the psychological aspects of the modern social order" (2013, p. 576). She has addressed the deviation of an earlier family bind because of the changing values in contemporary American society. Therefore, Naida's study is over-simplistic in finding out the determining factors of family dynamics since her study focused on 'disintegration' repeatedly and failed to link it with the awareness of postmodern identity.

There is a psychoanalytic study found on this play that is written by Sabareen Fathima, "The impact of psychoanalysis in Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*" (Fathima, 2015) which reflects the dramatist's biography. The author has explored the personal life of the dramatist and his subconscious and unconscious in light of Freudian psychoanalysis. It is an attempt to find out the similarity between the life event of the dramatist and the characters of the play as O'Neill is claimed to be in oedipal attraction. At the early age of releasing the play, Doris Falk finds Ephraim, the protagonist in his writing *Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension*: "a self-centred, loveless man who has projected his personality into that of his God, a tyrannical, ascetic restrictive embodiment of Puritanism" (Falk, 1958, p. 94). It is a discussion of the playwright's trend of writing a modern tragedy. Norman A. Jeffers in his writing *Eugene O'Neill* has focused on the tension between a materialistic goal and the affection in a family (Norman, 1963, p.55).

This study refers to some other discussions on this drama, a social reflection of a rising capitalist society and the charisma of O'Neill as a dramatist. Racey F. & Jr. Edgar has discussed the "*Myth as Tragic Structure in Desire under the Elms*" in O'Neill which shows the use of mythical plot and ideas in this drama (as cited in Akbar, 2013). Peter L. Hays has shown "Biblical perversions in *Desire under the Elms*" illustrate the deviated puritan protagonist, Hong Wenhui's, "Myth as a tragic structure in *Desire under the*

*Elms*”studies the use of mythological plot and similarity in tragic elements in this play. In finding the concept of alienation in Marx we have found “*Sociological Theory: Explanation, Paradigm, and Ideology* by William D Purdue. In Bertell Ollman’s “*Alienation: Marx’s Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*, Chapter 23: The Capitalist’s Alienation” where the alienation of individuals is conceptualized in a capitalistic society.

Joseph Wood Krutch’s book chapter, *Tragedy: Eugene O’Neill* (1939), projects the tragic tradition of O’Neill’s play, engaging Freudian psychology and Greek mythology. Krutch claims that O’Neill has taken the form of Greek tragedy in the sense of illustrating Greek inevitability, the role of fate, as well as the unhappy ending; therefore, he asserts, O’Neill denied the idea of pleasing the audience or satisfying the “Shallow-pated public” (1939, p. 73). In terms of taking playwriting as a sole job, Krutch further argued that O’Neill is utterly different from his contemporaries in uniquely varied themes, revealing skillful craftsmanship with a universal competence. As Krutch evaluates O’Neill: “Radical sociological theorising, Freudian psychology, and Roman Catholicism have successively concerned him” (1939, p. 80), which highly influences his work. He further added, “O’Neill may try to discover in Freudian psychology, a rational explanation of what seems super-rational...it is always the fact that men are moved by forces whose influence reason cannot justify which O’Neill finds interesting” (1939, p. 83). Hence, Krutch opines, that O’Neill’s work is highly influenced by Freudian psychology. This study does not disagree with Krutch’s observation regarding O’Neill’s prejudice towards Freudian psychology; however, it instead advocates analyzing his plays through new psychoanalytic theories that explore family relationships since family is the dominating theme of O’Neill’s works.

Besides the arguments mentioned above that depicted a clumsy, audacious, and perverted protagonist, Dr Diwakar Thomas’s study reviewed both biblical protagonist and family dynamics in *Desire Under the Elms* (1924) by focusing on the fragile father-son relationship and the psychical and psychological solitude of Ephraim Cabot. He argued on behalf of Ephraim that he is not shattered after incredible suffering and experiencing being cuckold and infanticide; instead, he grows confident in his fictional God (Thomas, 2015). His study portrays a stubborn puritanical protagonist, a misleading follower of the bible.

This study thus found several well-grounded studies on this play. However, it identified the Marxist reading of alienation in *Desire under the Elms* (1924) as an intriguing area in the field. Subsequently, this paper proposes an investigation of this perspective which may be considered an innovative attempt to analyze the play.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Individual alienation from the family and society is most possibly the end product of the industrial revolution which deepened after the two World Wars. In America, the representation of individualization, urbanization, and capitalization create a new mindset of them: “Americans value those things they consider “useful”. Business and natural sciences are seen as more valuable than humanities and social science.” (Farley, 1992, p. 108). In American society alienation of individuals identifies to be a crude reality—people from all over the world have migrated to this new world for material success, and their practicality, as it has been reflected, hinders useful social or familial bonding. As a reflection of society, of course, the literature focuses on some issues related to a social problem. This paper discusses a current and rising social issue of ‘alienation’, a literary theme conceived in literature as a social reality which is generated mainly in the capitalist society. Capitalism is claimed to be a movable factor that generates alienation among the individuals of the society which is reflected in this play. It will also be discussed the danger of capitalism, and materialism that leads to social isolation leaving the modern man in diffidence to find out the meaning of life: Alienation is one of the greatest problems confronting modern society. Its corrosive impact can be seen in the form of the generation gap, the anti-war movement, the hippie phenomenon, the credibility gap, the compartmentalization of our life, the stunting of personal development, the conspicuous absence of a sense of meaningfulness in life, and so on (Mittal, 2018). Alienation, as it seems, has generated the changing belief and materialistic attitude of modern man: “The playwright must dig at the roots of sickness today as he feels it...the death of the old God, the failure of science, and materialism to give any satisfying new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find meaning for life (Carpenter, 2008). With the influence of a capitalist society, the desire for possessions is seen exceedingly. The family in the play is distressed by greed and desire: “Rather than emphasizing Man’s lot in the universe. O’Neill introduces in *Desire under the Elms* a picture of

a rural family dismantled by greedy desires of possession” (Bogard, 1988).

### **3. Research Questions**

There are several research questions in this study.

- a. How Marxist theory of alienation can be interpreted in O’Neill’s *Desire Under the Elms* (1924)?
- b. What are the other elements in the materialistic society specifically designed to alienate the individuals in the text?
- c. How does alienation affect the individuals in the drama?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Firstly, the study aims to find the causes of alienation of the protagonist and the individuals of the drama in light of the Marxist theory of alienation. Marx’s concepts of the owner- labour-production will be analyzed to reflect how the formation of social division affects members of a family relationship. Secondly, this paper would identify the necessary factors that generate alienation in this play showing the causes of alienation represented step by step and the inner conflict that leads them to that disintegration. Thirdly, it is going to investigate the effect of the characters’ alienation in this play.

### **5. Theoretical Framework**

The reading process comprises four steps. First, it has become familiarized with the data through reading and rereading. Secondly, it generated the initial codes using theoretical concepts, such as greediness, commodification, objectification of labor, and the estrangement of the worker. Thirdly, it searched themes related to the codes justifying the Marxist paradigm of alienation. Finally, it defined the themes and made the discussion.

The method of the research is firstly the close reading of the text of the drama. The textual analysis will be utilized to analyze the characters’ psyche, plot, setting, theme, and symbol of material wealth. The portrayal of the materialistic society and the characters will be examined thematically to provide answers to the research questions identified earlier. Marxist theory of alienation is enrolled to examine the context of capitalism-generated alienation in the American family.

## 6. Findings

This study investigated how the owner commodifies the labor and how it alienated the individuals in the play as the Marxist paradigm suggests the alienation in a capitalist society. It distinguished three segments in the play; factory, the laborer, and production. The Cabot family in the drama represents the farm as the factory, Ephraim's three sons as laborer, and the crops as production. This study revealed Ephraim as the capitalist landlord who commodified the labor of his sons thus detaching them from the reward of the production which alienated Eben, Simeon, and Peter eventually. The following discussion would clarify it more.

### 6.1. Marx on Alienation

As a theorist of alienation, German philosopher and economist Karl Marx are most prominent. He is the pioneering philosopher who has discussed alienation as an obvious result of capitalism. The alienation theory of Marx is deliberated in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Among the four types of alienation, Marx has explored, the economic & social alienation in a capitalist society would be more clarified while Marx's theory of alienation is analyzed. *Desire Under the Elms* 1924 would be analyzed through this Marxist concept of economic and social alienation. Marx has discussed alienation as a consequence of capitalism where the owners of factories or farms use their labor, but the laborers have no control either over their lives or selves or on their work: "Marx believed that alienation is a systematic result of capitalism. Essentially, there is an "exploitation of men by men" where the division of labor creates an economic hierarchy." (Axelos, 1976, p. 58). The sense of alienation, as Marx has described which is discussed earlier, has grown in the mind of laborers in a capitalistic society. Because the workers never feel any attachment to their workplace, the owner, or the productions they have made. The laborers, do not feel any connection to the product they produce, do not get a share of the profit, and can't decide. Even their type of work is only robotic, not self-realized human beings. (Purdue, 1986). In capitalism, laborers are treated not as living human being rather they are treated as an instrument of production that alienates them: "As Marx saw it, industrial capitalism divorced workers from the fruits of their labor made them into cogs in the machinery of production and created an adversarial relationship between workers. The result was a fundamental dehumanization of workers that he called alienation" (Reis & Sprecher, 2009).

## 6.2. Marxist interpretation of *Desire Under the Elms* (1924)

The Cabot family and the family farm are a replication of the Marxist capitalist mode of production. Ephraim Cabot is a father character who is most likely an owner, the owner of the farm. The 'farm' is the most pronounced word in the play, symbolically the factory where workers are employed for production. Mr. Ephraim also has some workers, Simeon, Peter, and Eben. Although they are the successor and blood of Ephraim, here on a capitalist farm they are serving as laborers:

EBEN--Didn't he slave Maw t' death?

PETER--He's slaved himself t' death. He's slaved Sim' n' me 'n' yew t' death-on'y none o' us hain't died--yit. (O'Neill, 1924, 1.2)

The dialogue indicates a shocking factor in this play; the death of the mother is the result of excessive labor working on the farm which is imposed by the husband who is an ideal reflection of the capitalist owner. The youngest son sees the abusive relationship between husband and wife that signifies a violation of the human right and human traffic issues and he reaches enthusiasm to get avenge his dead mother suspecting his father. A charismatic representation of American capitalist society, where the desire for the 'farm' or possessions is only real. The other individuals are just role-playing as family members are still being alienated from each other.

The play has depicted such a reflection of the American society which may be an optimum literary example of alienation in capitalism; that sketches a picture of unstable family relationships, a deviated puritan materialistic protagonist, unaffectionate conjugal, filial and sibling relations, sexual deviations and oedipal attraction among the characters, cold filial and sibling relationship, a total picture of alienated characters in modern American society. It is a literary reflection of an unsuccessful family and course an alarm to such behavioral factors that lead us to a huge futile society as what it was once not built for.

The farm belongs to Ephraim, and he is the replication of a capitalist owner, his sons function as laborers and the Farm is the production in the context of Marxist theory. The difference between a

capitalist landlord and Ephraim is, that the laborers hardly meet their owner and by contrast, the sons in the play who are functioning as laborers, avail the physical presence of Ephraim and scold him sometimes. The Cabot family, as it seems, stands for an American capitalistic society in which labor-owner-production relation is present, and alienation of the workers has been reflected as Marx has described:

Alienation in capitalist societies occurs because in work each contributes to the commonwealth but they can only express this fundamentally social aspect of individuality through a production system that is not publicly social but privately owned, for which each individual functions as an instrument, not as a social being (Purdue, 1968, p. 325).

The relationship between workers and the work is explored in a capitalist society how does the worker alienate from his workplace; when he works doesn't feel it as his own place, only feels himself while he is relieved from work:

The malaise of this alienation from the self means that the worker does not affirm himself but denies himself and does not feel content but unhappy...The worker only feels himself outside his work, and in his work, he feels outside himself...Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, it is avoided like the plague." (Purdue, 1986, p. 325)

There is a paradox as the capitalist owners also experience alienation: "Marx also wrote, in a curtailed manner, that capitalist owners also experience alienation, through benefiting from the economic machine by endlessly competing, exploiting others and maintaining mass alienation in society" (Ollman, 1976, p. 154). In *Desire Under the Elms* 1924, as Marx has explored, Ephraim Cabot is also suffering from alienation as a capitalist owner. He's using the word 'lonesome' in several scenes of the play, passing nights in the barn with cows leaving a young wife at home is a sign of his alienation:



CABOT--(*confusedly*) I rested. I slept good--down with the cows. They know how t' sleep. They're teachin' me" (O'Neill, 1924, 2.4).

Resembling the capitalist owner Ephraim also suffers from alienation. Cabot's family loses the natural family ties due to the alteration of the protagonist into a capitalist landlord. The protagonist passes nights in the barn with cows avoiding the warm bed of a newly married wife. Still, he justifies his isolation and lonesomeness by his religious belief:

"Waal--what d'ye want? God's lonesome, hain't He? God's hard an' lonesome!" (O'Neill, 1924, 3.4)

In the previous scenes of the drama, he is found tyrannical to his sons and dead wife, the mother of Eben. He forces them to excessive labor beyond their will which sounds like human trafficking, a common syndrome of the capitalist owners. Eben is telling the tyranny of Ephraim on his mother:

EBEN--(*harshly*) They was chores t' do, wa' n't they? (*a pause--then slowly*) It was on'y after she died I come to think o' it. Me cookin'--doin' her work--that made me know her, suffer her sufferin'--she'd come back t' help--come back t' bile potatoes--come back t' fry bacon--come back t' bake biscuits--come back all cramped up t' shake the fire, an' carry ashes, her eyes weepin' an' bloody with smoke an' cinders same's they used t' be. She still comes back--stands by the stove thar in the evenin'--she can't find it nateral sleepin' an' restin' in peace. She can't git used t' bein' free--even in her grave (O'Neill, 1924, 1.2).

As it seems the 'Maw' in the play was pushed to work heavily which is inhuman. Ephraim treats her like labour in the capitalist mode of production and she couldn't resist: "The Theory of Alienation specifically argues that an individual loses the ability to determine his or her own life and destiny, as well as the capacity to direct actions and characters of these actions, define relationships with other people, and own those items produced by his or her labour. A capitalist society does this through the mechanization of an individual" (Simon, 2018).

### 6.3. Greediness

This study identifies greediness as a significant element of alienation among the individuals in this play. There are some grounds for the alienation of individuals in the play as a by-product of the capitalist mode of economy, such as greed for possessions and unaffectionate with family members. As Ephraim's greed let him treat his sons like laborers, his sons' greed pushes them to California:

PETER--Waal--in a manner o' speakin'--thar's the promise. (*growing excited*) Gold in the sky--in the West--Golden Gate--Californi-a!--Goldest West!--fields o' gold!" (O'Neill, 1924, 1.1).

Simeon and Peter intend to go to California in search of gold at the time of the California gold rush: "Within a few weeks, once rumours of the discovery had spread, tens of thousands of people were flocking to the area, struck by 'gold fever.'...San Francisco grew from a shantytown of 79 buildings to a city of tens of thousands. Over the next few years, at least 300,000 gold-seekers came to California" (Taylor, 2012). To Simon and Peter, greed for gold and their financial insecurity alienates them from their family. As they are not sure to get the share of this farm because they don't rely on Ephraim and Eben's claim to this farm as it belongs to his late mother:

EBEN--(*jumping to his feet*) Ye've no right! She wasn't yewr Maw! It was her farm! Didn't he steal it from her? She's dead. It's my farm" (O'Neill, 1924, 1.2).

But it is not only Ephraim who is yearning for material success. All his sons are looking at the farm either to have it all or at least to attain their share:

EBEN--(*decisively*) But t'ain't that. Ye won't never go because ye'll wait here fur yer share o' the farm, thinkin' allus he'll die soon.

SIMEON--(*after a pause*) We've a right.

PETER--Two thirds belong t' us (O'Neill, 1924, 1.2).

Abbie pretends to love Eben and seduced him to have a child as a successor and enjoy the ownership of the 'farm' which is of course, a

sign of greed. Abbie has married Ephraim, not to fall in love or as a charity to an old man but to in greed on the farm:

ABBIE--(*with a cool laugh of confidence*) Yewr'n?  
We'll see 'bout that! (*then strongly*) Waal--what if I  
did need a hum? What else do I marry an old man  
like him fur?" (O'Neill, 1924, 1.4)

Cabot family is not functioning as a family for their gluttony; physically it seems a family though. Ephraim Cabot's sons have left their father with sheer hatred with blaming each other for their greediness:

CABOT--(*edging away*) Lust fur gold--fur the sinful,  
easy gold o' Californi-a! It's made ye mad!

SIMEON--(*tauntingly*) Wouldn't ye like us to send ye  
back some sinful gold, ye old sinner? (O'Neill, 1924,  
1.4)

To the sons of Ephraim, Abbie is the ultimate threat as she, has married Ephraim in the greed of the farmland, and is the way to be brought a new successor of this farm as they are in fear of losing it always:

PETER--(*after a pause*) Everythin'll go t' her now"  
(O'Neill, 1924, 1.3)

In this play, the protagonist is craving for the warmth of family, affection and love but his greediness makes a wall of alienation. They are always suffering from 'lonesomeness' though they want nothing but that warmth of family. At the last scene Cabot's yearning for company and love as the alienated character feels:

CABOT--... Ye'd ought t' loved me. I'm a man. If  
ye'd loved me, I'd never told no Sheriff on ye no  
matter what ye did, if they was t' brile me alive!"  
(O'Neill, 1924, 3.4)

#### 6.4. Unaffectionate behavior

In this study 'unaffectionate behaviour' of the protagonist is identified as a factor of alienation among the individuals in the play. The reason for being repulsive to other family

members is nothing but the ownership of the farm. The protagonist is always in fear of losing the farm to his grown-up sons as they are legally eligible to own it. Ephraim feels disgusted with them as two of his sons already left him in search of gold and the remaining one seeks revenge for his mother's death by suspecting him of that. This aversion makes them isolated to each other. The home in this play is not a sweet home at all. Here, Peter is found sharing his feeling about the home is like a cage made by Ephraim:

PETER--(*with sardonic bitterness*) Here--it's stones atop o' the ground--stones atop o' stones--makin' stone walls--year atop o' year--him 'n' yew 'n' me 'n' then Eben--makin' stone walls fur him to fence us in!" (O'Neill, 1924, 1.1)

The sons hate the father, Ephraim as the father figure role is not ideal—being described as not loving to his sons; neither affectionate nor sympathetic who cares about nothing but his farm only. He married a woman of only half of his age. Here Peter and Simeon say goodbye to their father at the time of departing for California:

CABOT--I'll hev ye both chained up in the asylum!

PETER--Ye old skinflint! Good-by!

SIMEON--Ye old blood sucker! Good-by (O'Neill, 1924, 1.4)

Ephraim has made a home where his sons are reluctant to reside; to him, it is an asylum where he has to chain his sons up to retain them. His sons treat him as a skinflint or a miser who has been saving his money and property by his full might, depriving not only his sons but himself too. They are bidding adieu to their father addressing him as a bloodsucker; treating him as a capitalist landlord who knows how to make a profit on the sweat and blood of laborers .

### **6.5. Effect of Alienation: Incest and Infanticide**

In *Desire Under the Elms* 1924, not only the root of alienation in a capitalist society is reflected but some effects of it also unveiled. This study has recognized incest and infanticide as a consequence of alienation which is revealed in the text of the drama. After leaving of two elders of Eben, his father and stepmother is remaining family to him. Both Ephraim and Eben are alienated from each other, Abbie has taken the chance as she is allured by the youth of Eben likewise

Abbie's seduction was undeniable to him which resulted in incest. Here Abbie is expressing her love for Eben to Ephraim without any dilemma while answering about infanticide. These words of her are evident of their sin:

ABBIE: ... What right hev ye t' question me 'bout him? He wa 'n't yewr son! Think I'd have a son by yew? I'd die fust! I hate the sight o' ye an' allusdid! It's yew I should've murdered, if I'd had good sense! I hate ye! I love Eben. I did from the fust. An' he was Eben's son--mine an' Eben's--not your'n!" (O'Neill, 1924, 3.4)

Abbie kills the infant after continuous denial of Eben to her, she feels alienated and at last she commits infanticide thinking the baby makes a barrier between them. While Abbie has been taken to custody, Eben has confessed to being guilty and he has been arrested as well:

EBEN--I got t' pay fur my part o' the sin...If I'm sharin' with ye, I won't feel lonesome, leastways (O'Neill, 1924, 3.4).

They have become united at last only after the annihilation of the Cabot family. But eventually, Ephraim has become 'lonesome' physically. As it was seen earlier, Ephraim sleeping with cows, is also a sign of his alienation:

"CABOT--(*queerly*) Down whar it's restful--whar it's warm--down t' the barn. (*bitterly*) I kin talk t' the cows. They know. They know the farm an' me. They'll give me peace." (O'Neill, 1924, 2.2)

Ephraim is alienated from his family as all of the other members choose their fate. Eben and Abbie prefer would go to jail together leaving Ephraim behind after the infanticide. Therefore, in finding out the consequence of alienation, an evil circle is found; the greediness of family members makes them unaffectionate with their filial or sibling relationship that causes disintegration which leads the individuals to involve such illicit and insane activities in the family.

## 7. Conclusion

*Desire Under the Elms* (1924) has the significance of showing the danger of a capitalist society, the effect of alienation on individuals,

the representation of materialistic attitude and the consequence of it among the family members: “Familial estrangement between parents and adult children is attributed to several biological, psychological, social, and structural factors affecting the family, including attachment disorders, incompatible values and beliefs, unfulfilled expectations, critical life events and transitions, parental alienation, and ineffective communication patterns” (Agllias, 2017). Marxist explanation of the relation among the labor-owner-production is vibrantly reflected in this play that laborers are functioning here as only a manual instrument. The capitalist father, the owner of the farm, the protagonist behaves accordingly. This study referred to the evidence that the father treated the sons like mere laborers which no doubt hinders the functioning of the Cabot family. The family exists on selfless cordiality, affections, and compassion, for an exception, it fails. This paper identified the deviations in the Cabot family generated from Ephraim’s treatment of his sons which further validated the Marxist paradigm of alienation in the capitalist mode of production. It indicates Ephraim is the capitalist proprietor, Cabot farm is the factory, and Ephraim’s three sons, Simeon, Peter, and Eben are the labor who are alienated from their works when “the worker finds no purpose, no pleasure or contentment, no needs fulfilment, no independence or power, no mental growth or physical development. This is a state in which a person feels isolated, humiliated, unworthy, and insignificant.” (Mukhopadhyay, n.d.). This paper concludes with the findings that the cultural perspective of modern American society matches the notion of Marx. His observation regarding human alienation in a capitalist society has been found in the text.

