Critical Insights

A Journal of the Department of English Language and Literature

NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY
B A N G L A D E S H

Critical Insights: A journal of the Department of English Language and Literature, NDUB

Critical Insights: A journal of the Department of English Language and Literature, NDUB

Table of Contents

Critical Insights: A journal of the Department of English Language and Literature, NDUB

Applied Linguistics and ELT

Book Review

EDITORIAL

I am honored and delighted at the same to be able to write this editorial for the maiden issue of *Critical Insights* a scholarly journal of the Department of English language and Literature, Notre Dame University Bangladesh.

When I started working at this University in February 2020, I planned to launch the journal in 2021. We could not bring it out on time for the uncertainty that surrounded all of us because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Those who have worked in publishing an academic journal would understand the challenges and uncertainties involved in the process of publishing a journal smoothly.

At Notre Dame University Bangladesh, our Vice-Chancellor, Professor (Fr) Patrick Gaffney, CSC, Ph.D. readily accepted my proposal for publishing the journal. His inspiration, active support, and most importantly, his understanding of the need for bringing out a journal from the English department made me and my colleagues more eager than ever before to go ahead with the process of printing *Critical Insights*.

We were very fortunate to receive a good number of scholarly articles for the first issue of the journal. Established scholars from Bangladesh and abroad submitted their papers that I think is a recognition of the lofty ideals of Notre Dame University Bangladesh. Younger academics also turned in their submissions in plenty. The inaugural issue of *Critical Insights* will showcase the writings of both renowned scholars and those who are relatively new in academia.

I personally believe that younger academics are faced with many challenges for publishing in authentic peer-reviewed journals some of which are more than eager to accept works of senior and renowned academics. This forces many young faculty members to publish their works in suspect online journals that readily take papers for publication in exchange of money. It is our collective responsibility to help those who are new in academia to start writing in peer-reviewed journals. Even after getting negative reviews from a few reviewers, I sent a couple of papers to new reviewers and received encouraging and constructive comments that helped the authors to make changes following the suggestions of the reviewers.

One of the editorial policies of *Critical Insights* is to support new writers, for we believe that if they cannot get their works published in genuine journals, they will be compelled to take help from dubious publications. In our maiden issue, we have published only a certain number of papers. We will consider those that are left with us for including them in our next issue to be printed in 2023. Fresh submissions will also be accepted round the year in Studies in Literature, Cultural Studies, English language Teaching and Applied linguistics.

One notable feature of this inaugural issue is that the majority of articles, in Studies in Literature, are on South Asian writers who have won fame across the frontiers of the subcontinent. Interestingly both senior and new academics have opted to write on these authors. I feel this choice is because of the sharpened post-colonial sensitivity, much more delicate at present, and is instrumental in the growth of translations of many acclaimed authors such as Rabindranath Tagore, Rokeya Shakhawat Hossain, and Sadat Hasan Manto. Many famous scholars of Bangladesh and India, trained in the USA, UK, Canada and Australia, are now translating important works of fiction and other literary genres written in Bangla, Hindi and Urdu because only a few translators from the West have shown interest. I am aware that the recipient of the International Booker Prize for translated fiction in 2022 is *Tomb of Sand* written by Geetanjali Shree from India and translated by Daisy Rockwell an American Urdu and Hindi language translator. It is great to see more and more renowned scholars of Bangladesh translating the fiction of Bangladeshi Bangla language writers to English. A couple of these scholars have contributed their articles to the maiden issue of *Critical Insights*.

In the end, I want to sincerely thank the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, the Treasurer, and the Registrar, who is also the Publisher of *Critical Insights,* for their support and encouragement. I also owe my thanks to the assistant editor, members of the editorial board, members of the board of advisors, the learned reviewers, my colleagues in the department and all those who lent a helping hand in the process of publishing the first issue of *Critical Insights.*

Professor Golam Sarwar Chowdhury

Editor

Reclaiming Frayed Connections Imaginatively—Rabindranath Tagore's Voyages to China, Japan and Indonesia