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# **RHETORIC IN ENGLISH LITERARY WORKS AND IN THE HOLY QURAN**

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## **Abstract**

Rhetoric is the essence of good speech and writing. Authors make their works effective and powerful by using figurative language and stylistic devices which are dealt with in rhetoric. A literary work gets imprinted in the minds of readers not only by its striking thoughts but also by the stylistic strategies used in it. Rhetoric, in fact, makes use of effective and ornamental language in order to make information or meaning intelligently powerful, effective and attractive. Rhetoric or figures of speech, it is seen, are used in a great deal not only in literature but also in religious scripts or sacred books. The present study is a qualitative one. As the methodology, the author had a close reading of the important pieces of literary works (e.g. *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Lycidas*, *The Rape of the Lock*, ‘Ode to Autumn’ etc) as well as the Holy *Quran*. There have been conducted many a study on the use and effect of rhetoric in the *Quran* (e.g. Mayuuf (2022), Hussain et al (2020), Mutammam (2016), Cuypers (2011), Obied (2010)). But the present study chose some examples having the same figures of speech from English literature and the *Quran*. Having scrutinized the examples, the author found that in both the sources rhetoric is common. Of course, grammar helps to shape language in making our thoughts coherent and meaningful, rhetoric helps to express those thoughts more

powerfully, more readily, more intensively. Through the examples selected, the article shows that wherever there is an attempt in literature as well as in the *Quran* to make a message powerful, rhetoric has been an important instrument and that both English literature and the Holy *Quran* have made use of important figures of speech effectively as well as purposefully.

**Keywords:** Rhetoric, figures of speech, English literature, stylistic devices, the Holy *Quran*

## **(I) Introduction**

Since the ancient time, grammar and rhetoric have been being used inevitably with words of human language. As the systems of grammar evolved as a communication resource, they engage directly with the making of experiential, interpersonal and textual meanings. So none can deny the importance of grammar to talk and write coherently about our experience of the world and of our inner consciousness (Lock, 2005). Rhetoric has been equally important in speaking and writing. Like the present, in the past, literary persons (Homer in the *Iliad*: ‘At least send him out, let him lead a troop of Myrmidons’ (ethos), Sophocles in *Oedipus Rex*: ‘Judgments too quickly formed are dangerous’(aphorism), Milton in the *Paradise Lost*: ‘Whether upheld by strength, or Chance or Fate (Climax),etc), political figures (Churchill in his famous speech ‘Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat’: ‘It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be, for without victory there is no survival’(repetition), religious preachers and books (In the *Bible* : ‘But you are shield around me , O Lord/You bestow your glory on me and lift-up my head (metaphor) —all used rhetoric and made their works, speeches and messages powerful, effective and eloquent. By using different stylistic devices and figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, irony, metonymy, synecdoche, alliteration, asyndeton, polysyndeton, rhetorical question, etc the concerned tried to convince their target people of their thoughts, ideas and arguments, and made their thoughts imprinted in the minds of the people. These devices helped them to present and convey their

intended meaning more powerfully, vividly and comprehensively. It is often difficult to be aware of abstract ideas because these ideas give a partial or incomplete sense and they cannot be experienced by senses (Karim,1995). In such cases, figures of speech are essentially important in that they can help to experience the abstract things by making an association between the abstract and the concrete things—the things we can experience physically(Matiur, 2003). Rhetoric or stylistic devices thus help to experience the inexperienced by making an association with the experienced.

The author, as a teacher of English language and literature, has already come to know the use of a great variety of figures in different literary genre. He studied the *Quran* minutely and found many a figure strikingly used. More importantly, these figures, as he observed, pave the way to shaping the readers' (of the *Quran*) understanding of the nature of the Quranic language( "Rhetoric" ). In the article, he, under the heading of each figure, cited examples from English literature as well as from the *Quran*. The defining features of each figure are given immediately below the heading so that the figures used in the examples can be identified easily. The fact that in both English literature and the *Quran* rhetoric has played an important role to hold up the intended meaning effectively as well as successfully motivated the author to conduct the present study on the use of rhetoric in English literature and the *Quran*.

## **(II) Discussion**

In this section, examples from literature and (from) the *Quran* are analyzed, and put under the heading of a figure which underlies them. The definition of the figure, taken from an authentic source, immediately follows the heading. Though the *Quran* employs a wider range and frequency of rhetorical features, a few examples have been selected to exemplify some important figures ("Few of the literary devices used in *Quran*"). The figures are given one after another.

### **Simile**

Simile is frequently used in literary works. It is a figure of speech in which two different objects are compared to each other in an explicit way (Thakur, 1994):

a) *He doth betride the narrow world like a Colossus (Julius Caesar)*

Cassius compares Caesar to a huge statue under the legs of which ordinary men walk about timidly waiting for their deaths.

b) Fear at my heart, as at a cup,

My life-blood seemed to sip! (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*)

Fear is personified and compared to a Monster who takes the Mariner's life-blood in a cup and drinks it.

The *Quran* also uses simile in many chapters. For example—

a) Masalul fari kaini kal a'ma wal aswummi wal basiri  
wassami hal yastaoi iani masala,

afala tajakkarun (\*11:24) (Farid, 2015)

(=Just as the blind and the deaf are not equal to those who are capable of seeing and hearing, so are these two groups, i.e. people who are righteous and believe God are like those that are capable of seeing and hearing, and the people who are not righteous and disbelieve God are like those that are blind and deaf.)

b) Wa hia tajribihim fi maojin kal jibal (11:42)

(=Afterwards the boat started moving bearing them in it through the waves as high as the mountain.)

c) Alamtara kaifa daraba tullahu masalun kalimatun taiabatun kashajaratun taiabatin asluha sabituo wafar usha fissamai (14:24)

(=Have you not seen how God sets comparison? *Kalima taieba* is like the *best tree* which is strong and deep rooted and whose branches rise upwards.)

\*Number of chapter: Number of ‘ayat’ (in the Holy *Quran*)

d) Summa kasad kulubuhum mim baidi jalika fahia kal hijarati aua shaddu kaswa (2:74)

(=Nonetheless your *hearts* became as tough as *stones* or tougher than stones.)

## Metaphor

Metaphor is a figure of speech in which two different objects are compared to each other in an implicit way:

a) There is a tide in the affairs of men

Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune

Omitted, all the voyage of their life

Is bound in shallows and in miseries. (*Julius Caesar*)

Just as there is a tide in the ocean, so there is tide in human affairs. If a ship does not sail away when there is tide in the ocean, it gets stuck in the mud and shallow water. In the same way, if human beings miss an opportunity by their laziness or neglect, they will miss the chances of success.

This figure is exceptionally used by Shakespeare when he raises fundamental question about the whole nature and meaning of life (Peck and Coyle, 1995):

b) The *serpent* (i.e. *Claudius*) that did sting thy father’s life

Now wears his crown. (*Hamlet*)

Claudius is compared to a serpent. To Hamlet, Claudius is as dangerous as a serpent that, by nature, may snap at anyone and can take away his life.

c) Or to take arms against a *sea of troubles*. (*Hamlet*)

The overwhelming force of life's misfortunes is compared to a roaring ocean.

The *Quran* also uses metaphor in many chapters:

a) Balaman kasaba saia atao wa ahatat bihi khatiatuhu fa ulaika as habunnar (2:81)

(Asad, 2003)

(=Yes, he who has committed sin and has been netted by sin will be in Hell for ever). Here the verb 'netted' shows linkage to the noun 'net', which hints at a comparison between sin and net. Just as a net encompasses fishes, so sin grasps the sinners.

b) Wa masalullajina kafaru kamasal lillaji ian iku bimala iasma u illa dua au walid,

summun bukmun umun fahum la iakilun (2:171)

(=Nonbelievers are like the man who calls shouting, but what he calls hears nothing but shouting. They (nonbelievers) are deaf, dumb and blind). Here the nonbelievers are compared with the people who are deaf, dumb and blind.

c) Hunna liba sullakum wa untum liba sulla hunna... (2:187)

(=They (women) are your dress and you(men) are theirs). Here men and women are compared to dress for one another.

d) Katta bai ianar rushdu minal gaia, famai iakfur bittaguti wa iu mim billahi fakadis tam saka bil ur watil uska, lan fisa ma laha (2:256)

(=Of course the wrong path is clearly different from the true one. He who believes not ‘tagut’ but God grasps such a rope as gets torn never). Here believing God is compared to a strong rope. Just as there is no risk of falling down for one who grasps a strong rope, so there is no risk of being frustrated for one who believes God firmly.

e) Wa mai iuslim wazhahu ilallahi wahuwa muhsinun fakadis tamsaka bil ur watil uska...(31:22)

(=He who is virtuous and surrenders himself sincerely to God holds the strongest handle). Here the virtuous belief is compared to the strongest handle.

f) Wadrib lahum masalal hai ia tiddunia kama in anjalnahu minassama i fakhtalata bihi nabatul ardi fa asbaha hashiman tajruhurri iah, wa ka nallahu ala kulli shai im muktadir (18:45)

(=Describe the worldly life to them like this: I caused rainfall from the sky. It moistures the siblings to grow densely on earth, but eventually the siblings become so dry that they get reduced to dust, and air takes them away. God is almighty). Here the ultimate consequence of human life is compared to green plants that ultimately turn into dust. How significantly the *Quran* designs language to persuade man of an inevitable truth (“Writing 101: What is rhetoric? Learn about...Master class”)!

g) Innallajina ia kuluna am walal iatama julman innama ia kuluna fi butunihim nar...(4:10)

(=Those who grasp the riches of the orphan illegally swallows fire). Grasping the orphans’ riches illegally is as dangerous as fire.

## Rhetorical question

A rhetorical question strongly affirms or denies something in the form of a question. Neither the rhetorical *yes-no* nor the rhetorical *wh*-question generally expects an answer (Quirk et al, 1985):

a) Shall Caesar send a lie? (*Julius Caesar*)

The question does not expect a *yes/no*-answer, it rather emphasizes the statement that Caesar shall not send a lie.

b) Who would not sing for Lycidas? (*Lycidas*)

The question heightens the meaning that everybody would sing for Lycidas.

This figure of speech is also found in the Holy *Quran*:

a) Wa man ajlamu mimmam mana a' masajidallahi ai iuj kara fihas muhu wa sa afi kharabiha ulaika makana lahum ai iad khuluha illa kha ifin... (2:114)

(=Is there anyone more oppressive than the one who hampers the remembrance of God in the mosque and tries to destroy the mosque?)

b) Masalul fari kaini kal ama wal asammi wal basiri wassami i hal ias taoiani masala... (11:24)

(=The comparison between these two groups is like the one between those who are blind and deaf and those who are capable of seeing and hearing. Are they equal as compared?) Here a statement that is, these two groups are not equal is strongly asserted in the form of a question.

## Antithesis

Antithesis is the choice or arrangement of words to emphasize the contrast and give the effect of balance:

a) Give *everyman* thine ear, but *few* thy voice (*Hamlet*) (Lall, 1992)

b) Let us be *sacrificers*, but *not butchers* (*Julius Caesar*)

c) Not that I *loved Caesar less*, but that I *loved Rome more* (*Julius Caesar*)

In these examples, *everyman*, *sacrificers* and *Iloved Rome more* are highlighted by contrasting them with *few*, *butchers* and *Not that Iloved Caesar less* respectively.



In the second and sixteenth chapter of the *Quran*, we find effective use of antithesis:

a) Fajkuruni ajkurkum wa ash kuruli wala takfurun (2: 152)

(=Therefore bear me in mind, and I'll bear you in mind. Be *grateful*, not *ungrateful*, to me)

b) Ma indakum ian fadu wa ma indallahi bak (16: 96)

(=What you have will be *finished* but what God has *will not*).

## Alliteration

It is a figure in which the same sound, letter or syllable is repeated in a sequence of nearby words:

a) Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet-dou x (*The Rape of the Lock*)

The sound 'p' and the syllable 'bi' are repeated several times.

The glittering examples of alliteration are found in the Romantic Spirit Progenitor Coleridge (Drabble and Stringer, 2003):

b) Alone, alone, all, allalone (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*)

Alone on wide, wide sea

c) The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew

The furrow followed free. (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*)

The *Quran* is uniquely remarkable in the use of alliteration:

a)...Uma mimmim mamma aka (11:48)

(=To those who are with you). The sound ‘m’ is repeated several times.

b) Ijajul jilatil ardu jilja laha (99:1)

(=When the earth will be caused to tremble heavily). The sound ‘j’ is repeated several times.

c) Summum bukmun umiun fahum la iakilun(2:171).

(=They are deaf, dumb and blind. They can realize nothing). The sound ‘m’ is repeated several times.

## Metonymy

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which the name of one thing is substituted for that of another with which it is loosely associated:

a) Lycidas, your *sorrow* (i.e. object of sorrow) is not dead.  
(*Lycidas*)

b) Give every man thine *ear*, but few thy *voice* (i.e, organ for agent) (*Hamlet*)

This stylistic device is not uncommon in the *Quran*, too:

a) Allahu wa li iullajina amanu iukhrijuhum minajjulumati ilannur (2:257)

(=God is the guardian of the believers. He brings them out from *darkness* (i.e.ignorance) to *light* (i.e .knowledge) (Muhiuddin, 1999).

## Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which the name of one thing is substituted for that of another with which it is intimately associated:

a) I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,

And cried, 'A *sail!* A *sail!*' (i.e. ship) (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*)

b) Lowliness is young *Ambition's* (i.e. ambitious people) ladder (*Julius Caesar*)

c) Season of mists and mellow *fruitfulness* (i.e. fruits) ('Ode to Autumn').

The *Quran* has also used this figure of speech:

a)... Li iar lati iyallahu ma fi *suduri* kum... (3:154)

(=It came to happen so, because God will find out (thus) what is hidden in your *chest* (i.e. mind))

## Irony

It is a figure of speech in which the very opposite of what is stated is meant:

a) And Brutus is an *honourable* (i.e. dishonourable) man. (*Julius Caesar*)

The *Quran* also uses this device:

a) Innallajina iakfuruna biaiatillahi wa iaktulu nannabi iana bi gairi hak, wa iaktulu nallajina ia muruna bil kisti minannas *fabash shir* hum bi ajabin alim (3:21)

(=Those who refuse God's commandment and prohibition, kill His prophet unjustly and kill also those who, from among the people, come out to establish justice and virtue, give them the *good news* (i.e. bad news) of fatal punishment.

b) Hal *sawibal* kuffaru ma kanu iaf alun (83:36)

(=The nonbelievers gained the *goodness* (i.e. punishment for committing sin) of their deeds.

## Polysyndeton

It is a figure in which conjunctions are repeated with an artistic sense to emphasize each particular idea:

a) It cracked *and* growled *and* roared *and* howled

Like noises in swound! (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*)

Polysyndeton is also found in the *Quran*:

a) Wa iz akhajna misaka bani israila la ta'buduna illallah, *wa*  
bil wali daini ihsanao wajil kurba *wal* iatama *wal* masakini  
*wa* kulu linnasi husnao *wa* akimussalata *wa* atujjakata...  
(2:83)

(=Remember when we had the oath taken by Bani israil that worship none but God, *and* behave well with your parents *and* (with) your relatives *and* (with) the poor, *and* speak well to people, *and* establish 'salat' firmly *and* give 'jakat'.)

## Asyndeton

It is a figure in which conjunctions are omitted for vividness, energy, liveliness, or effect:

(a) I came, I saw, I conquered. (*Julius Caesar*)

The figure is also found in the *Quran*:

a) Summun bukmun umiun fahum la iakilun. (2:171)

(=They are deaf, dumb, blind. They can realize nothing).

## Conclusion

A good speech or writing does not mean that it is just free from grammatical error. The fundamental requirement for a good speech or

writing is its quality to be powerful, where some stylistic features such as the slightly different pattern of language, especial arrangement of words or ideas and superficially absurd or self-contradictory ideas play a vital role to make a meaning attractive and worth-remembering. In such cases, the listeners or readers reach the intended meaning only after they have observed the speech or writing deeply. This attempt to hold up a meaning or a piece of information through the ornamental and effective use of words is dealt with in rhetoric.

Rhetoric enriches all types of writing. English literature is especially remarkable in this regard. The present author, being professionally concerned with English language and literature, encountered how different figures along with striking thoughts made ever-appealing the works of renowned English writers such as Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Pope, etc. The figures they chose intelligently, not only added a new dimension to their works but also enhanced their beauty.

The effect of rhetoric in literature inspired the author to seek the effect of rhetoric also in religious books especially the Holy *Quran*. Out of curiosity, the author closely read the *Quran* and marked the ‘ayats’ polished with figures of speech. The author found how suitably the figures presented the implication of the ‘ayats’. The article ultimately shows that the figures in English literature are as indispensable as they were in the Holy *Quran* introduced fourteen hundred years ago.

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# **Strained Discourses between the Patriarchal Society and the Matriarchal Society in Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale***

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## **Abstract**

Margaret Atwood, the famous Canadian author describes the contemporary society of New England through her renowned novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. Here she explores the work and function of the handmaids through some female characters. The protagonist, named Offred is assigned to do her work for the high-class soldiers. Being a mother, as a handmaid she has to leave her child and husband and is forced to do the work for the Gilead society. Offred's character comes out through her work, dialogue, recalling of past life, and description of the present situation. While narrating her character, the writer describes both male and female characters who represent the society. At the same time, the characters of this novel reveal two dominant societies during that time: patriarchal society and matriarchal society. This paper brings out the strained discourses between these two societies of New England by analyzing the characters. At the same time, my purpose is to show that the females always struggle hard for living purpose in so many ways, but ultimately



their condition never improves because of the dominating patriarchal society.

**Keywords: Patriarchal society, Matriarchal society, Handmaid, Discourse, New England.**

Besides being a renowned writer and a critic in contemporary Canadian literature, Margaret Atwood has shown her keen interest in feminist movement of Canadian politics. That is why, in her writing, she brings most of the time the contemporary society, male and female characters, their relationship to each other with their sentiment, work and their rights. In the novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, the author portrays two societies with gender issues. Her suppressed female characters always face challenges and struggle a lot to live in the male dominated society. In this novel, the novelist describes how patriarchal society snatches the liberty and freedom from the matriarchal society in so many ways and in different situations. Moreover, Atwood wants to show that women are the rivals of women in the same society. This paper reflects these two societies through some of the major strained discourses in this novel.

Atwood works on women's movement which is known as second wave feminism. The period of this feminist movement is from the year 1960 to 1985. The motto of this movement is peace, equality in education, impartial employment, safety for women and birth control. Mary Wollstonecraft, the British proto-feminist of 18<sup>th</sup> century established the rights of women in her famous book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). In that book, she argues that women are not naturally inferior to men as they lack education. She brings comments of great philosophers like Bacon and Locke, and then puts her logical arguments. One of the suggestions suggested by her is that, both men and women should be treated as rational beings and imagines a social order founded on reason. Both of them should be well educated as they both have to take the responsibilities of family and society together. Other early feminists had made similar pleas for improved education for women, but Wollstonecraft suggests that society will be benefitted if there will be a radical change. Following

Mary Wollstonecraft, Atwood and other feminist writers have established some rights for the women in twentieth century.

There are some influential and famous feminists who work for this second wave feminism through their physical work, different piece of writing, and slogans, motto and speech. As Atwood is a liberal author, she puts her comments, arguments and criticisms by her strong pen. Through her writing, she describes the movement of women's representation in everything from professional work to personal work which insists on respect for non-mainstream identities and demand reform of law and government. In her novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, by describing the place named Gilead and its male and female members of different ranks and position, Atwood focuses the contemporary society with the violence and result of feministic movement.

Gilead is a 'rational' society which aims at serving its misogynist and racist purposes. As a place in a developed country, it is a society full of terror, doubt, depression and unhappiness. Offred, the protagonist of the novel, describes the place in her own words:

The street is almost like a museum, or a street in a model town constructed to show the way people used to live...This is the heart of Gilead, where the war cannot intrude except on television. Where the edges are we aren't sure, they vary, according to the attacks and counterattacks, but this is the centre, where nothing moves...Doctors lived here once, lawyers, university professors. There are no lawyers any more, and the university is closed (Atwood 33).

In Gilead society, at first some young Caucasian women are selected. They are imprisoned and trained as childbearing handmaids. Among them, the healthy and sound children are abducted by the government in order to give punishment to their parents. Particularly, young mothers are the main target in this society who are bound to listen to the male characters of the society according to the new Gileadean social order. Offred's only daughter was also kidnapped in this regard. Offred, from that time, becomes a Handmaid whose work is to serve the Commander, a high-ranking officer of the Gilead physically.

The women of Gilead society are treated very inhumanly, and they suffer from the oppression imposed upon them by the male dominated

society. Offred comments about the handmaids: “ladies in reduced circumstances. The circumstances have been reduced; for those of us who still have circumstances”. (Atwood 13) The women of Gilead are oppressed in many ways. The autocratic society dominates the poor women in such a way that they do not get freedom in their personal life. Or, it can be said that, they almost forget that they have a personal life to live. The males, who play different roles in the society, cruelly oppress the women. They become satisfied physically by getting pleasure when they get the company of the women whenever they want. For example, the handmaids who are able to be pregnant, are kept by their commanders in order to bear children. Those women who do not have fertility, are sent to the colonies to experience a slow death as a punishment. In the same society, women are oppressed not by the males only, but by other women as well. The role of the Aunts can be taken in this regard. According to the author, Aunts are a class of ladies who act as the agents of the Gilead regime. They supply the information of the handmaids to the commanders; thus, they maintain their safety and security by creating trouble to the Handmaids. Maximum time the handmaids get severe punishments only by the Aunts. Finally, women of this society are oppressed by religion, which is the principal reason for all other suppressions.

The novelist describes an incident which occurred in the year 1980. During that year, a good number of people severely suffer both physically and psychologically because of strong reactions occurred by nuclear and other poisonous chemicals. Unfortunately, women face many types of physical problems. One of the major problems is the infertility of the women. Then the present Government divides fertile and infertile women and they are categorized by their age and working ability. Jews, aged and non-white women are sent to colonies, a radioactive territory. On the other hand, white and fertile women with sound health are sent to the soldiers and commander's house. There they have to share the bed with the male members of that family and bear children for the family, especially to those families who are unable to bear children. According to the novelist, these women are known as Handmaids. The Handmaids work for the high-class families by following some strict rules. Most of the times, they are asked to share the bed with the male member of a family in presence of the infertile wife of her husband.

In this novel, Serena Joy is an infertile spouse of the Commander. She is a frustrated, selfish and complex character. As she is unable

to bear children, she requires Offred's help. When Offred is asked to lie with the Commander in front of Serena Joy, she is found sitting near at Offred's head and holds her hand tightly. She does it only for one reason. That is, if Offred fulfills the desire of the Commander, it becomes easy for Offred to be pregnant and both the Commander and his wife become the parents of that child. Offred comments about it: "She doesn't speak to me, unless she can't avoid it. I am a reproach to her; and a necessity." (Atwood 23) So many times Serena Joy asks Offred to maintain some restrictions strictly. One of these is that, Offred and the Commander can go to bed to have their physical relation, but they are not allowed to kiss each other, and after completing their sexual work, Offred gets only ten minutes to leave the room. Offred tells,

Above me, towards the head of the bed, Serena Joy is arranged, outspread ... My arms are raised; she holds my hands, each of mine in each of hers. This is supposed to signify that we are one flesh, one being... The rings of her left hand cut into my fingers... I do not say making love, because this is not what he's doing. Copulating too would be inaccurate, because it would imply two people and only one is involved. Nor does rape cover it: nothing is going on here that I haven't signed up for. (Atwood 104)

Thus, in this novel it is found that, in that patriarchal society, not only the male but also the females of the upper class get the right and the power to dominate other women.

In the book *The Second Sex* written by Simone de Beauvoir, the renowned French existentialist and feminist philosopher, explains some theories based on sex and gender. Through this book, she investigates popular definition of femininity. She explains that, femininity is a concept that has been learned through socialization in order to keep man dominant over others. According to her, the cultural devices of domination is responsible confining the women in so many ways. She also comments that, as these women cannot be a simple biological group, womanhood is forced on woman by civilization. She uses the word 'Other' which represents the fundamental social meaning of woman. According to this critic, biology is the main source for the women's oppression within

patriarchal society. Sexual harassment is also an unavoidable part of women's subjugation, manipulation and all other purposes of women. In this regard, Atwood brings and describes the logical arguments of Simone de Beauvoir in her text through the characters with their characteristics in this novel.

Like Beauvoir, Atwood also believes that among man and woman, only the woman is allowed to be judged by physically and psychologically. Offred, for example, purely and simply is not treated only as human in *The Handmaid's Tale*. The main reason of it is that, the society is a patriarchal based society. Both inside and outside the living place, Offred has to maintain some strict rules. She never thinks about any dream for her, and no one also asks her about her wish and dream.

As the women in Gilead society are deprived of their individual freedom, they are bound to lead their life according to the wish and order of the males of that society. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Offred narrates the full story of Gilead into a tape recorder with the barest trace of emotion, for she has been practically engaged in her handmaid training. Through her description, a clear picture of the matriarchal society comes out which is fully controlled and dominated by the patriarchal society. In Gilead society, language is the main way to give social roles and identities through labels. Then the patriarchal society executes their ideologies and principles by using the Holy book like Bible. Offred once described about religion by referring to some Biblical lines. These Biblical references are used and considered to justify the rules of the law. One of the rules is that, it is extremely prohibited for the women to read and write. That means, they should be illiterate. Because of this reason, they are unable to distinguish the real Biblical references from the altered versions. Unfortunately, they are forced to accept the false ideology of Bible imposed on them through these logical Biblical explanations. Master, father, husband or any male member of the family apply the patriarchal rules made by them over the females of that society. Another rule is that, the women are not allowed to make a plan for their personal life, neither they are allowed to dream, or indulge in dreaming. As they are considered as a means of production and under the control of the males, the patriarchal society deprives them from happiness, security, freedom and their own identities.

In Gilead, the women are categorized with their different ranks and labels such as Handmaids, Marthas, Wives etc. Each role is assigned its own color of clothing as a code for the work. The women are forced to wear these colors which represent their roles in the totalitarian theocracy known as Gilead. Furthermore, the color of the women's clothes indicates their specific duties along with hidden meanings. In this novel, the color of the

dress of the Handmaids is red which symbolizes fertility. Offred says about this color at the time of introducing herself as a Handmaid in this way: "The red gloves are lying on the bed. I pick them up, pull them onto my hands, finger by finger. Everything except the wings around my face is red, the color of blood, which defines us." (Atwood 18) Red suggests blood of the menstrual cycle and of child birth. This color is also a traditional marker of sexual sin. When the Handmaid's reproductive role supposedly finds its justification in the Bible, in some sense they commit adultery by having sex with their commanders who are married men. In contrast to red, they also wear white bonnets and wings to symbolize their purity and innocence. Green color dressed ladies are called Marthas, the domestic servants who take care of the house. They are older, infertile women who cannot bear children, but they can raise other people's children. They have access to information that gives them some control over handmaids and wives. The Aunts are the only class who keep the authority among all the women. They wear brown colored dresses symbolizing authority and power. They can read and write. They train the handmaids, organize their placement at Commanders' households, and monitor the compliance of wives and handmaids with their prescribed roles. In the novel, Aunt Lydia is the head aunt whose description through Offred's speech proves that she is a prestigious lady with authority:

I wasn't looking at her face, but at the part of her I could see with my head lowered: her blue waist, thickened, her left hand on the ivory head of her cane, the large diamonds on the ring finger, which must once have been fine filed to a gentle curving point. It was like an ironic smile, on that finger, like something mocking her. (Atwood 24)

There are also 'Econowives', who are the spouses of lower-class Caucasian men. They are used by Aunts as examples of inferiority in handmaid training. Using the dress of Aunt, Moira gets a chance to escape from Gilead society. Her exchange of clothing with Aunt Elizabeth is a symbolic gesture, a symbol of rebellion and resistance for the Handmaids. Though Gilead uses clothing and color to define different rank of the women, Moira strikes a blow against Gilead's attempt to define her identity. As a feminist and lesbian, Moira appears as an unconventional, rebellious character. To Atwood, Moira represents courage and hope, which other women of Gilead society have lost. Her determination is in contrast to Offred's, and her bravery is something exceptional that all the Handmaids wish to be a character like Moira.

When the Handmaids are asked to meet the Commanders, they have to obey the rules and formalities. When they show their passes, the two Guardians punch their numbers into the compucheck. Looking at their eyes, Offred compares the faces of those Guardians to the sheep, but the looks were like dog, 'spaniel, not tender' (Atwood 31) Offred describes the situation by the following lines:

What if I were to come at night, when he is on duty alone-though he would never be allowed such solitude- and permit him beyond my white wings? What if I were to peel off my red shroud and show myself to him, to them, by the uncertain light of the lanterns? This is what they must think about sometimes, as they stand endlessly beside this barrier, past which nobody even comes except the Commanders of the Faithful in their long back murmurous cars, or their blue Wives and white -veiled daughters on their dutiful way to Salvagings or Prayvaganzas, or their dumpy green Marthas, or the occasional Birthmobile, or their red Handmaids , on foot.( Atwood 31)

Through this speech, Offred wants to tell that the Guardians, whose work is to protect the Handmaids and fulfil their duties by sending the Handmaids to the Commanders, also become crazy to get the attachment of the Handmaids. But they have to control this feeling as they are afraid of the Commanders. The Commanders always deny the feelings of human beings, such as love, friendship and sexual relations through which man can be able to be experienced about practical life. Without any hesitation, they punish as subversion the tiniest expressions of feelings, as feelings lead people to form an emotional bondage with one another which is difficult to break. In Gilead, patriarchal society gives punishment to the people. Dead bodies of the lovers who, according to the Government, criminal, Doctors who performed abortions, priests, nuns and feminists are publicly displayed as warnings. Through this display, the patriarchal society wants to mean that if anyone wants to live in Gilead society, he or she should keep a bondage with the society by following the rules created by them. When the handmaids conceive, they get extra caring by the Guardians. They become very alert about the daily affairs of the handmaids until they give birth to the children. Offred describes this by the following lines:

She needs only the floor exercises, the breathing drill. She could stay at her house. And it's dangerous for her to be out, there must be a Guardian standing outside the door, waiting for her. Now that she's is carrier of life, she is closer to death, and needs special security. Jealousy could get her, it's happened before. All children are wanted now, but not by everyone. (Atwood 36)

By these lines, Atwood wants to show the cruel side of the patriarchal society. After giving birth to a child, it is the wish of the Commander whether the Handmaid will continue her life, or embrace her death declared by the Commander. The Commander and his wife never become grateful to the handmaids for giving them a baby in their life for which they get crazy for a long time. This is the subordinate position of the Handmaid. To Beauvoir, this subordinate position is known as 'Otherness' where a woman loses her freedom to bear child for herself according to her

wish. In other words, in this patriarchal society, basic demands of a Handmaid like Offred are ignored by the society.

In Gilead, all the handmaids who make sexual relation with the Commanders and prepare for bearing the child, are regular visitors to the doctors for their regular routine checkup. The Commanders are very punctual at this and every month according to their order, the Handmaids visit to the doctor. Offred describes this through these lines, 'I'm taken to the doctor's once a month, for tests: urine, hormones, cancer sear, blood test, the same as before, except that now it's obligatory.' (Atwood 69) The doctors represent the male dominating society like the Commander. They make the poor innocent ladies as their targets to fulfill their physical thirst who visit them as their patients. According to Beauvoir, two of the most important roles of a woman in the patriarchal society are wife and mother. As both these roles are connected with the satisfaction and happiness of men, they become conscious about the health issues of the women. This is described by Atwood in this novel wonderfully through Offred's character. Offred visits to the doctor for her regular mandatory routine checkup once in a month. The doctor, at the time of continuing his checkup, offers his voluntary help to her. He assures Offred that if she agrees to stay with him, he can take the risk to change her test report: "'Shh,' he says, 'I could help you. I've helped others.'... 'Today or tomorrow would do it, why waste it? It'd only take a minute, honey.'" (Atwood 70) But Offred refuses his proposal and leaves the chamber: "'It's too dangerous,' I say, 'No, I can't.'" (Atwood 71) Offred is an example of oppressed woman who is safe neither at her own place, nor at anywhere. She is leading a life full of uncertainty and insecurity.

In the novel, among many ceremonies the author describes a ceremony which is known as Sexual Ceremony. This ceremony is held every month where the Commander takes Offred with him. Like Offred, other Handmaids also join there. There the Handmaids suffer both psychologically and physically by the Commanders and other males. There the Commanders forcefully make the Handmaids as their target. This Ceremony is an example of the manifestation of the strict religious doctrines which prevent women, particularly the Handmaids, from having any control over their bodies and their identities. The masculine power of the Commanders represents here the western colonizers who, for their own benefits, control over the bodies of the Handmaids.

When Atwood was nine years old, she saw a film named *The Red Shoes*. The film was about a lady, who was a dancer. She had to choose either a life full of love, or her career about a dancer. Later, as she could not take the decision, she committed suicide by throwing herself under a running train. Atwood, reflecting on this movie, later



commented in her book of essays named *Negotiating with the Dead* that, it was a hard task for a lady to choose between love and dancing. As both needed full dedication, Atwood commented that women could not manage both home and career equally. This theme is used by the writer in this book *The Handmaid's Tale*, where oppressive patriarchal society strongly denies women's right. She used red shoes in this text where the Handmaids wear red shoes. Atwood wants to show her feministic attitude in the text. As a feminist, Offred's mother was always very vibrant against pornography and abortion. In the text, women, who were the feminists, were known as Unwomen, who always demonstrated against violent sexual attacks on women.

Atwood depicts the oppression imposed upon women by the political and religious trends, women's reaction to such victimization, their loss of identity, and their search for lost female and national identity. The issue of gender is the main concern for examining this novel. By revealing the manipulation and oppression of women, the author depicts the misery of her female characters who always restrain in their feminine roles. Further, she challenges the inferior status of the women in that contemporary society. Atwood has strongly applied the logical arguments and theories of Simone de Beauvoir about sex and gender in her novel to make her points logical and clear. Not only from the philosophical background, but also from the social and religious background, she describes the strained discourses of both male and female societies. Through her writing, Margaret Atwood wants to give a message to all- the people of Gilead do not have sentiments, feelings and conscience; they become numb and disoriented to their shared humanity, and continue their living without any kind of spirit to resist their own repression. Her novel bears the bitter truth of human life: matriarchal society is always controlled by the patriarchal society.

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# Locating the Re/presentation of the “Feminine Other”: 1970s – 1980s’ Popular Bangla Movie Songs as Gendered Discourses

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## **Abstract**

Bengali song titles like "চুমকি চলেছে একাপথে" (Chumki is Alone on the Way) to "নীল আকাশের নিচে আমি রাস্তায় চলেছি একা" (I'm Walking Alone under the Blue Sky) demonstrate how men are safe and free but women are unsafe if she's alone on a Bangladeshi road. Some song lyrics can be powerful media for infusing particular discourse into the audience's mind. Viewing and listening to famous Bengali movie songs is enjoyable but the problematics of the songs as gendered discourse are rarely addressed. According to the idea of “otherness as stereotype” from cultural theorist Stuart Hall's famous essay “The Spectacle of the Other” (1997), many Bengali songs demonstrate the connotations of gender binarism that stereotype women as the ‘other’. The mechanism of stereotyping considers Bengali women as the “fragmented other”, as film theorist Laura Mulvey discusses in her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975). The paper explores the fact that 1970s – 1980's Bangla movie songs reflect the male-dominated, stereotyped norms of the 1970s' Bangladeshi culture. The paper also analyzes how these selected song lyrics and their music videos represent women as the ‘feminine other’, or the gendered binary of men.

## Introduction:

### Romantic Songs in the 1970s – 1980s’ Bangladeshi Media: Romance as Male Fantasy

The use of songs in Bangladeshi films is not new phenomenon, yet it was especially 1960s when music became an integral part of Bangla cinema. The popularity of songs in films roots back in 1960, which is also known as the “Golden Age of Cinema” in Bangladesh. The films in this era had “a brilliant balance of music and story” as music was “an essential part of storytelling” (Ashiq, 2020, p. 7). In the 1970s, unlike the 21<sup>st</sup> century internet culture of ‘new media’, Bangladeshi media had radio, black and white television and cinema. The first major breakthrough in music in an independent Bangladesh was the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendro (Free Bengal Radio Centre). In their article, “*From Few to Many Voices: An Overview of Bangladesh’s Media*”, Shoesmith and Mahmud mention that television “was expensive to set up and receivers were generally seen as far too expensive for the majority of people” (Shoesmith & Genilo, 2013, p. 57). Still, for both rural and urban people, radio and cinema were the available means of entertainment. In rural Bangladesh, one black and white television in a solvent family gathered the attention of the whole local community, whereas urban people collected tickets for those movies at cinema halls. In the 1970-80s Bangla film industry, there was a huge appeal of movie stars like Razzak (1942 – 2017), Kabori (1950 – 2021), Babita (1953 - ), Shabana (1953 - ), Bulbul Ahmed (1940 – 2010), Alamgir (1950 - ) and others. Shazu (2019) reports that among the male actors, “Farooque, Uzzal, Sohel Rana, Bulbul Ahmed, Javed and others made their movie debuts in the 70s”. Many movie songs caught the “public” sentiment of romance and ideal domesticity which, in reality, represented male ego, male power and male fantasy. It is important to note that the songs got popularized by a large part of male producers as well as the male audience. If someone googles the list of Bangla movie directors and songwriters on Wikipedia, s/he will observe that most of them, if not all, are men. The film industry was largely run by a network of the masculine communities. In the case of cast, Shishir and Shams (2017) observe that the leading heroines in 1970’s films were portrayed to be “devoted towards the male viewers” because “(the most of the viewers of Bangladeshi cinema are men)”. As for the music productions, the female playback singers like Shammi Akhtar (1957 – 2018), Sabina Yesmin (1954 - ), Runa Laila (1952 - ),

Ferdousi Rahman (1941 - ), Shahnaz Rahmatullah (1952 – 2019) and others had to sing the songs written by male songwriters. Besides, the audience of those movies held traditional patriarchal values where women were often seen as the stereotyped “other” – the archetype of the caregiver, the emotional manager, the ideal wife, or the object of men’s desire, and so on. The movie songs were preoccupied with certain values, e.g. how women were “different” from men because of their biological and sociocultural vulnerability.

## **‘Otherness’ vis-à-vis Male Fantasy – Gender, Stereotype and Power:**

### **Theoretical Framework**

The present-time feminist media theory takes a feminist perspective towards media studies. Predominantly based on gender issues, feminist media theory explores how gender intersects with other dimensions of identity such as race, class, ability, nationhood, and sexual orientation, as well as with the relations of subordination or domination. Linda Steiner (2014) notes that feminist film theorists focus on how “structures and narrative strategies guided cinema spectatorship in gendered ways, thereby constructing “woman” as the Other.” (Fortner and Fackler, 2014, p. 361). The representation of women in popular media is chiefly performed by multidimensional cultural practices like stereotyping mechanisms. In this regard, Stuart Hall’s theorization of representation conceptualizes ‘otherness’ and explores how media represents certain people/ objects as “other”. Like stereotype, otherness too is an artificial construction that focuses on some particular traits, highlights them in media and normalizes those traits as natural identity. The process of ‘othering’ has a hegemonic, hierarchical and representational aim. Popular media captures certain feminine characteristics of women and magnifies those features, e.g. women being submissive, dependent on male counterparts, tearful, emotional, biologically insecure, unsafe etc. Thus media symbolically produces and reproduces the stereotyped image of femininity (oftentimes, ‘hyper-femininity’ in melodramatic Bangla movies). This construction of otherness holds power mechanisms – women and men are represented as two binary opposites, as if the ‘female other’ has no existence without its ‘male self’. Oftentimes, such selective feminine features are defined as ‘otherness’ in terms of men’s masculinity portrayed in the media. Hall (1997) writes, “Stereotyping, in other words, is part of the

maintenance of social and symbolic order [...] what 'belongs' and what does not or is 'Other', between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', Us and Them.” (p. 259). In this process, ‘otherness’ becomes subject to gross inequalities of power which is at the same time represented through the masculine agenda of movie songs and movie-making.

Hall also argues that “splitting” is one of the most important strategies for creating the other. This split psychology relates to poststructuralist psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s conception of the ‘fragmented other’. In misrecognition phase of a child’s upbringing, the child’s self-image gets separated from his mother’s image. In this process, the child becomes the ‘other’ and enters the ‘symbolic order’ phase, which is essentially phallogentric. Feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey borrows this concept of ‘symbolic order’ and claims that a woman stands in patriarchal culture “as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order” (Mulvey, 1989, p. 15). This is why the dominant cinema culture holds the male gaze in its production of language, lyrics, narratives, cinematography and point of views. Naturally, the audience’s attention is directed to the ‘male self’ that likes to see the ‘feminine other’ as an inferior being, thus projecting male fantasy in media images. Thus the ‘feminine other’ actually serves as a partial representation of the event. According to Hall (1997),

The important point is that stereotypes refer as much to what is imagined in fantasy as to what is perceived as 'real'. And, what is visually produced. By the practices of representation, is only half the story. The other half- the deeper meaning -lies in *what is not being said, but is being fantasized. What is implied but cannot be shown.* (p. 263)

This is the binary, the polarized form of representation that foregrounds women as the weak counterpart because men are the provider, the savior, and the superior. The song producers utilize this public sentiment (which holds the masculine point of view) for romantic songs to propagate the idea of “feminine other”, whose ultimate goal, in other words, is to strengthen the masculine self and to re-assert male consciousness. This paper takes Hall’s idea of ‘gender stereotype’ and Mulvey’s concept of ‘fragmented other’ and fuses these two ideas into ‘feminine other’.

## Analysis of Movie Songs: The Lyrics and Their Visual Narratives

Underneath the so-called narratives of love and romance, some Bangladeshi movie songs conveyed the ‘otherness’ of a woman in different ways. Many romantic songs in the 1970s-1980s were rooted in the idea of women as biological means, or “biological essentialism”. Michael Ryan (2012) comments on the gendered cultural conditioning portrayed in media, “It is carried out in a patriarchal world anchored in biological imperatives that drive us toward survival” (p. 91). The song lyrics present such polarity of language and survival connotations of women under the Bangladeshi patriarchal social order. The cinematography of the music videos complements the song lyrics. The representation of the ‘feminine other’ takes a semiotic, or meaning-making approach. According to Baldwin (2014), “semiotics looks specifically at the relationship between texts and their underlying meanings (specifically, at social structures which they represent)”. Song producers tend to ‘fix’ a meaning or way of understanding as stereotyping includes fixation of the meaning into one ‘preferred meaning’. Studying the verbal narratives or song lyrics is as important as analyzing the visual narratives of the songs because, “in music video, not only lyrics but also image and music shift roles” (Vernallis, 2002, p. 17). The meanings of the lyrics decipher the network of power relations working underneath these discourses. This paper uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a tool to analyze the heteronormative cultural dynamics in the verbal signs of the songs and the visual signs of the music video. CDA unveils the hegemonic gender stereotypes in media language that portray women as the “fragmented other”.

- i. “আমি তোমার বধু, তুমি আমার স্বামী” (I am your wife, you are my husband)



**Figure 1** : Two narrative sequences of the movie song “আমিতোমারবধু,তুমিআমারস্বামী”

This famous song composed by Alam Khan and sung by Shammi Akhter, is from the movie *Aradhona* (1979). The male gaze expects the wife to find her salvation in her husband. Here Rupa (Kabori) conforms to the phallogocentric status of male superiority because she considers her husband Ashik (Bulbul Ahmed) as a godlike figure – “খোদারপরেতোমায়আমি বড় বলে জানি ” (to me, you are next to God). The audience sees the wife’s dedication towards her husband, which actually reveals her internalization of self-inferiority especially when she bends down to his feet to seek blessings. These certain repetitive acts and gestures of a ‘feminine image’, in Judith Butler’s theorization of gender, is seen as ‘gender performativity’ that constructs the feminine other “to perform, produce and sustain



discrete and polar genders” (Butler, 1990, p. 190). Constant repetition of the media-scripted feminine roles makes the audience forget that gender is “learned”, not “given”. In the song narrative, Rupa acts according to heteronormative Islamic marriage vows of the Bengali community that ultimately gives Ashik more privilege over his female counterpart.

ii. “যদিবউসাজোগো” (If You are Dressed as a Bride)



**Figure 2** : Two narrative sequences of the movie song “যদিবউসাজোগো”

From the movie *Wada* (1972), this song introduces Hall’s idea of fetishism and “male-centered fantasy”. It shows how a man defines a woman’s beauty by marrying her. In the song narrative, Masud (Bulbul Ahmed), the hero, sings that being a bride would make Aysha (Bobita) more beautiful than she already is. Aysha cheerfully agrees

with Masud, “বলোবলোআরওবলো,লাগছেমন্দনয়) ”tell me more and more, I love hearing it all). The woman’s patronization of male desire unveils gender theorist Adrienne Rich’s conception of “male identification” - “the act whereby women place men above women, including themselves, in credibility, status, and importance...” (Rich, 1980, p. 43). Male identification happens when women identify their own wishes in terms of men’s desires. Even the female audiences identify themselves according to the masculine nature of the narrative. The song lyrics hold the voyeuristic pleasure of the male gaze. Aysha is represented as the archetype of the ideal Bengali bride who acts shy, sweet and submissive.

iii. “চুমকিচলেছেএকাপথে” (Chumki is Alone on the Way)



**Figure 3** : Four narrative sequences of the movie song “চুমকিচলেছেএকাপথে”

This apparently famous song from the movie *Dost Dushman* (1977) can be considered as a passive tale of harassment. Through playful melody, this song narrates the heroine’s loss of personal freedom.

Chumki (Shabana), driving a cart, is safe by herself till Raja (Wasim) runs after her, as if it is natural for a man to intrude on a woman's personal space. At some point, Raja takes away Chumki's whip and sings, “ওটাঙ্গেওয়ালি, হাতকরোখালি /

চাবুকরেখেআমারহাতধরো, সেইভালো” (Oh Tonga wali, free up your hand and hold my hand, it's better this way). This visual sign asserts a man's attempt of taming the woman till she becomes his possession. The visual narrative reflects patriarchal codes and conducts where a man is expected to 'save' the 'unsafe' damsel in distress despite her being okay within her own comfort zone. Furthermore, this false representation of a woman's vulnerability unfolds the media politics of normalizing certain gender roles. This song represents a gendered regime of representation, that, a lonely woman needs a man, not her individuality.

iv. “ওচোখেচোখপড়েছেযখুনি” (When I cast my Look in your Eyes)



**Figure 4 :** Two narrative sequences of the movie song  
“ওচোখেচোখপড়েছেযখুনি”

This song is chosen from the famous Bangla movie *Ananto Prem* (1977). The song “O chokhe chokh poreche jokhuni” is written by Gazi Mazharul Anwar and composed by Azad Rahman. From the song title, it is evident that this song involves Laura Mulvey’s theorization of ‘scopophilia’, or the pleasure of looking. Scopophilia is associated with “taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze” (Mulvey, 1989, p. 16). In this song, the female body is visually fetishized to represent the heroine’s sexual otherness. The woman in love is termed by several dictions that denote patriarchal values of love; e.g. “কলঙ্কিনী” (the stigmatized woman), “বিরহিনী” (the woman with unrequited love) , “অভাগিনী” (the ill-fated woman) – all of them give a negative connotation to represent the loss of her bodily chastity. Razzak’s lines “এইযৌবনেকেউনাএলেকাছে / এতরূপেরকিদামবলআছেগো” (What value does your beauty have unless you find a lover in your youth?) convey the masculine point of view regarding feminine beauty. Fetishism, according to Hall, is a powerful tool for stereotyping. Fetishism involves the strategy of disavowal, or, “a powerful fascination or desire (that is) both *indulged* and at the same time *denied*” (Hall, 1997, p. 267). Fetishism has a sexual aim where women become “to-be-looked-at-ness” in front of the passive, male onlookers. In this segment, Babita’s saree is shown partly hanging by her shoulder, and in other scene her hands are pressed onto her chest. These visual actions make her an object of male fetishism. The cinematographer’s strategic disavowal of her feminine body parts makes Razzak the savior, the protector of his sensitive ‘feminine other’.

v. “আমিরজনীগন্ধাফুলেরমতগন্ধবিলিয়েমাই” (Like a  
Tuberose Flower, I Spread Fragrance)



**Figure 5 :** Four narrative sequences of the movie song “আমিরজনীগন্ধাফুলেরমতগন্ধবিলিয়েযাই”

Here in the song is taken from the movie *Rajanigandha* (1982). The phraseology of this song is noteworthy along with its music video. Phraseology, according to Gries (2008), is “the co-occurrence of a form or a lemma of a lexical item and one or more additional linguistic elements of various kinds which function as one semantic unit in a clause or sentence” (p. 6). Sudha (Shabana) represents her femininity by certain similes and metaphors, such as “রজনীগন্ধাফুলেরমত” (like tuberose flower), “মেঘেঢাকাচাঁদেরমত” (like the moon hidden behind the clouds) and “কাঁটা” (thorns). The phraseology of the lyrics suggests the heroine’s self-objectification as an entertaining agent. These flower and moon imageries reflect the softness and submissiveness of women. The song, passively upholds the theme of women as the silent bearers of pain and their self-sacrifice is necessary to sustain the (patriarchal) social privilege. In the song, Sudha, apparently happy, keeps entertaining her male audience where the men are seen sitting and looking at her with pride and ego. This scenario brings forth Laura Mulvey’s argument on the passive ‘female other’ who “performs within the narrative; the gaze of the spectator and that of the male characters in the film are neatly combined without breaking narrative verisimilitude” (Mulvey, 1989, p. 19). In other words,

Sudha's presence compliments the narratives of the men's world. In Mulvey's opinion, the audience also participates in the male stars' "fetishistic scopophilia". The 'feminine other' turns into an object of fetishistic voyeurism.

vi. “মনেবড়আশাছিল” (I had this Desire in my Heart)



**Figure 6** : Three narrative sequences of the movie song “মনেবড়আশাছিল”

Derived from the movie *Choto Maa* (1982), this song portrays how the 'feminine other' finds completeness when her male counterpart asks her to sing a song. This song upholds the male fantasy of fulfilling a woman's life by marrying her. Ruma (Kabori) sings, “ধন্যতোমারজন্যআমারনারীহয়েজন্মনেয়া /

ভাগ্যগুনেতোমারমতস্বামীপাওয়া” (My femininity finds meaning because of you, I am blessed to have you as my husband). Not only that, while holding her husband Rashed's (Bulbul Ahmed) hand in a pleasing manner, she sings that she aspires to lead her life according to his wishes: “মনযুগিয়েচলতেপারি” (...so that I can please you).



These lines infuse inside the audience's mind the masculinist norms of standardizing a woman's values In the song narrative. Ruma's physical gestures unveil the fact that a wife's sacred duty is to be the pleaser and the entertainer, which actually fulfills the male need of exhibiting their own ego through media images. These scripted acts of a woman pleasing a man normalize the discourses of gender roles. The audience is convinced of the sacred duty of the 'feminine other'. Furthermore, Ruma's bodily actions operate as "body politic" – that is, female body happens to be the carrier of male fantasy of love, care and submission. The audience, too, engages in this crude competition of voyeurism for the other. Evidently, the female spectator is absent in the song narrative even though the song is sung by a female singer.

vii. “কথাবলনাবলওগোবন্ধু, ছায়াহয়েতবুপাশেরইব” (Whether You Talk to me or not, I'll be Staying beside you like a Shadow)



**Figure 7** : Three narrative sequences of the movie song “কথাবলনাবলওগোবন্ধু, ছায়াহয়েতবুপাশেরইব”

This song, chosen from the movie *Modhu Milan*(1970), depicts the sadistic male gaze that feeds upon a woman's misery. The wailing Mina (Shabana) embodies the loss of female agency. The eroticization of a woman's helplessness has been an interesting media strategy to uphold the man's self-importance. The 'feminine other's'grief, in search of the man's kindness, indirectly strengthens

male pride. Along with Mina, the audiences identify themselves in terms of male identification and the masochistic pattern of Bengali women's tolerance of pain. Mina sings to Arif (Razzak) - “আমিঅভাগিনী, শুধুযেতোমারই/ যতইব্যথাদেবেসইবো” (I am helplessly yours, I'll bear all the pain you give me). Here, the female cast's self-image is shaped by masculine order of sadism. This binary of male sadism, however, is represented in the woman's masochism. It conveys to the audience the message that a woman stays with her husband despite all disrespect and portrays women as the sole absorber of male pride and ego. Oftentimes, it becomes the audience's demand to see a woman sacrifice herself in order to restore greater peace. In the narrative and lyrics of this song, Arif silently watches Mina whereas she tearfully tries to win him back. This side upholds women's internalization of self-inferiority as the ‘feminine other’ of men.

### Media, Gender and Beyond

Songs, as popular media, shape culture, gender and personhood, because, a song also serves as verbal rhetoric that carries certain ideologies. Critics Becca Cragin and Wendy Simons claim that “cultural studies can provide the feminist study of gender with a framework for analyzing in detail the content of cultural production while leaving it anchored to the social system from which it originates” (Chafetz, 2006, p. 196). Media images normalize the most mundane aspects of personal or cultural life and represent this inequality between ‘masculine self’ and ‘feminine other’. The reason behind women's ‘otherness’ in Bangladeshi media was largely related to women's lived experiences as well. Especially, the representation of a rural woman was inspired by her educational, social and economic position in society. Lack of female empowerment, poverty, loss of father, low social position of father/family etc shaped her self-image as the ‘inferior other’ of her male counterpart. In the media, men are the proprietor of the “spectacle” who wants to see a “feminine other” for their own ego and identity formation. Not only the 1970s – 80s Bengali movie songs hold this focus of Stuart Hall's ‘otherness’, it is relevant to twenty-first century contemporary Bangla songs as well. For example, in a song from the movie *Valobasha Dibi Kina Bol* (2009), Shakib Khan sings to Apu Biswas, “দেখবেসেদিনআমি বদলেযাব ,যেদিনবধূবেশেতোমাকে পাব”



(I'll change myself the day I'll have you dressed as a bride). These lyrics highlight a man's need of his 'female other' in shaping his 'good boy' image. However, keeping aside a few of the exceptions, most of the media representation in Bangladeshi music industry stereotypes women as the subject of a gendered sociocultural regime.

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# **The Treatment of Radha as a Woman : Perspective Bengali Folk Songs**

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## ***Abstract***

Radha and Krishna, popular and worshipped in Vaishnavism, have appeared in Bengali Literature as the most common associates of each other. This paper focuses on the representation of Radha in the area of Bengali folk songs where both of Radha and Krishna have acted humanly and are involved in a love relationship like common human beings. Excluding the spiritual and religious identity of Radha, found in the songs, this paper attempted to do a feministic study on her. When Radha is portrayed as a woman by male lyricists or composers she is constructed and treated as a devotee rather than a life partner. In the name of devotion, the image of Radha has been shaped, fixed and expected as a submissive, emotional, impractical, soft-hearted and irrational lady. Radha's devotion and submissive behavior for Krishna has been used to construct the idea of so-called good woman. This paper researched on the songs, books, articles, discussion etc. to explore the matter. Finally this paper has concluded that Radha as a woman has not been given any individuality or personality of her own.

**Keywords: Folk Song, Radha and Krishna, Representation, Individuality, Devotee, Submission**

## **Introduction**

In the platform of world literature, Bengali Literature has attained a special place. Bengali Songs have made this work convenient. “Bangladesh is a country of songs ( Ahmed 275)” and Bengali songs are enriched with its vast amount of folk songs. The simplicity and soft melody of Bengali folk songs touch our heart easily. In the kingdom of folk songs, love as a theme overpowers and dominate a lot and “Radha and Krishna are the traditional symbols of love” (279). Since there is a tone of separation, Radha’s lamentation for Krishna makes us emotional. The poets who bring Radha and Krishna into their songs are very talented and successful enough that all of these songs, stories, lyrics, music have developed a permanent appeal in the mind of the audiences. These songs are resources in the ground of folk songs.

In Bengali Literature, Radha and Krishnawere brought in the verse, *SriKrishnaKitan* by Boru Chandidas. According to Nilima Ibrahim (2016), “*SriKrishnaKirtan* Kabya is an excellent example of medieval language and literature” (Ibrahim 13). This verse attempted to introduce Radha, Krishna and their relationship to the Bengali reader. Ibrahim in her book, *SriKrishnakirtan Kabya Pather Vumika* (2016), describes and criticizes different issues of this verse (the time, language, story, The problem of Chandidash etc.). She pointed out that in *SriKrishnakirtan*, Radha is a very simple village girl, the daughter of a milkman and a loyal wife who loves her husband a lot and considers Krishna as a vagabond village boy. In relation Krishna is her nephew. Radha in her human birth totally forget about her goddess identity. “This forgetfulness of Radhika irrigated *SriKrishnaKirtan* Kabya with a humanitarian flavor” (Ibrahim 50). The human feelings of Radhika, her social –consciousness, the rectification of virtue, tangible domestic life knowledge made this verse humanitarian (51). Even in folk songs, we get Radha, Krishna, their love, krishna’s flute, Jamuna etc. that compelled us to consider Radha and Krishna as normal human beings more than god and goddesses.

The songs used as data for this study are: “ভোমরকইযোগিয়া”, “প্রাণসখীরেওইশোনকদম্বতলেবংশীবাজ্যকে?”, “ওকিওবন্ধু, কাজলভ্রমরারে”, নির্জনযমুনারকূলেবসিয়াকদম্বতলে, “বনমালীগোতুমিপরজনমেহইয়োরাঁধা” and “ভোমারওলাগিয়ারেসদাইপ্রানআমারকান্দেরে”. These songs express Radha’s helpless situation in absence of Krishna since the songs are composed from Radha’s point of view. Separation from Krishna makes her

alienated that is clearly visible through her lamentation. These songs say about Radha's lifelong waiting for him and the unfulfilled desire of Radha that increases Radha's estrangement in extreme level.

## Literature Review

Folk Literature contains the essence of nationhood. The different items or varieties (Folk songs, Dramas, Riddles, Proverbs, Ballads, Folktales etc.) of Folk literature were developed and generated orally because of a lack of education and interest to preserve the songs of its creators. Folk literature saves both of our past and present. Geography and social integrity work as deep level foundation for the literature of this type. It not only helps to build a national culture but also supports to construct other areas of knowledge, for example, Anthropology, Ethnography, social sciences etc. Since folk literature is dynamic, it walks with time (Ahmed 274).

Wakil Ahmed also stated in his essay, "Folk Literature" (2007) that the aspects that support folk songs directly or indirectly to be originated and developed in this area are geographical setting and climate. Bangladesh is located in tropical area which gifted the country a natural beauty with a perfect weather for cultivation. Flood brings good crop that makes farmer happy and this happiness is disclosed through their songs (Ahmed 275). Since folk songs is a resourceful area of our culture, its types are huge. Almost fifty different types of folk songs can be possible to enlisted in a catalogue (277). While *Baromasi* describes the seasons of the year, *Bhatiali* narrates the river of Bangladesh and *Bhawaiya* is land or meadow related song. *Jari* songs are consistent with the essence of Muharram. There is *Baul* songs that gives a devotional flavor. *Jari* songs, *gomvira*, *baromasi* songs, *alkap*, *jatragaan* are usually very long to perform (276-277). Besides all of those songs "The symbols of Radha and Krishna are recurrent in the following types of Bangla folksongs: *alkap*, *Kobigaan* or song-duet, *ghatu gaan*, *jhumur*, *baromasi* or lyrical description of the year, *meyeli* or female songs, *jatra* or open-air opera etc. (279)". Ahmed also pointed out that the way love theme has become prominent in folk songs and ballads, is not visible in other areas of Bengali Folk literatures. He talks about physical or worldly love that is the essence of love songs and spiritual love is the core of devotional songs (279).

The relationship between Radha and Krishna has been interpreted metaphorically and spiritually. According to the vaishnab poets, Krishna is “Paromatta” (The Creator) and Radha is “Jibannta” (The Creation). Both the Creator and its Creation want to be united with each other but they cannot. There are lots of obstacles and limitations. This separation of Radha and Krishna (The Creator and The Creation) has become a prominent theme of the Vaishnab poets of medieval period in Bengali literature (Azad 33-34).

It is observed that helpless men from prehistoric period had a tendency to search a hero to make them free from all hindrance and obstacles of life. Since they didn’t find a real hero in reality, they created a heroic figure in their imagination. In this way, a hero was born in ancient and medieval Folk Tale. Once upon a time hero was called “Avatar”, such as Krishna. He killed the tyrannical king Kongsho to save the mankind (Shafique 11).

The love relationship of pre-Chaitanya period celebrates physicality. Since *Shreekrishna kirtana* has been written before Chaitanya period, it also celebrates physical relationship of Radha and Krishna. The nature and type of love is shown between Radha and Krishna in *Shreekrishna kirtana* is different than the post Chaitanya period. Love before Chaitanya period was physical based on the other hand love relationship after the Chaitanya period or post Chaitanya period didn’t celebrate physicality. It goes beyond physicality and physical relationship (Ibrahim 12). Ibrahim (2016), also states in the chapter, “SrekrishnaKirtan Kabyer Manobik Abedon” of her book, *SreeKrishnakirtan Kabya Pather Vumika* that, a young guy has offered love to an adolescent girl, enjoyed her body forcefully. The girl requested him, wanted to get rid of him. Then later when the girl became matured, started to feel about love and physical relation, her lover got far away from her. The wanderlust nature of men destroyed the life of women. Poet actually represented that neglected women through Radha without his intention (53).

The way Baru Chandidash portrays Krishna, represents a selfish guy who just wants self-satisfaction. He not only scolds Radha but also spreads rumor in name of her. He has no sympathy for Radha. He enjoyed her body many times, still cannot forgive her fault and he leaves her (Alam 114).

Wakil Ahmed in his another essay, “Bangla Literature in the Eighteenth Century” (2007), discussed about *Kabiwala* songs that were composed instantly based on the worldly love of Radha and Krishna. Initially these songs were popular only in Kolkata City but later it spread out of the city. *Kabiwalas* (the poets) were from both Muslim and Hindu community though in the beginning most poets were Hindu. These *kabiwalas* were ill-educated, socially inferior, lack of intellectual capability and were not interested to give a religious flavor of their songs since their primary concern is to make the audiences happy. Besides Radha-Krishna, Hor- Gouri and Ram, Sita’s story were famous to audiences. There were some popular varieties of *Kabiwala* songs. “*Kabigaan, Danra Kabigan, Akhrai, Half-Akhrai, Kheur, Tappa, Tarja* were the common types of *Kabiwala* songs” (Ahmed 221). In this study, Ahmed shows the differences between the *Vaishnav* poets and *Kabiwalas*. *Vaishnavism*, a movement led by Srichaitanya and his followers, deviated from the traditional Hinduism and was led by some unique “principles of love, equality, brotherhood and monotheism” (216). *Vaishnav* poets were concerned with the spiritual love of Radha and Krishna.

Bangladesh is enriched with numerous folk songs. These songs are immensely related with the deep understanding of its people. Bhatiali and Sari songs were popular to the boatmen. On the other hand, Bhawaiya and chatka were popular in dry area of Northern Bengal. Cart men Sung these songs while working on unsmooth rugged and dusty road. Besides Bhatiali and Bhawaiya we have other areas of folk music i.e. Bichhedi songs (songs of separation), mystic songs of Hason Raja, Lalon shah’s songs, Marfati, Murshidi, Jari gaan, Kabi gaan, pala gaan etc. Abbas Uddin Ahmed, King of folk songs, took initiative to preserve these songs. He collected and brought these songs to Calcutta to record them. He identified village people as simple minded. Their simple mind set up are reflected in our folk songs as well (Rahman).

Sometimes the poets of numerous folk songs are unknown. Those folk songs are preserved as “Traditional” or “Collected” songs. Since most of the poets composed the songs orally during its creation, the songs turned into different versions through its different phases of collections and preservations by the hand of disciples. In the book, *RadhaRaman Gitimala* (2002), edited and collected by Nandalal Sharma, we get some informatons about Radharaman’s song



composition style. The saint poet Radharaman created songs in his meditative condition and used to sing those songs immediately. His disciples learned those songs orally and would present them at their hermitage. Radharaman never composed his songs in written way. Even who enlisted those songs of Radharaman for the first time in written way is totally unknown. Jatindramohan Bhattacharya, Professor, Department of Bangla, University of Calcutta engaged himself to collect the songs of Radharaman (Sharma 3). In a prominent and informative book on Lalon Fakir's song, *City of Mirrors: Songs of Lālan Sāi.*, it is narrated that Lalon composed orally. According to an eyewitness (anonymous Hitakari obituary) he was not able to read or write. His disciples used to record the songs in notebooks (Salomon 4).

Since this article attempts to understand the portrayal of Radha as a woman in Folk Songs specially by male composers and establishes the position of Radha as a female companion of Krishna, this study investigates the representation of Radha from feministic point of view.

## **Conceptualization**

This writing deals with major two concepts: Folk songs and feminism.

## **Folk Song**

Folk song, an augmented part of folk literature, can be defined as traditional, typical, local, most of the cases orally transmitted, unknown or known composer, originating among a particular area, modern, performed by custom, related national culture, and no copyright, related with particular historical events or characters.

Bengali folk song is not only meant for entertainment but also an authentic source of numerous information about our history, culture, geography, climate, agriculture, livelihood of the common people and myth of the nation etc. So folk songs are humanitarian. Even the gods and goddesses have appeared as normal human beings in the folk songs and created a great appeal for themselves in the mind of the common people. In twentieth century contemporary or revival folk music has been emerged as a variety from traditional folk

music that includes genres as folk rock, electric folk, folk metal, progressive folk, neo-folk, folktronica etc. (Chepkemioi).

The relationship between Radha and Krishna has got a Bengali social background in *Srikrishnakirtan* by Baru Chandidas, poet of medieval Bengali literature. He brought Radha and Krishna in his book *Sri Krishna kirtana*, accepting the influence of Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*. "Translations of some verse of *Gita Govinda* are found in *SreeKrishna Kirtana*" (Ahmed 14). There are thirteen sections in the book (Ibrahim 11), (Alam, 117). *SreeKrishnakirtana*, the earliest available poem in Bengali Language, was edited by Basanta Ranjan ray Vidwadbhalla and published by the Bangio Shahittay Parishad in 1916.

The poets who composed folk songs during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century had a great influence of *Sri Krishna Kirtan* in their composition. They captured Radha's obsession and yearning in their songs in a way as if they portrayed a helpless, neglected woman of our society. The time when women were trying to be dependent and educated, they (the folk song composers) constructed the image of dependent women in their songs. This study tries to find out those techniques, mentality of the society contained for women.

## **Feminism**

Feminism, a movement (contains both theoretical and practical aspect) beliefs and works for the rights of women. In its theoretical level feminist writers and philosophers continued their fight for women through their writing. It was a nonviolent process to uprising the women's consciousness about their position in the family. In its practical level, women had to take steps to regain their rights they were deprived of. Though feminism demonstrates a common philosophy (injustice or inequality of women comparing with men) in its different phases it changes its objectives and directions. In its first wave (during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20th century) feminists were concern of the discrimination of women that they had to face at their own home. At the same time, feminist writers fought for the rights of women to vote for. In the second waves (1960s-1980s), feminism threw light on official legal rights of women should have in family as well as in their working places. Third wave feminism (in the early 1990s to 2010s) was a continuation of the second wave and worked a

lot to make women understood about their individuality and intellectual responsibilities.

**Objectives:** This paper aims at some specific goals or objectives.

- a) To evaluate the “essence of womanhood” constructed by the male poets or composers in Bengali folk songs.
- b) To find out the individuality that was given to Radha as a female character in the particular folk songs used as sources for this paper.
- c) To understand the expectation of society from a woman observing the condition of Radha as a companion of Krishna.

## **Methodology**

This paper selected six songs as examples or data to support the arguments and discussions. To evaluate the ideas, both of the qualitative and quantitative research styles were important. The lyrics of the songs were collected from reliable sources. Some online sources have also been used to collect information. To understand the representation of Radha, both the primary sources (the songs) and secondary sources of knowledge on the issue like some particular chapters of book, book article, online discussion were collected and added. The translations of the song lyrics were done by the author of the paper except the song “ভোমরকইওগিয়া”. To illustrate the ideas, this paper has used Prof. Suresh Ranjan Acharyee’s translated version of the song “ভোমরকইওগিয়া”. Finally, the objectives of the paper have been matched with its findings to have a satisfactory conclusion.

## **Introduction to the Songs and Poets**

In case of numerous folk songs, it is not easy to reach a final decision about the actual lyrics and lyricists. Transparency is a vital feature for the lyrics of folk songs. A very interesting matter to be noted that most of the cases a particular song is presented in social media with a lyric that is totally different from the book (a collection of songs) where the song is published later by its collector.

“ভোমরকইওগিয়া” a song dictating Radha’s love for Krishna, has been enlisted both in *Radharaman Gitimala* that is collected and edited by Nandalal Sharma in 2002 and *Radharamaner Gan* edited by Tapon Bagchi in 2009. In both books lyrics are almost same though in Tapon Bagchi’s edited book, we get two lines more than the previous one. Even in case of punctuation a lit bit difference is found. This song was translated by Prof. Sitesh Ranjan Acharjee and the translated version was enlisted at page no. 421 in *Radharaman Gitimala* (2002) by Nandalal Sharma. RadhaRaman Dutta (1833-1915), known as the father of Dhamail songs, was the youngest son of lyricist Radha Madhab Dutta. He was born in Keshabpur village, Jaggannathpur Upazila, Sunamganj District. He was a worshipper of Krishna. Vaishnavism and Krishna kept a great influence on his songs. He led a very simple life. Besides Vaishnavism, Dutta was also heavily influenced by Sufism. Radha Raman composed more than 3000 songs in Baul tradition.

“নির্জনমুন্যারকুলেবসিয়াকদম্বতলে” a song expressing Radha’s restlessness, has been collected from the edited book, *Durbinshah Shomogro* by SumanKumar Dash. Durbin Shah, composer of lots of folk songs, was also a mystical poet and singer. He was born at Chattak under Shunamganj district. His birthplace is known as Durbin Tilla. His song “Nirjono Jamunar Kuley” was one of his famous songs sung by many artists including Dilruba Khan.

“প্রাপসখীরেঐশোনকদম্বতলেবংশীবাজায়কে?” is a very much popular song cocerning Radha and Krishna and Krishna’s flute. The song is found in *Radharomoner Gan* (2009), edited by Tapon Bagchi and in *Radharamaner Gitimala* (2002), collected and edited by Nandalal Sharma. In Sharma’s book the same song is traced in two different pages (page no. 176 and 300) with two different lyrics with different punctuation. At the same time both of the editors enlisted it as Radha Raman’s song. Jashmuddin (1903-1976) also included the song in his book *Murshida Gan* (1977). He included it as devotional song. In this paper Jashimuddin’s enlisted version has been used to explain.

“ওকিওবন্ধুকাজলভোমরারে” is a song of Bhawaiya stream. The song was sung by Runa Laila, Rathindranath Roy and many others. The simplicity of its lyrics and music keep a long term effect. “বনমালীগোতুমিপ্রজনমেহইযোরাধা”, another song, composed from Radha’s point of view, was also sung by famous singers like Basudeb Baul,

Satyarki Banarjee, Runa Laila and Bappa Mazumder et. al. The song “তোমারলাগিয়ারেসদাই” also supports the opinion of the paper. In case of these last three songs lyrics have been taken from online sources where they claim the poet Din Shoroth is the lyricist of the song “বনমালিগোতুমিপরজনমেহইমোরাধা” but in the book of *Ondho Kabi Din Shoroth o Tar Gaan* by Abu Dayen, Professor, Department of Bangla, Jahangirnagar University, this song is not enlisted. The same case is observed in the song “তোমারলাগিয়ারেসদাই” which is enlisted in the source by the name of the poet Kanailal Shil but in the edited book of SumanKumar Dash, *Bangladesher Baul Fakir Porichiti o Gaan*, in the portion of Kanailal Shil the song is not found.

## Representation of Radha in Folk Songs

### Radha as an emotional lady

Radha is expected to be emotional and soft to such an extent that she can easily be persuaded through the tune of flute. Flute plays a very important role in Radha and Krishna’s relationship. Krishna cannot go to Radha directly to persuade her but his flute can reach Radha. Hence, women are always thought to be too much emotional and impractical. Women are always considered to be delicate so that they are the subject to emotional blackmailing for the several times. The poets represent the psychology of women through the impulsive condition of Radha. In the following song of Durbin Shah, there is evident that how Radha becomes impulsive repeatedly by the soft melody of Krishna’s flute.

নির্জনযমুনারকূলেবসিয়াকদম্বতলে

বাজায়বাঁশিবন্ধুশ্যামরায়।।

(At the bank of solitary Jamuna sitting under the bur flower tree

Plays flute friend ShamRai.)

বাঁশিতে কিমধুভরা আমারে করিল সারা

আমি নারীগৃহে থাকাদায়

কালার বাঁশি হল বাম বলে শুধু রাধানাম

(Is the flute full of honey, makes me excited

Impossible for me to stay at home

Kala's flute has become obstacle

Says only the name of Radha)

বাঁশীর সুরে অগ্নিস্বলে ঘরের জল বাহিরে ফেলে

মনে লয় যাব যমুনায়ে।।

(Being burnt by the tune of flute, throwing the water of home

I wish I could go to Jamuna.)

Krishna acts very cunningly; he understands the psychology of Radha very well. “Banshi”, The flute, has gained an important position to the poets who composed songs concerning Radha and Krishna's relationship. In the following song only flute (banshi) plays a magical role. It gives service like a messenger of Krishna.

প্রাণসখীরে

ওই শোন কদম্বতলে

বংশী বাজায়কে।

(O dear friend

Please listen

Who is playing flute under the bur flower tree.)

The flute of Krishna has achieved a great importance in numerous folk songs. The sweet tune and melody of flute creates a magical effect in the mind of Radha. She becomes mad for Krishna. The soft and melodious tune of flute surprisingly created an illusion that is totally impossible for Radha to ignore.

আগেযদিজানতামতোর

বংশীরএতস্বালা,

আমি, ঘরবানাতামকদম্বতলে

রহিতামএকেলা।

(I wish I could know it before

The toxic effect of your flute,

I would make a house under the bur flower tree

Used to stay alone.)

The above lines clearly state the fact that Radha is deeply missing Krishna and his flute is making her restless. She is even ready to live alone under the tree where Krishna keeps playing the flute.

### **Radha as a desperate lady to fulfill her urge**

In the absence of Krishna, Radha becomes desperate to meet him. This madness of Radha, however, seemed that not only for her mental peace but also to satisfy her physical demand. Bengali folk songs regarding Radha and Krishna have a great influence of *Sri Krishna Kirtan, the Bengali verse*. In that poems Krishna forced and persuaded Radha many ways and took the advantages of Radha's innocence. Krishna set Radha in a place (in water, in forest) every time that she became merely a toy in the hand of Krishna to fulfill Krishna's physical urge. Consequently, Radha started to feel for Krishna and became habituated to have sex with him but Krishna was destined to go away from Radha to save the mankind. Hence Radha was left alone to miss and yearn for Krishna. In the platform of folksongs, poets hint Radha's unfulfilled desire both for her mental and physical incompleteness. The word 'Ongo' (body) was used to explain Radha's condition.

ভোমরকইওগিয়া

শ্রীকৃষ্ণবিচ্ছেদেররাধারঅঙ্গায়স্থলিয়া

(O Bee, go and tell

That the body of Radha burns

From pangs of separation from SriKrishna) (translated by Prof. Sitesh Ranjan Acharjee)

In absence of Krishna Radha feels a burning sensation. Her agony is destroying herself day by day. Radha even becomes lustrous. Radha wants to attach with Krishna physically

ওভোমরকেকইওকইওআরেভোমরকৃষ্ণরেবুঝাইয়া।।

ওরেভোমররেনাথায়অন্ননাথায়জলনাহিবান্দেকেশ

ঘরথেকেবাহিরহইলাযেমনপাগলিনিরবেশ।।

(O my Bee, I entreat you to apprise Krishna)

Of my state in perfect manner.

O my bee, tell that she does neither

Take meal or water nor does her hair and she has left her house in

the attire) (Translated by Prof. Sitesh Ranjan Acharjee)

Radha is fasting since she has lost all her interest to take food or drink water. The woman who was very ashamed of man forgot everything and left her home like insane. The composer of the song, Radharaman Dutta, was a worshipper of Krishna. The song can be considered for his personal love, devotion and obsession for Krishna. But it can also be noted that when he is considering himself as a devotee of Krishna, Radha's helplessness as a woman is visible inside him.

**Submissive and Sacrificing Radha**



Radha, represented as a female figure, was confined and destined to be submissive and sacrificing lady. All of the male writers of the songs consciously or unconsciously wanted Radha as a submissive one to the greater or superior ego, Krishna who is ultimately always represented as a male figure. In the song by Durbin Shah Radha is saying that:

কেউ যদি দরদী থাকে বন্ধু এনে প্রাণটি রাখো

মন প্রাণ সঁপি বরাঙা পায়।।

(If anybody dear one, save my life bringing my friend

I will submit my soul and body to his red leg.)

To express Radha's restless situation Durbin Shah again says that:

মনে লয় সন্ন্যাসী হইয়া দেখি বতাল্লা শিয়া

কোন বনে বাঁশরি বাজায়

(I wish I could be ascetic to search him

In which forest he plays flute)

Radha is ready to sacrifice her worldly life to gain Krishna's love and attachment. Family, relative, society do not mean anything to her and she is even ready to die.

নইলে কলসি বেলেদে গলে ঝাঁপ দিব মুনীর জলে

প্রাণ ত্যাগি বলে দূর বীনশায়।।

(Otherwise tying jug in neck, I will jump in the water of Jamuna

I will sacrifice my life declared by Durbin Shah.)

The emotion and feelings Radha has for Krishna is being told through the poet as a middleman. So here the representation of Radha is biased by the thought of the writer as a male. The lines are just reflecting the ideas a male mind preserves for women belonging to the contemporary Bengali society.

### **Radha as a depressed woman**

Radha is fixed to be depressed. Gradual waiting and lamentation for somebody makes a man depressed and that is visible in Radha's case. Since Radha's waiting for Krishna has no limits, she has become completely depressed.

আগেযদিজানতামরেবন্ধু করবাইরেনৈরাশা

(ওতুই) নাজেনেসীরিতেররীতিরেবন্ধু

ঘটাইলিদুর্দশাবন্ধুরে

প্রাণবন্ধুকালিয়ারে।।

(I wish I would know it before you would make me depressed

(O friend) you don't know the rules of love

Made my sufferings my dear friend

Soul friend Kaaliya.)

### **Radha as a devotee**

Radha as a companion of Krishna most commonly regarded as a devotee rather than a lover. Though love and devotion are internally connected with each other, there are always some differences to be a lover and to be a devotee. Devotee beliefs and follows his/her master blindly on the other hand lover judge, teach and maintain a caring and sharing relationship with his/her beloved. In a love relationship both the lovers are equally important and have a great impact on each other. To some extent devotee can be compared with a disciple. Though no devotion survives without love and no love survives

without a little bit devotion nevertheless, Radha's suffering reached its extreme position.

তুমিআমারিমতনকান্দিওকান্দিও

কৃষ্ণকৃষ্ণনামবদনেজপিও

তুমিবুঝিবেতখন..নারীরওবেদন

রাধারওপ্রাণেকতব্যথা

(You keep crying like me

Keep chanting in the name of Krishna

You will realize the sufferings of a woman

How much pain Radha preserve in her mind.)

In reality Radha is preferred and fixed to be a devotee rather than a practical lover of Krishna. Another fact is that when it's a question of devotion always Radha as a woman figure is recommended by the poets. Radha chants in the name of Krishna and it's all about her vision and mission.

### **Radha as an obsessed lady**

For Radha, Krishna is like an illusion. She cannot but thinking about Krishna always. She is obsessed for Krishna. She behaves impractically and irrationally. She lives in an imaginary world with Krishna.

বটবৃক্ষেরমায়াযেমনরে

মোরবন্ধুরমায়াতেমনরে

(The illusion of Banyan tree is an example

Of the illusion of my beloved friend)

### **Findings**

When Radha is presented as a woman in literature, she is existed as a helpless lady of our society. It seems that she is expected to be stuck in one point, Krishna. Poets are male. So, when they think of Radha, they got biased. They are stubborn enough to give a fixed personality of Radha that will be an example of dependent woman. Radha exists in literature because of Krishna . Without Krishna she even does not exist and cannot put a single step. She is always used as a symbol of devotion. She always shows the way how to achieve the love of Krishna through devotion, loyalty and prayer. This character (Radha) is a creation of patriarchal society. In literature there were few female writers like Begum Rokeya Shakhawat Hossain, Nilima Ibrahim, Selina Hossain, Monica Ali etc. who glorified and kept scope for lady characters to fight for their rights in their writings.

In literature, Radha is always expected to feel incomplete without Krishna. Except yearning for Krishna she is nowhere wanted to be involved in any other activities. It seems that Radha's obsession and desperate condition to fulfill her urge (mental and physical) satisfy male's ego. Precisely, Radha is the symbolic representation of those women who are treated as soft, delicate, emotional and easily can be persuaded. Radha's constant lamentation for Krishna suggests that she is how much far away from any kind of social or intellectual activity. Nobody in the world is out of problems, limitation and anxieties. But the way Radha is fixed to be stubborn to have Krishna it seems that she is wished to die being mad for Krishna. The only one contribution she is keeping in literature that she is creating an example of so called ideal and selfless love. Ultimately, the way Radha has been represented simply identifies Radha only as a blind devotee of Krishna more than a life partner or companion of Krishna.

Radha's yearning and longing for Krishna has made Krishna as powerful and supreme figure. To make someone superior, it's urgent to make somebody inferior. In all layers (spiritually and worldly) Radha's role is to magnify Krishna. Radha's behavior (emotional, obsessed, and submissive) means nothing but to focus Krishna. Krishna is considered as supreme powerful figure who demands a devotee like Radha who is ready to sacrifice her life anytime. The words used to express Radha's estrangement, purely refers the thinking of the writers as male regarding women. "Joliyo" (Burning)," Morio" (Dying), "Kandio" (Crying), "Maya" (Illusion)

etc. have frequently been used in the songs. Radha is a window to see the picture of suppressed, neglected and dependent Bengali women.

## Conclusion

This writing is a simple try to evaluate the condition of women in folk songs through research and discussion on the representation of Radha. Since their relationship (Radha and Krishna) was extra marital (represented in the text of *Sri Krishna Kirtan* and as expressed in the songs), it is a sin and prohibited but in the eyes of the readers and listeners of the songs, they are the symbol of love. Thus, their relationship has attained a new turn in literature. This study shows Radha from feministic point of view where the representation of Radha is always as a submissive female companion of Krishna. Radha has become an example of irrational love that breaks all the rules of the society. Radha's representation through male lyricists creates a devotee not a lover. In Literature, the journey of Radha is not smooth. This is her lifelong struggle to have Krishna, to own Krishna. She neglects her dignity and self- esteem to be Krishna's lover. The common philosophy that plays a vital role for all the songs used as sources for the paper is Radha as a woman should submit totally for Krishna. The more Radha wants to be united with Krishna, the more she gets hurt. Poets in their imagination cannot give Radha a strong personality and individuality of her own. For Radha, still a long way to walk to gain her respect and self-dignity in the eyes of society.

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## Abstract

Considering the traditional teacher-centered approach practiced in Bangladeshi undergraduate literature classrooms, the intention of the authors is to offer alternative student-centered approaches explaining how the classroom activities designed for

teaching text interpretation can also complement Critical Thinking (CT) skill development. The significance of this approach is twofold, relieving teachers from designing separate CT tasks while securing both outcomes of learning how to interpret a text and developing CT skills through students' active participation in a classroom. Though teaching text interpretation and developing CT skills are considered two different pedagogic avenues assuming requirements of different teaching strategies, however, the authors' attempt is unique here as they intend to propose how these two avenues are potentially complementary to each other. Hence, this paper utilizes two theoretical models, Sandra N. Harper's (1988) Three-phase sequence approach to teaching how to interpret a literary text and Numrich's (2006) sequence of tasks to develop CT skills. The paper is a non-survey study based on existing literature on classic classroom activities.

**Keywords: teaching literature; CT skills; active learning; interpreting text; classroom activity**

## **I. Introduction:**

In a literature classroom interpreting a text and developing Critical Thinking (CT) skills are integral parts of the whole teaching and learning process. Meaningful interpretation of a text is completed by the CT skills that endow a student to function more humanly beyond the classroom. For this, the teaching-learning process needs to shift from a traditional teacher-centered method to a student-centered one. In this regard, engaging and collaborative classroom activities are able to promote necessary mental activity for students rather than traditional lectures on texts.

English Studies is a popular discipline in the Higher education scenario of Bangladesh yet the teaching and learning approaches generally practiced in the majority of the English Departments are quite traditional in style, especially in the case of teaching English Literature in undergraduate classrooms. Students only listen to the teacher's lectures in this case and process the literary text which keeps them as passive entities in the classroom (Amin, 2019, Dutta, 2001). The reason behind this is the hereditary legacy of lecture-based teaching in the English Departments of Bangladesh where training on effective teaching is absent. Novice literature teachers directly



confront large-sized classes with very little knowledge of ‘how’ to teach in a meaningful way, suffer from a set of anxieties and fail to craft active learning in the classroom due to this lack of training (Alam, 2005; Showalter 2003). Effective teaching on the other hand requires creativity, monitoring, evaluation, selection, execution, adjustment, and frequent use of teaching techniques to determine the degree of active learning for students (Bay, 2012, Knutson, 2014, Mulligan 2011). Therefore, the didactic teacher-centered approach hinders active learning resulting in a fundamental lack of CT skill development in undergraduate classrooms.

Literature cultivates humanistic perspectives in its learners that can be reinforced by employing active learning and using student-centered teaching methods in the classroom. The transmission of knowledge by the teachers is not only to be transacted later when it's needed, rather it should immerse the students with their realization of using education to think, question, act and react towards the world and its systems to make it a better place (Hooks, 1994). It is a matter of concern how actively the teacher communicates the necessary outcomes of literature with their students in a classroom. Hence, activating CT among the learners can be done by employing student-centered classroom activities.

This paper discusses how to incorporate active learning while teaching how to interpret a literary text in undergraduate classrooms using engaging activities which concurrently create scope to develop CT skills. Encountering text, making meaning, analyzing the evidence, dealing with language, and reaching a conclusion comprise the meaningful interpretation of a text which is crucial in a literature classroom context. CT involves discovering the meaning and substantiating the interpretation of a text by weighing the evidence. Also while interpreting a text CT reflects students’ mental engagement, experiential learning, decision-making, problem-solving abilities, and comprehension of the text (Esplugas and Landwehr, 1996). This is such a rational approach that demands a shift from the didactic paradigm and introduces active methods in the classroom.

This paper infuses Sandra N Harper’s (1988) three-phase approach to teaching how to interpret a text and Numrich’s (2006) Sequence of CT tasks to address three primary objectives in an undergraduate literature classroom: interpreting a text, developing CT skills, and initiating active classroom environment. This is a non-survey-based study of a number of literature classroom activities designed for

undergraduate early years where target students can be seen as non-specialists. Considering the traditional teacher-centered approach practiced in Bangladeshi undergraduate literature classrooms, the intention of the authors is to offer alternative student-centered approaches explaining how the classroom activities designed for teaching text interpretation can also complement CT skill development as well. The significance of this approach is twofold, relieving teachers from designing separate CT tasks while securing both outcomes of learning how to interpret a text and developing CT skills through students' active participation in a classroom. Though teaching text interpretation and developing CT skills are considered two different pedagogic avenues assuming requirements of different teaching strategies, however, the authors' attempt is unique here as they intend to propose how these two avenues are potentially complementary to each other.

## **II. Theoretical Implication:**

The justification for using Sandra Harper's three-phase approach to interpret text and Numrich's sequence of CT tasks is due to the capacity these models to direct critical reading that requires readers' personal emotional interaction with the text and help make meaning from their own perspectives. Critical reading is interpretation and theorists have taken a significant turn in the 80s and 90s prioritizing the reader and text over the author and work. With the rise of Reception theory and Reader-response theory, interpreting texts results in numerous open-ended possible meanings, anticipation and retrospection, connecting the fictional world with the familiar world, gradual awareness and meanings given to literary representations, evoking feelings, activating and learning previous and new linguistic structures, and mastering CT (Rosenbaltt 1993, Iser 1978, Holub 1984 cited in Bobkina & Stefanova 2016). These trajectories to interpret a text are central to the designing of classroom activities in Sandra Harper's Three-phase approach. This approach consists of three consecutive phases in a sequence, the first phase, *Pre-Interpretation*, is preparatory in nature where students participate in pre-interpretation activities that enable their perceptive ability through systematic practices. In the second, the *Interpretation* phase consists of activities that guide the students to personally encounter and interact with the text. The third phase is *Synthesis* where students engage in summative activities enabling them to unify their learning.

In the same vein, the addressing of the humanistic engagement of the readers in these theories clearly necessitates the adjustment of CT skills during class activities. Therefore, Numrich's (2006) sequence of CT skill tasks is discussed here to create a basis so that the authors could logically present how the text interpretation activities can be substantially complementary to the development of CT skills. Also, the authors have found Numrich's model feasible as it is closely adjustable to the pre-interpretation, interpretation, and post-interpretation/synthesis phases of Sandra Harper's model. Numrich's model is a scaffolding sequence of tasks that takes into account of learner's level and advances gradually from a lower to a higher order of CT tasks (Afifuddin 2017, Beaumont 2010, Gomez-Rodriguez 2018). Hence, the claim is justifiable that Sandra Harper's Three-phase activities are complementary to Numrich's sequence as the former formulates its activities from preparatory to more complex ones. Numrich's sequence of tasks includes seven CT tasks from three different perspectives. *Observing and Identifying assumptions* correspond to the first perspective, *Focus on the students' world*. *Interpreting and Understanding* relate to the second phase, *Focus on the text*. Other tasks, *inquiring further, analyzing and evaluating, and making decisions* are included in the third perspective, *Focus beyond the text*. Popularly used in language classrooms, Numrich's sequence of tasks model has been studied as a framework for guiding teachers to scaffold CT and English language skills, foster English learner's intercultural communicative competence, and develop a competency-based syllabus (Afifuddin 2017, Gomez-Rodriguez 2018, Benavides, Cantillo & Monogollon 2018).

Although many researchers have investigated the relationship between literature and CT, and developing CT and language skills in EFL/ESL classrooms using literary text as a tool (Imran & Firman, 2020; Karimi, 2016; Manalo, 2019; Mohsen, Hamed & Reza, 2021; Petek & Bedir, 2018; Qadir & Yousufi, 2021; Wang & Seepho, 2017; Zare & Makundan, 2015) only a few have focused on guiding teachers with possible classroom activities which could serve multiple purposes at a time such as introducing active learning and engage students, interpreting a text and developing CT skills as well, specifically with a model for each purpose to ground a basis on which the possibilities can be outlined (Abida, 2016; Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016; Clark, 2021, Clark, 2020).

### **III. English Literature studies at the undergraduate level in Bangladesh:**

In Bangladesh, at present, a large number of public and private universities are equipped with designated departments for English studies. They are advancing with a view to enhancing the linguistic competency of Bangladeshi students in the English language, teaching the English language, and nourishing them with literary merits and aesthetics of English literature as well.

However, the dichotomy of the learning outcomes between equipping students with linguistic skills for the job market and harnessing them with humanistic quality through teaching literature afflicts the English departments of Bangladesh (Mortuza, 2020). While the transformative aspect of Bangladesh Higher education aims more to enhance the skills of students, to function more, and to be more productive to compete with the industrially revolutionized world, the ultimate purpose of knowledge is to liberate human minds for physical, moral, and intellectual progress seems insignificant to the stakeholders (Freire, 1972). Henceforth the growing focus on the communicative aspect of language somehow marginalizes the humanistic outcome of many traditional English studies programs that were primarily focused on how the implied readers of English Literature should give artistic expression to their experience of the world (Rosovsky, 1991, Mortuza, 2020). Furthermore, though literary texts have been a potential source of authentic materials, it is rarely used in language classrooms in Bangladesh. Thus a lack of reconciliation between the language and literature stream in the English departments is evident which refers to the dichotomy and predicts future chaos in this academic discipline. As a result of this, what is more hypothetically alarming is the loss of an entire generation who will lack the ability to think critically and function creatively while studying English language and literature in the Higher Education Institutions in Bangladesh because of the existing dichotomy that hinders the activation of humanistic approaches that literary studies could provide. Relatively, it is also very crucial to ponder on the question of how to improve the teaching strategies in English literature classrooms that can successfully instill CT skills among students. This inquiry is necessary because acquiring those skills reflects the very purpose of literature as well as education, that is to experience and evaluate the world and reality with a critical view

that advocates asking valid questions and making judgments between right and wrong (Ahmed. 1986; Amin 2009).

To foster this, the teaching of Literature requires rethinking the traditional methods and innovating how students should get motivated and learn to employ creativity and CT through studying literature. The most popular teaching method, currently practiced in undergraduate literature classrooms in Bangladesh is lecturing. Though lecturing is a time-tested and frequently used teaching style in Higher Education institutions throughout the world, it does not engage students in active participation in the classroom and often leaves them disconnected from the lecture after a certain period of time (Svinicki & Mckeachie, 2011; Lambert, 2012; Millis, 2012). Active learning is quite opposite of this traditional lecture method. In contrast, it involves peer working, group activities, students responding frequently and resolving misunderstandings, monitoring students' comprehension, and engaging them in short exercises and assessments. In this regard Bonwell and Eison (1991) confirm that in the process of active learning the students do things by themselves in classrooms, it also helps them to think about what they are doing leading them to practice CT and creativity as well. So, CT and creativity postulate to be key elements of active learning which in effect significantly enhances the performance of the students than those who are taught with traditional methods (Prince, 2004; Berry, 2008). So, in the growing emphasis on improving quality in the education setting of Bangladesh, it is needless to say that the undergraduate literature teaching-learning process and pedagogy require improvement through employing active learning methods (Parks, 2012).

#### **IV. Role of English literature to foster CT:**

The relevance between literature and CT is immense. While CT and creativity are among the major purposes of education, literature is one of the pillars to enhance those skills (Khatib & Shakouri, 2013). Creativity and CT can develop the power of questioning and meaning-seeking through experience inside a student's mindset. These are the skills that help them to evaluate arguments laid by others and form personal and logical judgments (Rainbolt & Dwyer, 2012). Literary texts can enhance language learning through CT because these texts are inherently authentic and engage students with cultural awareness, intensive-extensive reading, sociolinguistics, and pragmatic knowledge and language skills (Ghose, 2002; Khatib,

Rezaei & Derakhshan, 2011). When reading literature students are exposed to fictional yet factual and historical events as well as essential emotions such as love, alienation, ideology, resistance, identity, etc. that formulate their response to reality as they encounter it (Van, 2009). Therefore, the teaching and learning literature fosters creativity and CT skills which are defined as the ability to interpret facts, recognize errors and apply affective reactions. Teaching literature also offers students a nuanced understanding of life, and moral standards and promotes a positive affective approach between humans and nature through the language and culture that the text portrays (D'angelo 1970).

To nurture thinking and creative application of the earned insights from literature students need to make use of the teacher as bridges to move from lower-order thinking to higher-order thinking. While only recalling and comprehending the facts in a literary text is not enough to develop these skills, it needs to go for further synthesis of the knowledge. Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning objectives in 1956 and its revision by Anderson in 2001 prescribes a necessary guide to attain this movement from lower-order thinking to higher-order thinking skills (Rahman & Manaf, 2017). Though there are many views on the argument that why students should receive teaching on how to think, considering thinking is a quite natural process for any human being, it is argued by many that formal teaching of CT is still in need to guide the students towards maturity and excellence in thinking. A similar argument goes for the literary readers, why students should be taught how to read literary texts while it seems important that only skill of reading is not enough for reading literary texts. When students acquire the power of reading with thinking they appreciate the text and become implied readers and move forward to apply their knowledge creatively in their own experience of life and the world.

Therefore, teachers should adopt such teaching methods in literature classrooms that prompt critical and creative thinking by students. They must support their students by exposing them to different viewpoints that may mature their view of the experience of reality and the world. They must teach them to probe into whatever they read or see before believing those as absolute truth (Case,2013; Breslin,2015).

The students experience a diverse picture of both European and American thus the western socio-cultural context in a broader

perspective. Assuming that undergraduate fresher lack much knowledge about the western socio-cultural aspects, they face a deeper challenge while encountering the texts. During the reading, the readers attempt to create their own meaning in the light of contexts. So new readers who are not familiar with the diverse set of the wide-ranging socio-cultural context of English society and culture may incorrectly construct the meanings of the texts. Furthermore, joined experiences and expectations can be affected by the social context in which texts are interpreted. It is therefore important to think about how culture influences the assumptions, beliefs, and aspirations that each reader brings to the reading of a text (Mangialetti & Palmquist, 2022). Thus the communication between the reader and the text needs much focus in the realm of teaching and learning English literature. In the same manner, when readers are aware of a writer's purpose, needs, interests, values, or beliefs, they are better able to appreciate, accept, and value that writer.

Now understanding the socio-cultural context for the students in Bangladesh is quite difficult. It is because learning the context of a text is not as simple as it seems. It's no more about learning aspects of society and culture from a neutral non-stimulating state. Readers' experiences of a text are as much affected by what they bring to the experience as what the text offers (Trousdale & Harris, 1993). The concern of Bangladeshi undergraduate students in understanding the western socio-cultural context is challenging because there are particular meanings attached to different ways people in different cultures live. When Bangladeshi undergraduate students experience the western socio-cultural context while reading any English literary text, their own different socio-cultural notions lead them to comparison. Moreover, literary works help students to understand how they think and behave psychologically when they read things that contradict their beliefs (Mustofa, 2016). Hence it is notable that being in a non-native environment English literature teaching should focus more on CT and creativity as the students could end up misinterpreting the texts if not trained well.

## **V. Discussion: Classroom Activities and outcomes**

The possible classroom activities described here are categorized under Sandra harper's Three phase sequence of interpretation. The sorted activities mentioned under each phase: Pre interpretation, Interpretation, and Post-interpretation, also have the potential to help student practice CT skills implicitly. One of the major objectives to

discuss these classroom activities is to identify and elucidate the potential CT skills these activities can foster among students while practicing and learning how to interpret a literary text.

*Pre-interpretation phase activities and CT skills (Observation and identifying assumptions):*

Objectives for Sandra Harper's pre-interpretation phase activities are establishing common background, comprehension, and linguistic abilities among students in order to facilitate the interpretation and post-interpretation phase. Alongside, the first two tasks of Numrich's sequence of CT task list are observation and identifying assumptions which focus upon students' initial perspectives on the text and their experience of the world. The activities below summarize the preparatory stage both in case of text interpretation and initial tasks for CT skill exercises like observation and identifying assumptions.

For establishing background knowledge most effective activities are to provide short lectures, audiovisual presentations, and summarizing cultural, biographical, or historical knowledge followed by a *brainstorming activity*. Students may ponder on selected terms, titles, and facts. In this process, they will brainstorm and try to assume the meaning of the selected terms, titles, facts, or initial themes from their personal life experiences (Carell, 1984; Kramsch, 1985). *Linguistic activities* can be conducted by asking students to discuss any object or experience from their daily life that can be explained by the figurative language of the literature received from the essential background knowledge provided by the teacher (Spinelli & Williams, 1981). To establish comprehension at this stage *predicting questions* can be another effective activity after brainstorming and linguistic activities. These questions designed by the students can help teachers identify assumptions (Kramsch, 1985).

Conducting these activities in groups has the benefit of engaging students in a proactive learning environment. Besides, these pre-interpretation activities pave the way to design activities for the next phases as well as facilitate running discussions in the target language without overwhelming the students with heavy grammatical and other linguistic expectations. From a CT perspective, when students are receiving common background knowledge and participating in the brainstorming activities mentioned above, they are simultaneously using their daily life observations. They are also assuming and making meanings of selected figurative languages, themes, facts, and titles and predicting questions based on those assumptions. These



activities substantially expose them to the task of observation and identifying assumptions. In pursuit of further reasoning, the observation and implicit initial assumptions contribute to the further logical argument as they learn how to take into account relevant considerations (Fisher, 2011).

*Interpretation Phase and CT skills (Understanding and Interpreting):*

The ultimate objective of the interpretation phase in Sandra Harper's three-phase sequence is to take into account the reader or student's direct interaction and personal experience of the text. In this phase, the students should have full access to express, negotiate and refine personal interpretations. This personal encounter and experience with text are largely facilitated by alternative interpretations provided by peers and teachers as well. Interpretation requires close reading and comprehension of a text. The reader's own background knowledge of the context encounters the text and interacts with the meaning (Harper, 1988). The reader also acquires new knowledge and goes through adjustment and refinement of their comprehension and understanding of the text. In the same vein, Numrich's next two tasks, understanding and interpreting in the sequence to practice CT skills are also applicable to Sandra Harper's Interpretation phase. These two tasks are placed under the second perspective of the model, Focus on the text. Similar to Harper's interpretation phase, these two tasks specifically train readers in skills such as understanding and interpreting texts. The classroom activities below will ensure student engagement and comprehension of text with interaction, transaction, and adjustment of ideas and meaning in the classroom while the same activities will provide ground for practicing summarizing, compare-contrast, cause-effect, hypothesizing, making inferences, and interpreting meaning skills in order to address CT tasks of understanding and interpreting.

Some of the many significant classroom activities to teach text interpretation are brainstorming responses to open-ended why and what, etc questions, rewriting a text with a change in time, place, and people, and scripting a text for a different media production such as stage drama. In the case of open-ended questions, students can write answers to relevant what and why questions posed by the teacher. While discussing and answering with peers, students are able to point out the key information for what questions while for why questions they provide a variety of possible points of view on the text (Mead, 1980). Rewriting the full or partial text with a change in time,

place, and people may ensure rigorous thoughts, heighten creativity and justify their point of view. Another engaging activity can be writing scripts for different media by students such as stage drama. This will help them employ multiple perspectives and meanings, and contextualize the text from personal experiences of life (Kramsch, 1985).

These activities also reflect the outcome of text-focused CT tasks in Numrich's sequence of tasks such as understanding and interpreting. These two tasks address the cultivation of subskill sets, for instance, summarizing, compare-contrast, and cause-effect skills under the Understanding task and making inferences, interpreting the meaning, and hypothesizing under the Interpreting task (Beaumont, 2010). Now to adjust Numrich's sequence of tasks for CT practice, participating in the open-ended question also helps students to practice summarizing skills, the rewriting activity will initiate them to make comparisons and contrast with the original text, finding logics of cause and effects in the narrative. Moreover, drama script writing can help them interpret the text from their own inference, meaning making, and hypothesis of major ideas, and themes, and other elements of the texts.

*Post-Interpretation phase and CT skills (Inquiring further, analyzing and evaluating, making decision):*

According to Sandra Harper the post-interpretation or Synthesis phase targets to reuniting the dissected text and unifying what students have learned. Another major target is to input new knowledge or greater wisdom in students collected from the text interpretation activities. To many extents, this greater wisdom or collected knowledge can transcend the classroom and equip students with social, moral, and cultural values to have an impact on their society. The objectives of this phase assimilate with the last phase of Numrich's sequence of tasks listed as inquiring further, analyzing and evaluating, and making decisions under the Focus beyond text perspective.

The most effective activities described under Harper's Synthesis/post-interpretative phase are: *developing a thesis* chosen by the teacher that requires appropriate inclusion of all stylistic and other literary elements. This activity can help students identify further research angles toward this particular text. Another activity can be asking students to *deliver their comments on any author or critic*. His activity can enhance analytical ability and evaluation and reevaluation of assumptions. Other activities such as *developing essay questions*

and finding the possible answer by the students can help them think beyond the context of the text, and the meaning suggested by the author, and foster critical views (Hankins, 1972, Harper, 1988).

In terms of associating CT tasks, developing a thesis will encourage them to inquire further into the text and related resources such as literary criticisms. Students will be able to foster research and survey skills through this. Critiquing authors' or critics' statements will direct them to reflect and synthesize more information in a logical way. They will be able to reevaluate old assumptions and justify new ones. Forming essay questions and searching for the possible answer may give them insight into proposing outlined solutions. Furthermore, in a broader sense, the greater wisdom acquired after this phase can motivate them to participate, take action and solve problems in their socio-cultural contexts (Gomez-Rodriguez, 2018).

## **VI. Conclusion**

By encouraging processes of thoughts in literature classrooms a teacher can make it a productive one rather than making it reproductive in a sense when students listen to lectures only and are not involved in experiential learning. Thus, they end up repeating the teacher's critical thought and interpretation only (Peck, 1985). The activity-based classroom and developed approaches to support this kind of classroom practice systematically prepare the students for interacting with the literary texts with the necessary skills. It also provides opportunities for students to convey and express their own thoughts through negotiating and revising their own personal interpretations in a mutual and supportive environment. A structured classroom activity with a proper methodology in operation can encourage expressions of complex ideas, and nurture creativity and CT while fusing and synthesizing all these with textual analysis and interpretation. An active student participating in an active classroom interacts with the text actively and encounters personal feelings and personal life experiences which merge the student's reading with his or her understanding of the world. Therefore, the proposed classroom activities can be used as an attempt to help develop CT skills in Bangladeshi English Literature students at the undergraduate level. Their encounter with a different socio-cultural picture found in the English literary texts and another contextual unfamiliarity can be eased with the active thinking process in an activity-based classroom. Here they can have all the scopes to express, challenge, question,

negotiate and clarify issues by developing their own critical interpretation skill.

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# **ENHANCING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG NNEs OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL: IDENTIFYING THE GAP BETWEEN TEACHING AND LEARNING**

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## **Abstract**

The learning outcome of English speaking lessons provided to Bangladeshi learners is not much satisfactory (Ibna Seraj et al., 2021). In a Non-Native English Speakers (NNEs) setting (Pinilla-Portiño, 2018), Bangladeshi EFL learners' socio-economic status is demonstrating to be a variable in the development of English speaking skills among the learners. This observation led to qualitative research to diagnose the teaching-learning scenario in the EFL context of Bangladesh

and identify the gaps by employing an extensive literature review by probing the problems learners face in learning speaking skills at the tertiary level (Hamid et al., 2013; Heydarnejad, Ebrahimi, & Adel, 2019) and by examining the pedagogical challenges faced by the teachers (Rahman et al., 2019; Hamid et al., 2013; & Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021). Thereafter, the study analyzes the particular teaching-learning scenario in order to identify the gap if there is any. Hence, it also offers some low-cost readily available materials and suggests some pedagogical techniques (ThiTuyetAnh, 2015; Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021) that may aid teachers in making adjustments in classes to minimize the learning gap that is found.

***Keywords: Speaking skills, low-cost materials, developing countries, pedagogical techniques, classroom adjustments***

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Speaking is the most important skill among all four skills of language (Ur, 1996, as cited in ThiTuyetAnh, 2015) which only indicates that using a language is more important than just knowing about it. It is also observed that EFL language learners at the tertiary level in developing countries struggle a lot to develop their speaking skills (Al Hosni, 2014, as cited in Afshar & Asakereh, 2016). The researchers believe teaching speaking skills requires special attention in tertiary level language courses as study shows that the average Bangladeshi EFL learners' speaking performance much less than satisfactory (Ibna Seraj et al., 2021). Therefore, this study hopes to present a qualitative research employing an extensive literature review to identify the gap, if there is any, in teaching and learning speaking skills of the EFL learners of developing countries, specifically in Bangladeshi context.

To be precise, this study looks forward to conducting qualitative research adapting an extensive literature review method to identify the struggles learners face in developing speaking skills. It also hopes to investigate the problems teachers face in the same context following the same method. Thereafter, it will analyze the teaching-learning process in this context to identify the gap, if there is

any. Finally, if needed, it will attempt to provide some suggestions for the teachers' adjustment in class.

### **1.1 The Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are-

1. Evaluating the challenges learners face in developing their speaking skills in the EFL context of Bangladesh
2. Examining the pedagogical challenges faced by the teachers in the EFL context of Bangladesh
3. Analyze the Teaching-Learning scenario of the same context in order to identify the gap if there is any

### **1.2 The Significance of the Study**

This study on teaching and learning English speaking skills can be very beneficial to the students, teachers and researchers studying language teaching and learning, especially in the EFL context in developing countries as it employs literature review to find out the gaps and offer suggestions to bridge it if there is any.

### **1.3 Delimitation and Limitations of the Study**

This study is a review based qualitative research that employs only secondary data and researchers' teaching experience as a resource. As secondary data, it uses extensive reviews of internationally peer-reviewed journal articles and research papers published in high-impact journals and periodicals. This study does not collect primary data or include interviews as the focus is in identifying the gap in teaching and learning in the existing literature, if there is any.

While working, it is found that not many work is published on teaching and learning speaking in the EFL context of Bangladesh, especially at the tertiary level. Therefore, this study should be unique and should add value to the particular research area.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **2.1 Probing the Problems Faced by the Tertiary Level Learners in Developing Speaking Skills in the EFL Context of Bangladesh**

“Concerning the EFL English Proficiency Index, the status of English proficiency in Bangladesh is within the band categorized as very low proficiency” (EPI, 2019, as cited in Ibna Seraj et al., 2021, p.502) which indicates that the overall learning outcome of English speaking lessons provided to Bangladeshi learners is not satisfactory.

There are many factors that cause difficulty in speaking. Firstly, students are worried about making mistakes, worried about criticism or being laughed at and overdependence on L1 translation, following their feeling of voidness when they do not know how to express their complex thoughts in the foreign language (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016).

Learners also struggle with vocabulary uses (Rabab'ah, 2003) as they are not exposed to the contextual meaning of the words they are learning. Both researchers find that learners are only exposed to the denotative meanings of each word in isolation. This results in a lack of proper comprehension of the words learners memorize and causes a failure to use them in their spoken conversation.

Learners' emotions play a significant role in the EFL classroom when it comes to communication (Heydarnejad, Ebrahimi, & Adel, 2019). They state that emotions in a language learning classroom are vital factors for motivation and contentment; and without openness in portraying the right emotion, learners cannot express their thoughts completely and accurately. They also point out that speaking involves choosing the correct vocabulary and grammatical structures matching their emotions. Learners need to feel risk-free and confident about their choices to articulate their emotions without worrying about making mistakes (Heydarnejad, Ebrahimi, & Adel, 2019).

In a Non-Native English Speakers (NNESs) setting, the teaching and learning process depends on the learners' socio economic necessities; in other words, learning opportunities for English are associated with the learners' socio-economic status (Pinilla-Portiño, 2018). She mentions that the learning outcomes of the EFL learners in the NNESs setting heavily depend on their sociocultural background, the more upgraded social setting they belong to, the better performance they demonstrate.

Students in the EFL context usually have limited scope to practice English outside the classroom and limited exposure to English speakers or members of the international community (Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021) as a result, they do not see a real need to learn or speak English other than the classroom use. Thus, English speaking practices for EFL learners take place only where speaking performance is conducted for an audience in a classroom setting. Whereas, according to Boonkit (2010), speaking is the most important skill required in language learning for better communication considering which speaking practices should be given priority in the EFL settings.

## **2.2 Evaluating the Pedagogical Challenges Faced by the Teachers Speaking Skills in the EFL Context of Bangladesh**

For any classroom, the teacher's role is crucial as it is through teachers that interaction between learners develops in a meaningful way and it is through teachers' skills of using strategies and methods of pedagogical techniques effectively Teaching-Learning takes place (Ahmad et al., 2019). A positive interaction between teachers and learners contributes to a proper learning environment which results in better learning. Thus, a teacher's knowledge in the field of teaching is essential for ensuring productive learning.

Although in order to ensure a successful speaking skill development for the learners' teachers must allow an interactive and highly communicative classroom environment (ThiTuyetAnh, 2015), teachers in the Bangladeshi EFL context are conducting Lecture-based classes (Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021) which is not allowing the language learners to speak, participate and interact with each other in the target language.

Different studies show that teachers employ L1 for class management (Hamid et al., 2013; Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021). Notwithstanding, this can be another determinant that adds to the problem of speaking challenges for the learners. This is because using L1 means yielding valuable opportunities for well-motivated foreign use. In addition, it tends to degrade the target language as a medium for communication. Learners view it as designated to communicatively trivial domains such as drills or dialogue practice, while the mother tongue continues to be a suitable medium for discussing matters of immediate interest hindering the major purpose of learning TL, communication.

In the Bangladeshi EFL context, most teachers report that there is a lack of resources, such as authentic audio-visual materials when it comes to teaching speaking skills (Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021). Necessary language learning books are also unavailable in this country which eventually aggravates the provision of scarce educational resources (Rahman et al., 2019).

Teachers fail to provide additional scope for practice to the learners in the EFL setting of Bangladesh (Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021), as a result, even if students have adequate linguistic competence they fail to practice that under the proper guidance of their teachers which might have been very helpful for them.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This paper is based on a qualitative research methodology that employs extensive literature review as research ‘data’ to find out the gaps in the pedagogy of teaching speaking in an EFL context of Bangladesh and uses the researcher's teaching experience as ‘tools’ to diagnose the problems regarding developing English Speaking skills and comes up with some probable suggestions in order to address the issues. Extensive literature review has been done to meet the purpose and objectives of the study. The data collection process includes searches for peer-reviewed articles, critical studies, research papers, literary journals, periodicals, term papers and Google Scholar-based journals that are thoroughly acknowledged in the study. The researchers have been teaching English in the particular EFL context at the secondary and tertiary level for more than eight years.

This study adopts a two-pronged approach; first of all, it analyses the problems faced by the learners while acquiring English speaking skills in the EFL context of Bangladesh (Study objective 1); thereafter, it explores the pedagogical difficulties faced by the teachers in the same setting while teaching English speaking (Study objective 2). The literature reviews then lead to finding the gap between teaching and learning English speaking skills in the Bangladeshi EFL context (Study objective 3).

Additionally, as the need felt along the way, the study also provides specific suggestions for the teachers' adjustment in the class as there

is a scarcity of teaching materials and less scope for allowing students to practice speaking in English.

### **3.2 Setting**

The study is based on the Bangladeshi context, where both the researchers are from. Both the data collection and the analysis is done keeping Bangladeshi tertiary level students in focus as the researchers teach at the tertiary level and use themselves as tools for data analysis. English is learned as a foreign language in Bangladesh (Hamid et al. 2013). As we look at the scenario, we see that the medium of instruction is Bangla up to the secondary level except for a handful of expensive private English Medium schools. In (Rahman et al., 2019) we find that English is available in two forms in the education system in Bangladesh: as a content-based subject in government and non-government Bangla medium schools and colleges (BMSC) and as the only language of academic discourses in the elite English medium schools (EMSC). This creates a perfect setting for a study on NNEs (Pinilla-Portiño, 2018) already. Moreover, Bangladesh is a developing country, according to a World Bank report that was made public in 2016, which identifies Bangladesh as a lower middle-income country (as cited in Rahman et al., 2019). Therefore, considering all the above, the researcher's find the Bangladeshi context as the ideal setting to conduct the study on Speaking skills development of the NNEs in a developing country at the tertiary level as the title suggests.

### **3.3 Data and Research Instrument**

The study utilizes both the researchers' teaching experience to select the literature and review them from their perspectives to reach the findings of the objectives of this study. In short, in this study, the literature review is used as the data for analysis. The researchers' teaching experience is used as the instrument to analyze to reach the findings.

## **4. DISCUSSION & FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Findings in terms of the study objectives**

Following are the findings in terms of data analysis. This study employs extensive literature review as the 'data', and both

researchers' teaching experience in the EFL context worked as the 'instrument' to analyze the data to reach the study's findings.

#### **4.1.1. Evaluating the challenges learners face in developing their speaking skills in the EFL context of Bangladesh**

From the literature review, it is quite evident that at the tertiary level of the Bangladeshi EFL setting the need for speaking skills development is much neglected. The problems learners are facing are multifold and in need of serious attention. It is to be noticed cautiously that learners feel a void when it comes to speaking performance (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016). They feel empty from the inside and all of a sudden they cannot find proper vocabulary (Rabab'ah, 2003) to express their ideas with (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016). They are heavily dependent on their L1 and constantly in need of translating their thoughts into English (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016) for which their fluency is being hampered. Also, they are going through inhibition of making mistakes for which they fear being laughed at by their peers in the classroom and are failing to think freely and become confident (Heydarnejad, Ebrahimi, & Adel, 2019), which is an essential element for any successful speaker of any language. As learners' socio-economic status is a determining factor for English speaking proficiency (Pinilla-Portiño, 2018), it leaves unwanted intimidation on those who come from a rather modest socioeconomic background. Last but not least, as the lack of opportunity of practising English speaking outside the classroom is near impossible for the majority of the learners, there is no scope for them to work on these apprehensions and overcome the embarrassment of "speaking in English" in front of the public. Therefore, all these factors above cause major hindrance to the speaking skills development for learners in the EFL context of Bangladesh.

#### **4.1.2. Examining the pedagogical challenges faced by the teachers in the EFL context of Bangladesh**

Rendering to the findings from the literature review, it is evident that the EFL teachers in Bangladesh are in dire need of support in order to improvise the situation for the EFL learners' speaking skills. First of all, teachers need to acknowledge the fact that speaking skills can



only be developed when the classrooms will allow students to interact more (ThiTuyetAnh, 2015) this particular skill cannot be developed through lectures or instructions about speaking (Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021). Therefore, it is on the teachers to realize that they have to create an interactive classroom environment and provide enough scope for them to practice speaking among themselves. Teachers also have to be role models in the classroom and do not use L1 for instructions as then speaking in English would only be limited to performing tasks only instead of using it for successful communication (Hamid et al., 2013; Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021). Teachers also pledge for appropriate materials suited for speaking activities (Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2019) which is not only scarce for a developing country like Bangladesh but also become very expensive when available. Teachers also resent not having enough opportunity for their learners' speaking practices in the academic setting, just as importantly (Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021).

#### **4.2.3. Analyze the Teaching-Learning scenario of the same context in order to identify the gap, if there is any**

What is more appreciable is that both teachers and learners feel that there is a need for development when it comes to speaking skills in EFL classes in this particular context which is the prerequisite for mending the gaps the study made visible. To start with, both teachers and learners recognise that there is very little scope for English speaking practices in the EFL setting of Bangladesh (Boonkit, 2010; Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021). From the learners' end when the issues are emotional obstruction and lack of confidence (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016), the teachers should be more open to allow them to practice freely instead of providing 'lecture'/'instructions' on how to speak in English (ThiTuyetAnh, 2015). When the learners are already struggling with resourcing adequate vocabulary (Rabab'ah, 2003), teachers must not limit their speaking to 'tasks' only by communicating all through in L1 in the classes. Also when practising speaking English become repugnant due to the learners' socioeconomic background (Pinilla-Portiño, 2018), teachers must create the environment for everyone to practice freely and learn from each other in a comfortable setting (Heydarnejad, Ebrahimi, & Adel, 2019). There are more things to the situation of EFL in the Bangladeshi context. In Bangladesh, education policies have reformed from GTM to CLT (Rahman et al., 2019); however, it was not backed by a solid infrastructure to run successfully which is why

teachers conducting classes using GTM is still visible (Hamid et al., 2013; Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021). Moreover, there are failings of suitable teaching materials as well (Rahman et al., 2019) and even if they are available to some extent, they become expensive for mass use in a developing country like Bangladesh.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Summary of the Study**

To sum up, both researchers teach English Language in NNEs (Pinilla-Portiño, 2018) setting of a developing country, Bangladesh. From their teaching experience, they marked that English speaking skills development requires special attention in the regular academic courses at the tertiary level. This observation led to qualitative research to diagnose the teaching-learning scenario in the EFL context of Bangladesh and identify the gaps employing an extensive literature review. Thereafter, propose possible suggestions to bridge the gaps, if it is to be found. As the setting, it chooses Bangladeshi tertiary level education, where both the researchers work. This qualitative study has employed a creative research design, used literature review as data and both researchers' experience of teaching in the relevant context as the instruments for analyzing the data. The study then performed a critical analysis of the data to reach the findings. Then, a few probable solutions are tailored and offered from the researchers' perspective to address the needs.

### **5.2. Summary of the Findings**

To be precise, the findings suggest that even though speaking is an essential skill in language learning, it is often given less importance in classroom practices (Ahmad et al., 2019). Also, there is a lack of a suitable environment for learners to practice speaking outside the classroom (Boonkit, 2010; ThiTuyetAnh, 2015; Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021). Teachers often use L1 as the medium of instruction which no longer encourages learners to speak in English even inside the classroom (Hamid et al., 2013; Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021). It is also seen that English language teaching and learning resources are expensive and scarce (Rahman et al., 2019); additionally, learning opportunities for English are associated with the learner's socioeconomic status (Pinilla-Portiño, 2018). At the same time, teachers are using age-old teaching methods and failing to create a proper Teaching-Learning

environment (Rahman et al., 2019; Hamid et al., 2013; Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021). All these are causing a severe lack of motivation among the learners to work on their speaking development (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016; Heydarnejad, Ebrahimi, & Adel, 2019). Also, teachers need an updated task-based speaking activity plan for incorporating into their regular academic courses (ThiTuyetAnh, 2015). Both researchers concluded that the gap is more evident from the teachers' side than from the learners' side. Thus, they would like to propose some solutions in order to minimize that.

### **5.3 Solutions**

From the study, it is evident that the major issue with English speaking enhancement is the lack of scope for practice (ThiTuyetAnh, 2015; Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021). Additionally, in the EFL context of a developing country like Bangladesh, access to well-prepared appropriate materials for speaking enhancement is also very scarce (Rahman et al., 2019). Nonetheless, teachers' dependency on using L1 as their medium of instruction is also major drawback towards speaking skills development of the students (Hamid et al., 2013; Ibna Seraj, et al., 2021).

Therefore, in the EFL context of Bangladesh, when providing the most updated teacher's training and buying the latest audio-visual materials for mass consumption becomes by an large expensive and time-consuming phase, both researchers would like to recommend employing contextual, interactive, level-appropriate tasks and materials (ThiTuyetAnh, 2015) in order to bridge the gap between teaching and learning. In the following segment of the study a few readily usable ideas for a few ESL games, from both researchers' points of view, are added as examples to demonstrate the way interactive speaking practices can be enhanced and promoted to a wider scale that requires minimal and cost-effective resources. The researchers named this "English Speaking Activity" and would like to coin the phrase as a catchy activity among all the EFL teachers and learners in Bangladesh.

#### **5.3.1 English Speaking Activity**

The English Speaking Activities are based on interaction; it can be student-student interaction; also, it can be student-teacher interaction. The theory behind designing these activities is to ensure the student's

engagement and participation to the maximum level (Nunan, 1996 as in ThiTuyetAnh, 2015) to keep their motivation high (Ur, 1996, as cited in ThiTuyetAnh, 2015) keeping contextual examples to help learners relate better (ThiTuyetAnh, 2015) to all the tasks and activities. To conduct these activities, teachers would require minimal resources at the lowest cost, creating a highly interactive teaching-learning environment. All these activities can be accomplished with smaller groups as well as larger groups. The activities are very flexible to teachers' and learners' requirements as per classroom size and syllabus accommodation.

The primary idea of designing the tasks is to make sure that learners feel free and have fun while practising English speaking because learning speaking is successful only when it is stress-free (Ur, 1996, as cited in ThiTuyetAnh, 2015). Following are a few examples of English Speaking Activities that teachers can adapt to their classroom requirements to ensure more interaction and high participation in a very cost-effective way.

### **5.3.1.1 Activity 1: Intonation/Stress-Fun Game**

To begin, teachers will have to change the learners' seating arrangements; all the learners can make a big circle or form a U-shape to see each other while speaking. Then, the teacher will keep some chits they prepared earlier in the middle of the ring and ask all students to participate in the game. The teacher will inform students that something is written on the chits, and students will have to ask the participants to perform on that, and then they will guess the contextual meaning of the word/phrases.

The teacher would prepare an example to demonstrate the task to the learners. The teacher says "hello" to some people differently and asks participants to interpret the meaning.

Some examples could be these:

Speaker says "**hello**" to...

1. to a customer over the phone
2. to a friend whom you haven't seen for three years
3. to someone you have just found doing something they shouldn't do

4. to a friend
5. to a neighbor that you don't like
6. to a six-month-old baby
7. to someone on the phone when you're not sure if they are still on the other end

At the end of the activity, the teacher will explain how different intonations convey different meanings in the English language. Then, the teacher will encourage all learners to come in front/ or in the middle and perform what the chits are asked to do. The teacher encourages all learners to participate.

In a very similar manner, teachers would demonstrate the sentence stress pattern of the English language through another example as given below:

Imagine the conversation below is taking place between two siblings! The bold and enlarged words/ phrases indicate having more stress in that sentence than the rest.

Example 1: **I** did not play games on your laptop yesterday! (Which means somebody else did, not me.)

Example 2: I **did not** play games on your laptop yesterday! (Which means I didn't do it at all.)

Example 3: I did not **play games** on your laptop yesterday! (Which means I did not play games, I did some important work.)

Example 4: I did not play games on **your** laptop yesterday! (Which means I did play games, but not on your laptop.)

Example 5: I did not play games on your laptop **yesterday**! (Which means I did play games on your laptop, but not yesterday.)

Through this demonstration, teachers would introduce the concept of "sentence stress" in English language and explain in brief how the English language sentence stress incorporates a pattern during speaking that depends on the meaning speakers intend. Teachers can emphasize the fact that if learners understand the English intonation and stress pattern, they will speak and communicate in the language better. Teachers can prepare several other similar dialogues ahead of time and divide the learners in the class in pair/small groups to conduct a drill.

### **5.3.1.2 Activity 2: Fluency practice through relevant contextual prompts with effective pauses**

EFL learners must remember that they do not have to follow any particular accent; instead, they should simply articulate their words clearly with proper intonation and stress. Also, as EFL learners, speakers must understand that fluency does not indicate speaking at a fast pace. Rather, fluency indicates speaking with proper intonation, stress and maintaining adequate pauses. Pauses, during speaking, attract the audience's attention. Speakers might want to pause after they said something fundamental, allowing the audience to sink in. This idea can be instilled in the learners in the following way:

The learners will write down their respective hobbies (mostly in brief/bullet points because writing skills are not the focus here) and discuss why they meant so much to them with their peers in small groups/pairs. Then, the teacher will provide a small checklist called a “reality check”, to the learners where the learners will ask the questions on the checklist to each other. Some questions of the checklist could be:

1. How do you feel when you get to practice your hobbies?
2. How do you feel when you fail to practice your hobbies for a long time?
3. Can you compare your days where you can or cannot practice your hobbies and tell me which day you feel better?

After this brief conversation, learners will prepare a small impromptu saying addressing the prompt teachers may write on the board/ provide in a small chit that asks them to answer “Why should we pursue hobbies?”. When the preparation is done, the teacher would one by one ask the learners to share their ideas. However, before the learners begin, the teacher will demonstrate the ways to maintain effective pauses in their speech to make it more meaningful and clear to the audience. Teachers can prepare a speech ahead of time where they talk about their hobby and demonstrate the use of pauses. For instance, the teacher can say, “I love reading books, but the last book I read is six months ago...” in saying this the teacher can take a brief pause to demonstrate how small pauses after some key ideas can attract more audience attention and continue telling his story.

### **5.3.1.3 Activity 3: Chain-story to practice coherence in speaking**

For this activity, teachers would require a small tennis size ball. Also, teachers would need to be prepared with some stories ahead of time. In the beginning, the teacher would ask everyone to sit so all the learners could see each other while speaking as this will allow learners to interact more while participating. The teacher then begins by telling a story. For instance, "once upon a time there was a girl name "Meena". She wanted to go to school, but her parents thought ...", the teacher would stop at a point and pass the ball to another participant and ask them to continue for a minute from where the teacher stopped. Then, after a minute, that participant would pass the ball randomly to another participant and ask them to continue from where they left. In this way, when the teacher observes that the story has ended, the teacher takes a turn and begins another story to continue in the same manner. Teachers will provide the learners with a small list of transitional words before the storytelling activity and ask the learners to use those to help them compose their story in a coherent way.

The activities mentioned above are very simple ESL interactive activities that can be played with students anytime during the class in accommodation with the syllabus requirement. As stated, these activities are highly flexible to teachers' and learners' needs. Once teachers comprehend how to deliver such games, they can design ways to develop such activities tailoring to their needs. All these activities require basic and low-cost materials. Therefore, the researchers think they are highly suitable for learners' speaking development in the EFL context in developing countries like Bangladesh.

### **5.4 Recommendation**

It is hard for the researchers to provide recommendations to "eradicate" the problem, but it can be minimised, and the gap in the Teaching-Learning environment regarding speaking can be reduced. However, to develop the scenario, the researchers think education authorities, policymakers, and institutions have significant roles to play. First of all, researchers recommend that in the EFL context, especially considering the scenario of developing countries, language teachers should be given proper training and adequate teaching support so that they understand the practical implications of teaching speaking sincerely, and at the same time follow updated teaching

strategies to make attempts to motivate students to develop their English speaking skills. The researchers also think education authorities and institutions should carefully decide their syllabus so that the speaking skill's integration is done adequately along with the other three fundamental skills. Nonetheless, if teachers also go through this study, they should illustrate the gap in their continuum and start working on that.

### **5.5 Further studies**

In the delimitations, the researchers stated that they will not be incorporating any interview or analysis of any focused group study. The primary reasons for that were that both were looking forward to studying existing literature to identify the gap regarding teaching speaking in an EFL context. The findings suggest that the gap is mainly on the teachers' side. Based on their study, researchers have already provided some solutions and made further recommendations; it is time for the researchers to interview the teachers and know their valuable opinion on this matter. This study is also focused on the tertiary level only. If any researcher wants, they can conduct a similar study at the primary and secondary levels.

### **5.6 Conclusion**

This small-scale study identified a significant gap in the pedagogy of teaching English speaking in Bangladeshi tertiary level education. The researchers feel there is an avoidance from the teachers and administrators regarding teaching speaking as a separate skill. This must be minimised to help the students become successful in real world language usage.

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## **Reintegration Challenges of Migrant Labour in Rural Areas of Bangladesh: A Case Study**

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### **Abstract**

Recently, migrants of Bangladesh faced many problems in their destination countries. Therefore, a huge number of migrants have returned home from abroad. The difficulties that the unskilled and semi-skilled return migrants are facing in Bangladesh have recently gained more attention. The study identifies the financial and social challenges returnees usually face to reintegrate into their families and communities. A mixed method approach was employed in the villages of two Upazilas of Comilla. Based on the return migrants (on a ten-year reference period), a combination of closed and open-ended questions was included in the interview schedule to interview 145 respondents among different categories of participants. Aside from the survey, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted to get in-depth data on the challenges to reintegrate. The study

shows that there is a relationship between return and reintegration experiences of returnees and also indicates that returnees must reintegrate socially and economically, as most return migrants are in vulnerable situations after their return. Therefore, there is a need to have policies and programs for the reintegration of returnees.

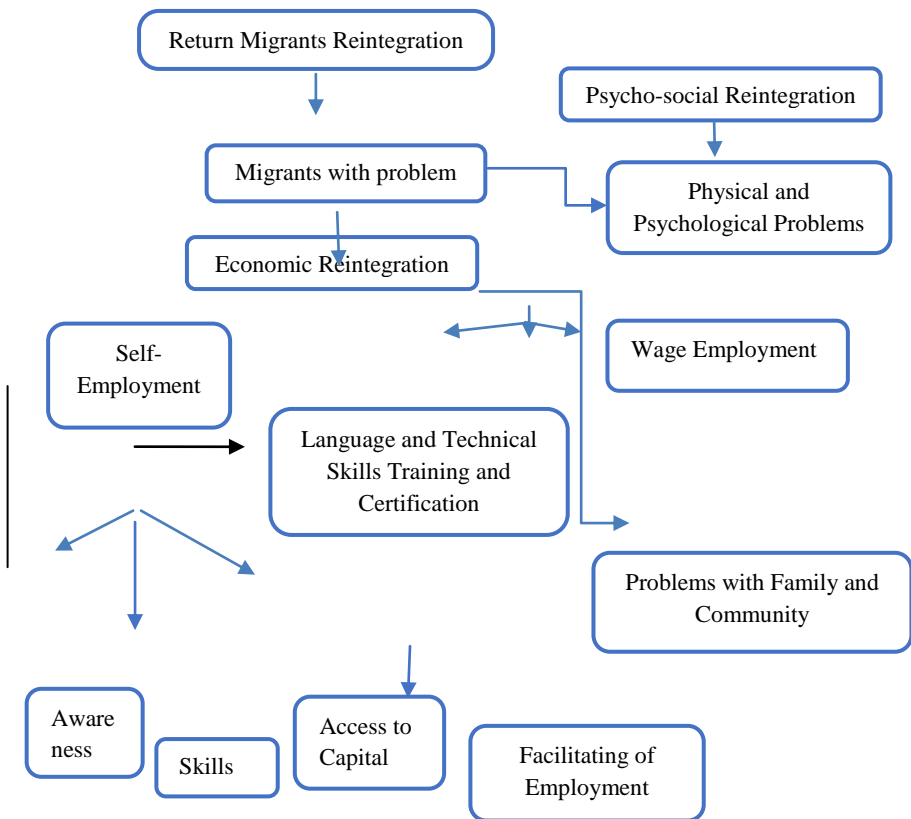
**Keywords:** *Migration, Return Migrant, Return Migration, Reintegration*

## **Introduction**

Bangladesh is a huge labour surplus country (Siddiqui and Abrar, 2003). Many migrants from Bangladesh have gone abroad for different periods since independence, and the reasons are manifold (Siddiqui & Bhuiyan, 2013). Recently, migration has created a vast opportunity for poverty reduction, women's empowerment, and income generation (Masud and Hamzah, 2018). As a result, international labor migration has become an integral part of the global economy (Siddiqui and Abrar, 2003). Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training (BMET) data show that Bangladeshi workers are predominantly men (BMET, 2019). According to 2018 migrant worker data, many Bangladeshi migrant workers are unskilled, and more than half of the migrant employees are semi-skilled (16%) or less skilled (39%) workers (Siddiqui et al., 2019). Compared to the other labor-sending countries, the number of Bangladesh migrants is smaller, primarily short-term in employment, less skilled in working performance, and low paid (Masud and Hamzah, 2018). Excessive workload, lack of communication with their home, and physical exploitation make their stay more challenging and problematic. As a result, in major exporting countries such as Bangladesh, many migrants have returned home from abroad (The Daily Prothom Alo, 2019). This study has focused on Neo-classical Economics and Neo-economics on labour migration perspectives to explain the phenomenon of return migration. According to Neoclassical economic theories, return migration occurs due to a mismatch between information obtained about the destination country's prospective working circumstances and actuality. The New Economics of Labor Migration (NELM) refers to the migrants for a specific period, and the main target is to receive higher income and accumulate savings. The study concludes that the best relevant theory for defining the environment of Bangladeshi return migration is a

combination of neoclassical migration theory and New Economic Labor Migration theory.

Within the mix of push and pull factors, migrants' experiences of failure in the destination country and nostalgia for the home country are key drivers for return decisions. As a result, when migrants' expectations and goals for the migration plan are not met, they return home. Most of the returning population belonged to the most impoverished strata in society; they faced multidimensional problems reintegrating into their community, culture, and country (Nawaz & Tonny, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to look at returnee migrants' challenges while reintegrating into the local economy and community. An integrated approach to reintegration is essential for return migrants. The study suggests that it is necessary to incorporate integrated approaches at the individual, structural, and communal levels. In order to reintegrate the returnees, the integrated approach suggests evaluation of the returnees; monitoring of social relationships, and assistance programs on vocational training and rehabilitation of returnees. In this study, three independent variables have been used: (a) migration, (b) return migration, and (c) reintegration, and it is discovered that these variables are related to one another.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Return Migrants Reintegration Program**

**Source:** Adapted from Bachtiar and Prasetyo, 2017, p.31.

## Objectives

The study's main objective is to understand the reintegration challenges Bangladeshi migrant workers face after returning from abroad. More specifically, the study would attempt to-

1. to analyze the factors of migration;

2. to examine the factors that are influencing the return decision;
3. to identify the challenges returnees usually face during the reintegration process.

## **Literature Review**

Permanent or semi-permanent residence changes are generally known as migration (IOM, 2015) as well as it is a highly discussed topic in sending and receiving countries (Smoliner et al., 2012). Traditional concepts of migration have been explained using the "push-pull" paradigm (Lee, 1966). People push to migrate for various reasons, including finding new employment, improving their professional chances, increasing their income, and improving one's living standard (Klage/Klein-Hitpaß, 2007). International migration is a source of revenue in a developing country like Bangladesh, which benefits from the experiences of migrants (Masud & Hamzah, 2018). According to a study conducted by Siddiqui and Abrar (2002), labour migration significantly impacts Bangladesh's national economy. As labor migration and remittances are an integral part of Bangladesh's economy and have evolved into an undivided idea of the global economy, their study makes an effort to describe the nature of migrant worker remittances in Bangladesh. Over the previous ten years, the number of people returning home has increased (Kuyper, 2008). According to Siddiqui and Abrar (2002), a significant percentage of migrants return to their home country each year once their contract expires. A migrant is referred to as a "return migrant" when they return to their native country (Cassarino, 2008). Economic and non-economic (e.g., familial, cultural, and social) factors drive return migration. The decision to return is influenced by both structural and personal considerations (Martin 2003: 54). Excessive workload, physical and mental harassment, an uncomfortable work environment, late payments, and nonpayment are all significant issues.

Return migration is based on reintegration, which is perhaps the least highlighted aspect of the phenomenon in Bangladesh. Reintegration is defined by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as "the re-inclusion of a person into a group or a process, such as the re-inclusion of a migrant into his or her country of origin's community" (IOM, 2011). When migrants return to their home country and attempt to reintegrate into society, this is referred to as reintegration.

However, returnees must reintegrate into society after returning to the homeland, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. It is feasible that the return will be permanent or transitory, and it may be decided voluntarily by the migrant or compelled by unexpected circumstances (Cassarino 2008, 3). According to the IOM (2012a), voluntary return is based on the individual's free choice, which is defined as the absence of any physical, psychological, or material pressure and an informed decision. Involuntary return, on the other hand, presents different obstacles for returnees (Mensah, 2016).

Social reintegration, economic reintegration, and psychological integration are all connected aspects of reintegration (IOM, 2015). The term "reintegration strategies" was coined by Kuschminder (2013) to describe the theoretical and policy concepts of return migration, integration, and reintegration. It is found that economic, psychological, and social factors all play a role in returnee reintegration. Government agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and communities must work together to achieve effective reintegration (IOM, 2017a). Bachtiar and Prasetyo (2017) underline the relevance of reintegration strategies in developing a conceptual framework for return migration in their SMERU Research paper. Reintegration occurs when migrants return to their homeland and attempt to readjust, according to Kerpaci and Kuka (2019). Rajan and Saxena (2019) stated that many return migrants were unemployed and had difficulty finding work in the home labour market in India. They received no assistance from the government or other government-sponsored programs. Furthermore, the migratory experience, the average time spent abroad, the circumstances that motivated the decision to return, and the position in the place of origin all influence the range of effective reintegration (Kuschminder, 2014).

Even though Islam (2010) explained the concepts of reintegration, he explored and highlighted the terms of financial integration. Islam also discusses various ways of reintegrating returnee migrants. Return migrants identified severe social problems in their reintegration process, according to IOM (2002a). According to the examined literature, return migrants have multifaceted obstacles in reintegrating with their family and community members and challenges in finding new employment. Therefore, the issue of reintegration of return migrants has recently received more attention. The existing literature shows that return migrant reintegration problems have been rarely

studied. As a result, the reintegration of migrants returning home is becoming an important and exciting area for sociological studies.

## **Study Area and Methodology**

This study looked at the current situation of return migrants who went to other countries and then returned to Bangladesh for various reasons. These causes range from psychological, societal, political, and economic factors to personal factors. To obtain a complete picture of the situation concerning the reintegration of return migrants, the study adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection for conducting the research. Comilla is Bangladesh's highest labour exporting district, according to BMET (2018) data. As a result, the surveys were conducted in two Upazilas of Comilla: Comilla Adarsha Sadar Upazila and Chauddagam Upazila. Comilla Adarsha Sadar Upazila (Comilla district) area of 187.71 sq. km, is located between the latitudes of 23°24' and 23°31' north and the longitudes of 91°03' and 91°15' east as shown in Figure 2. The total population of this district is 517860; the literacy rate is 66.05% here (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics; Cultural survey report of Comilla Adarsha Sadar Upazila 2007). The population of Chauddagam Upazila (Comilla district) is 381548 people, and it covers an area of 268.48 square kilometers. The Upazila is situated between 23°03' and 23°22' north latitude and 91°12' and 91°22' east longitude (Wikipedia, 2019).



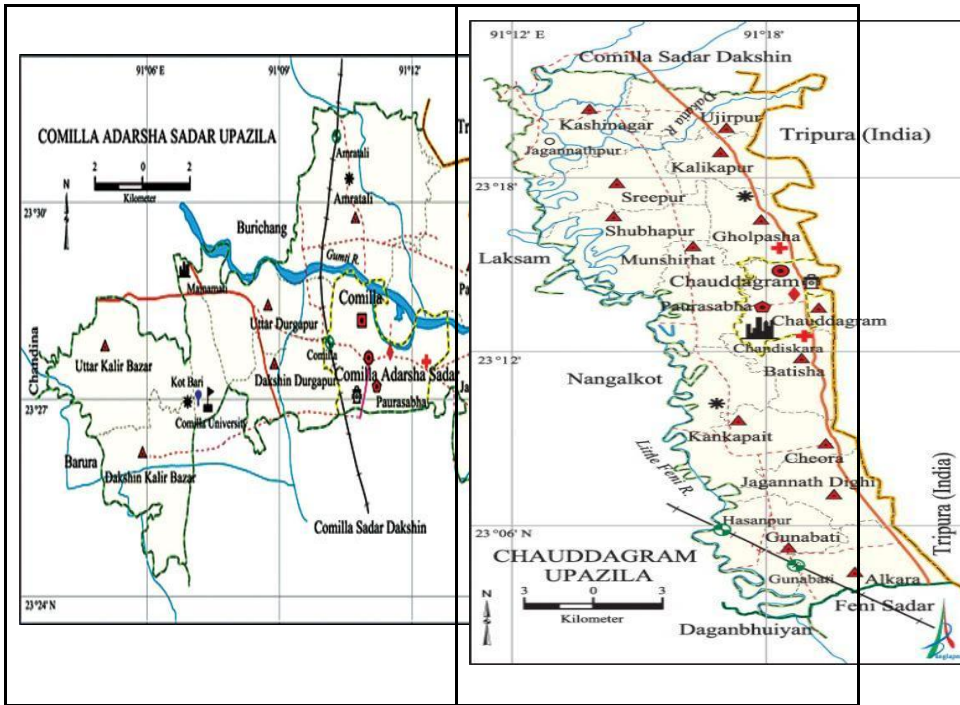


Figure 2: Maps of (a) Comilla Adarsha Sadar Upazila, (b) Chaudagram Upazila Map

**Source:** Adapted from Banglapedia (2021)

A total of 145 respondents were selected and interviewed for this research from two Upazilas and the interviews were conducted between March to May 2021. A combination of closed and open-ended questions was included in the schedule to interview the respondents. Questions were asked on the sociodemographic features of male return migrants, their overseas migration experiences, and their post-return experiences (the reintegration experience). Aside from the survey, the research developed a plan to gather respondents' information through Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Four groups participated in four focus groups (two with return participants and two with family members of return migrants). The snowball sampling technique was used to select the responders.

For choosing the study area, the researcher used multi-stage sampling techniques and a purposive sampling procedure. Comilla was purposefully chosen as the research location due to its high number of return migrants. Following a multi-stage sample technique, two Upazilas, Comilla Adarsha Sadar Upazila and Chaudhagram Upazila (a total of 17 Upazilas under Comilla district), one union from each Upazila, Kalirbazar and Batisha (7+14= total of 21 unions), and lastly, two villages were selected purposively from the districts (Zangalia and Paragram). According to the current research, return migrants were chosen based on a ten-year reference period (those who returned within ten years of the survey). It refers to migrants who spent at least two years outside of Bangladesh before returning and those who returned one year before the interview because reintegration takes time.

The data were tabulated using computer-assisted data analysis software, “Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)” (version 25). Few data was analyzed using a five-point Likert scale. Even though FGD is a method for collecting qualitative data, the researcher attempted to quantify a number of the findings using a 10-point scale. A detailed description of return migrants has been provided and triangulation was used to ensure the validity of this study. For reliability, the checklist and interview schedule were adapted from two previous studies of Kuschminder’s PhD dissertation (2014) and Mengesha, M. (2016).

## **Results**

Table-1.1 presents the frequency distribution with a field survey of 145 male respondents according to their Age, Marital Status, Religion, and Educational Qualification and aged between 18-55 years old.

**Table 1.1: Demographic Variables of the Respondents (in %)**

Variables	Categories	%	N
<b>Age</b>			
	18-29	31.0	45
	30-49	50.3	73
	50+	18.6	27
<b>Marital Status</b>			
	Married	82.75	120
	Unmarried	7.58	11
	Divorcee	9.65	14
<b>Religion</b>			
	Muslim	82.06	119
	Non-Muslim	17.93	26
<b>Education</b>			
	Illiterate	17.24	25
	Primary	20.69	30
	Secondary and Secondary+	62.07	90

**Source:** Field data, 2021

The table's distribution of all respondents by age indicates that about 31.0% were in 18-29 years, 50.0% were in 30-49 years, and 18.6% were more than 50 years. The table also shows that the highest

proportion of respondents (N=73) belong to the age group between 30-49 years old, indicating that majority of the respondents migrated in middle age. The mean age of the returnees at the time of the interview was 1.88 years. The marital status of respondents shows that before migration, most of the respondents (N=120) were married (82.8%), 11 (7.6%) respondents were unmarried, and the rest of the 14 were widowed. It is apparent from the Table that (82.06%) are Muslim which is the maximum number of respondents, and 26 (17.93%) are Non-Muslim religious followers. The results indicate that 20.69% of the respondents had no formal educational background. Literacy figures show that more than 20% (N=30) attended only the primary level as they were less educated. Their educational status rarely changed between the pre-and post-migration periods. (see Table 1.1)

When asked about their socioeconomic circumstances, most respondents stated that they came from the most depressed socioeconomic background. In terms of migration costs, most respondents borrowed money at a high-interest rate to cover their expenses.

**Table 1.2: Family Profile of the Respondents**

Categories	%	N
<b>Family Members*</b>		
2-3	31.03	45
4-5	57.93	84
6+	11.03	16
<b>Yearly Total Family Income of the Respondents</b>		
-60000	12.4	18
60001-80000	38.6	56
80001-100000	27.6	40

100001-120000	11.0	16
120000+	10.3	15
<b>Occupation (before migration)</b>		
Day Labourer	1.37	2
Driver (Van, Auto, Rickshaw, Trolly, Mahindra)	11.72	17
Farmer	8.96	13
Small Business	51.03	74
Others	26.89	39
<b>Occupation of Father (If Unmarried) N=11</b>		
Day Labourer	9.09	1
Farmer	45.45	5
Others	45.45	5

**Source:** Field data, 2021

The results (Table 1.2) indicate that 45 families (31.03%) respondents reported having 2-3 family members indicating a small family size, whereas 11.3% of the families have more than 6+ family members, indicating a large family norms size. In analyzing the family income of the migrant workers, the table presents that about one-third of respondents (38.6%) have a family income between 60001-80000Tk, while 27.6% have a total income between 80001-100000Tk. On the other hand, the table also shows that 12.4% of a family's yearly income is too low (less than 60000Tk). Existing literature shows that diversification of family income is an important reason for migration. It can be assessed that most labour migrants who took up migration as a livelihood option are from poor sections of society, similarly, the most important finding of this research is that economic reasons are the primary motivation to go abroad. The mean total family income is 2.68. In this study, most of the respondents were small businessmen (51.03%), and 11.72% of respondents were drivers (van, auto,

rickshaw, trolley, and Mahindra puller). In contrast, nearly 27% of the respondents said they were involved in many other occupations (different types of low-paid jobs), like handicrafts, shop attendants, cleaners, mechanic workers, etc. Regarding the occupation of the respondent's father (in case of unmarried), the survey data shows that among the 11 participants, 45.45% of respondents mentioned that their father was a farmer. (see Table 1.2)

**Table 1.3: Basic information related to Migration (in %)**

<b>Year of Migration</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>
2010-2012	15.86	23
2013-2015	33.10	48
2016-2018	51.03	74

<b>Years of Experience they Gathered</b>		
-36 months	38.6	56
37-60 months	27.6	40
61-84 months	17.9	26
84+	15.9	23

<b>Respondents Abroad Time</b>		
-36 months	47.6	69
37-60 months	35.9	52
60+	16.6	24

<b>Number of Times Respondents Visited</b>		
1 Time	38.6	56
2-3 Times	35.9	52

**Source:** Field data, 2021

Table 1.3 presents that a considerable number of respondents, 33.10% migrated within the 2013-2015 years whereas about two-thirds of respondents migrated within the 2016-2018 years from the survey area. Regarding the years of experience, it is found that about one-third (38.6%) of the total respondents who stayed abroad is less than 36 months, while 27.6% stayed for 37-60 months and gathered experience. A considerable number of respondents (17.9%) stayed abroad from 61-84 months. The mean age of the years of experience is 2.11 years. In analyzing the respondent's abroad time, it is found that about two-thirds of 47.6% (N=69) of total respondents' abroad time was less than 36 months while one-third (35.9%) of the respondent abroad time from 37-60 months. The mean age of the respondents' abroad time is 1.69 years. The data from the sample area also represented that a considerable number of respondents (35.9%) 2-to 3 times visited abroad, and the remaining 25.5% of respondents visited above four times. (see Table 1.3)

Return is a complicated phenomenon that varies from person to person, and it is a micro-level decision made by an individual influenced by several factors.

**Table 1.4: Causes of Return Migration (in %)**

			%	N
<b>Got Salary</b>	<b>Committed</b>	Yes	75.86	110
		No	24.13	35
<b>Delayed Salary</b>		Yes	62.06	90
		No	37.93	55
<b>Daily Working Time (in abroad)</b>		1-10 hours	22.06	32
		11- 20 hours	77.93	113
<b>Behavior</b>	<b>with</b>	Satisfied	48.96	71

<b>Respondents</b>	Not Satisfied	51.03	74
<b>Treatment Cost</b>	Employer	37.93	55
	Self	62.06	90
<b>Reason of Returning</b>	End of the Contact	51.03	74
	Forcefully Return	35.9	52
	Nostalgia	13.10	19

**Source:** Field data, 2021

Table 1.4 explains the problems that respondents faced in the destination country. When questioned about issues they had in the destination country, most participants said they had many problems including regularity of payment, daily working time abroad, behaviour with the house lord, treatment cost, and communication facilities. Regarding migrant workers' salaries being paid regularly, about 25% of respondents stated that they did not get the committed salary. In some cases, 60% of participants were not paid on time, while 37.93% were paid on time. From the table, it is evident that more than (75%) worked above 20 hours a day. In analyzing the behaviour of respondents, it is evident that more than 50% of respondents were not satisfied with their Owner's behavior, and only 37.93% of respondents said their employer took their treatment cost. When respondents were asked why they returned, more than 50% of respondents mentioned returning to the country after the agreement ended, whereas more than 35% of the respondents were forcefully returned to Bangladesh. Only 13.10% of respondents chose to return to their own decision (Nostalgia/homesickness). (see Table 1.4)

Return migrants, according to the survey, faced several challenges, including finding work, building relationships with friends and relatives, meeting the high expectations of family members, and adjusting to family members. According to this study, people who are forced to return face various reintegration challenges, including low social acceptability, trouble finding new jobs, and physical and psychological issues. This study explores how return migrants to Comilla are reintegrated into society and the difficulties they experience during this process. Table 1.5 depicts the respondents'



post-return conditions, with many of them citing various circumstances.

**Table 1.5: Post Return Situation of the Respondents (in %)**

Responsibility	%	N
Unemployed	60.0	87
Small Business	40.0	58
<b>Problem Faced</b>		
Financial Problem	64.13	93
Social Problem	20.0	29
Adjustment with Family	15.86	23
<b>Support from Organization</b>		
Yes	21.37	31
No	78.62	114
<b>Support Types of Private Organization (N=31)</b>		
Financial	58.06	18
Counseling	41.93	13

**Source:** Field data, 2021

From the table, it is evident that the majority of the respondents, 60% were in vulnerable situations after returns as they did not manage to find work. The Table shows that only 40% of respondents started small businesses. The table shows that nearly 65% of respondents were in financial problems while 20% were in social issues. Besides, 15.86% of respondents faced adjustment problems with their families. Regarding the support from the organization, it was found that about 80% of respondents did not receive help. This study shows that most

return migrants were in vulnerable situations after their return and needed support as shown in Figure 1. The Table shows that more than 40% of the respondents support counseling (see Table 1.5).

## Discussion

The reasons for migration can be stated as "push" factors from the origin country and "pull" factors from the destination country. The study reveals that respondents who participated in in-depth interviews said that their family members pushed them to migrate to desire higher income in almost all cases. According to the study results, the demographic profile of return migrants determines migration rates, and the socio-economic profile influences migrants, and the study's findings are related to the NELM approach in this example. Although the study was conducted many years ago, similar to that study, Islam (2010) found that most respondents (33.51%) were between 26-30 years old and went abroad for work. According to the study, most respondents are Muslim and married, and studied up to the primary level. Siddiqui and Bhuiyan's (2013) findings are similar to those of the current study.

According to the study, more than 10% of families have 6+ members. In contrast, IOM and RMMRU found that the majority of remittance-receiving households are six-person joint households. In their study Migrant Worker Remittances and Micro-Finance in Bangladesh, Siddiqui and Abrar (2003) observed that the average monthly household income is taka 16,699.25. It is also evident in the current study, which found that 56% of respondents have a total yearly family income of 60001-80000Tk. According to those interviewed for this survey, 'the desire for the job' or 'a higher wage' was a driving motivation behind their migration. *'We anticipated going and working hard and altering our fortunes in a short amount of time,'* according to interviews. The majority of labour migrants who chose migration to sustenance in the study area came from low-income families. The family members of returnees claimed, *'We were in a vulnerable situation before that's why they started leaving home to earn money.'* In a similar study, Islam (2010) found that most employees (44%) wanted to migrate to improve their family's financial condition. The study reveals that respondents generally

receive funds through mortgaging or selling their homes or by taking out high-interest loans.

When the respondents arrived at their location, the study discovered that many of them did not receive the job they were offered, nor did they receive the money they were promised. *'I received only three months' salary instead of five, at the cost of 25,000 takas per month — for less than the promised 40,000tk,'* said one returnee in an interview. The respondents stated that they were paid irregularly and that their salaries were sometimes withheld for no particular reason. The interviewee expressed her feelings: *'My salary was cut off for minor matters. Even if it was 10/15 minutes late to reach the factory, the salary was deducted. I had to live in fear all the time. The manager used to scold a lot.'*

[Rubel, 34 years old male]

Another return migrant worker from Qatar also shared his experience the accommodation problem abroad:

*'I used to live in the housing supplied by my job, and it was a nightmare. Previously, about 8-10 individuals shared a room with shared toilet facilities. The majority of people become ill as a result of their living situations. The space was always filthy and suffocating for so many people.'*

[Humayun, 32 years old male]

## **Reintegration Challenges**

Reintegration occurs when migrants return home and wish to reintegrate into their families and society (Chobanyan, 2013). According to the study, after spending a long time in a diverse cultural background, returnee migrant workers find it difficult to reintegrate into society. It is apparent in the current study, which demonstrates that some returnees encounter family-related issues and reintegration challenges after returning. Most of the participants reported that their family members did not receive them with respect during the focus group discussion. The migrant sends remittances to the family and expected their families to spend part of their remittances. Unfortunately, some migrants found that their families had spent the entire amount upon their return, while others had only

kept a small portion. Sometimes returnees have to return empty-handed, and the study reveals that financial problem is the main problem for returnees. According to the respondents, family members are always keen to demonstrate that they live better than the rest of the community. As a result, meeting the high expectations of families and community members is a considerable difficulty for return migrants. *'I recently returned from Jordan without any savings,' one interviewee stated. 'My parents are becoming increasingly concerned about me,'* according to a return migrant.

Respondents reported that they were separated from their families due to social stigma and criticism. Similar findings have been found in the case of a return migrant: *'They had to sell the land to send me abroad. They thought that the money I would send from abroad would pay off debt, and they could even buy more new land. But when they found out, I could not bring anything, and they were disappointed. No one from my family welcomed me.'*

[Zakaria, 36 years old male]

In a Focus Group Discussion, one of the returnees said:

*'There were many distinctions between before and after I went abroad. In the past, every member of my family valued what I had to say. They assumed I would travel abroad and bring a large sum of money with me. For two and a half years, I experienced inhumane suffering abroad and was even sent money. No one seemed to mind when I returned empty-handed. They would not even listen to my words with specific needs.'*

[Dulal, 30 years old male]

Rajan and Saxena (2019) discovered that returning migrants had a difficult time finding a job. Dayton-Johnson et al. (2009) identified that a lack of job possibilities is a common problem for return migrants in a global context. In a Focus Group Discussion, one of the returnees said: *'I did not find any job after my return. My experiences are not matching here with my expectations. I learned new things during my stay in Saudi Arabia but did not know how to use my skills and experiences. The opportunity is limited here for me.'*

[Samshad, 38 years old male]

As noted by interviewees: *'I have no future in my place of origin. As I am unemployed, and for this, I cannot help my family financially.'* Another returnee said: *"I have not yet managed any employment since my return. The job opportunity is not the same here. As a technician in Libya, I acquired a lot of procedures that are not applicable in Bangladesh."*

Siddiqui and Abrar (2002) discovered a discrepancy between returnees' skills obtained in their destination countries and their post-return employment status in India and Nepal. Returnee men stated that a lack of job possibilities is a primary concern for them and financial difficulties have delayed their reintegration. The findings of this study are comparable to those of (Kuschminder 2014; De Regt & Tafesse, 2016). Respondents indicated that's why they want to re-migrate. As noted by interviewees: *'Yes, I want to return to Libya. If a company offers me a good job, then I must go. I keep my passport with me all the time. I tried a lot, but I could not get any benefits in the country. How long will I sit? Only the burden of debt is increasing.'*

[Jamal, 40 years old male]

The study found that the lack of coordinated, integrated, and reintegration programs for returnee migrants is a significant barrier to their reintegration. As a result, various actions should be taken to provide overall socioeconomic support and reintegration with their families for returnee migrants. The study concluded that the reintegration mechanism is not functioning as planned, based on the perceptions of return migrants and the theoretical insight of the NELM theory. According to Velazquez (2000), Everett Lee proposed the push-pull migration theory in 1966, which may be easily applied to migration and remigration. Returnees are commonly encouraged to re-emigrate due to three factors: poor return conditions, limited employment opportunities, and a lack of a reintegration strategy.

## **Conclusion**

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated states globally, and it is also one of the most popular international labour migration and

remittance destinations globally (Chowdhury, 2015). Return is typically regarded as the conclusion of a migratory journey (Battistella, 2018). Bangladesh has always had a higher rate of return migration of unskilled labourers than any other Asian country. The majority of returnees struggle with economic reintegration, which is essential to their survival. The study found that there are not yet to take the necessary steps for returnee migrant workers' social and economic reintegration. Despite the lack of a government-led strategy to help return migrants reintegrate, several government organizations (such as MEWOE, BMET, PKB, and BOESEL) are working to improve the lives of migrant workers by safeguarding their rights by offering services. Unfortunately, in the study area, there are no government-sponsored reintegration programs for returning migrants. The study suggests that returnees must actively participate in the reintegration process and address the economic, social, and psychosocial factors through suitable training, counseling, networking, and financial support to achieve long-term reintegration.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following are some recommendations for reintegrating returnee migrants:

1. Before leaving the country, migrant workers must be taught functional English.
2. If employees have an issue, they should call a single number to inform the authorities.
3. Returnees involved in income-generating activities should be provided with technical assistance.
4. It is essential to have a well-defined policy framework for the reintegration of returnee migrants.
5. Migrant employees must finish training for the job for which they are moving to another country.
6. Involvement of the family and community in the reintegration process is also essential.
7. An effective reintegration program for returnees should include training, counseling, and financial help.
8. Brokers should not take advantage of migrant employees.

9. The government should give returnee migrants an allowance.
10. Bangladesh's government should negotiate with destination nations to ensure that Bangladeshi employees are paid a reasonable wage.

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