Fakrul Alam*

In his 1925 *Talks in China* Rabindranath Tagore appeals to the hosts of his second lecture of the tour to "re-open the channel of communication which I hope is still there; for though overgrown with weeds of oblivion its lines can still be traced." He has in mind at this point networking in the past that linked the Indian subcontinent to the countries of Fareast Asia. Either for religion or philosophy and/or for sheer enlightenment, pilgrims and sages had travelled intrepidly between these regions until the European colonizers came. The Europeans for their part connected the subcontinent with Fareast Asia but through the opium trade—something Tagore had decried even as a young man. What he would now like, he says first to his Chinese hosts, and then to his Japanese ones in the second leg of this tour, was to renew civilizational ties for mutual benefits—humanizing and forging cultural connections anew for present-day benefits. Three years later, in his trip to Java, Bali and Singapore, Tagore would once again ruminate in the journal that he kept on the occasion on clearly visible signs he saw of civilizational ties, whether preserved or frayed or transformed, if not beyond recognition, to a point where the connecting lines were only faintly traceable.

Through Rabindranath's attempts to reclaim the past through his creative reading of cultural signs so that the past becomes part of the present and a gateway to a future in a manner that could prove to be an alternative to European ways of seeing and being, this paper focuses on memory and the past in South Asia, on remembering and forgetting, on the past recalled from written records, cultural forms, and religious rituals. Reading Rabindranath's Nationalism, *Talks to China* and *Letters from* Java, as well as his letters and making use of secondary literature on the subject as well as his educational philosophy, my paper focuses not only on Tagore's musings on past connections but also on his attempts to revive and rejuvenate them and make them of use in the present in his Visva-Bharati initiatives and in his literary and cultural imaginings.

_____

*Professor Fakrul Alam is Director, Sheikh Mujib Research Institute for Peace and Liberty and UGC Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka. He received the Bangla Academy Puroshkar (Literature Award) for Translation in 2013. His publications include *Bharati Mukherjee* (Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1995); *Jibanananda Das: Selected Poems* (UPL, 1999); *South Asian Writers in English* (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006). Professor Alam is an internationally acclaimed critic, translator, and theorist.

Let me begin by thanking Professor Mukesh Williams, Advisor and Chair of the Evaluation Committee of the South Asia Research Center of Soka University, and its team, so dedicated to making this virtual international conference on "Memory and the Past in South Asia" a success.

My presentation on this occasion makes two basic assumptions. The first is that in it I will be reflecting on Tagore's remembrances of the connections between Japan and South Asia over time in a panel consisting of presentations looking at memory, history and the effect they have had on South Asian writing of the last century. I will be doing so at a time when there is a lot of interest being shown about forging south-south connections and moving away from an obsession with north-south binaries. The second assumption that I will be making is that there was always a past in Asia in which south-south connections played a noteworthy part. It is a phenomenon that Rabindranath Tagore, the great Bengali writer who attained considerable global fame for at least two decades of the twentieth century, wanted to revive and replicate in his university, Viswa-Bharati at least a little. After all, he thought of it as a place where worlds could meet in a single nest. He wanted the people there to share and learn from, among other things, inherited wisdom that he saw as the legacy of descendants of, so to speak, a joint family. Assuming that the collective memories of such connections and shared wisdom had been occluded at a time when imperialism stemming from the nationalistic ambitions of the western world had begun to dominate imaginations everywhere, and that memories and ancient wisdom needed to be brought into the limelight by Asians once again as they opted for free and mutually beneficial exchanges of ideas between themselves, Tagore thus went out on world tours that paralleled his educational and cultural endeavors for this as well as other reasons. For Tagore, such endeavors would not only be a way of opposing the hegemonizing ambitions of the dominant nations of the global north but also of reviving ties that he felt could begin a process of spiritual healing that could have lasting positive implications for the peoples of the global south now wanting to develop according to an alternative world view that would take them away from the monopolizing materialistic mindsets of the west.

To this end, and taking advantage of the many invitations that came his way consequent to the immense worldwide fame he had achieved immediately after he had got the Nobel Prize in 1914, Tagore embarked on a number of visits to parts of Asia where he knew there had been some cross-cultural contacts over time. Such contacts would also contrast significantly with the ones that had developed between South Asians and East Asians from the second half of the nineteenth century because of the spice or the opium trade run by the British. To that end, in 1916 Tagore toured Japan for a few weeks en route to a lecture tour he would undertake in the United States, the first of three visits to the Asian country; the others would take place in 1924 and 1929. Tagore went to China in April-May

1924 en route to his second visit to Japan. In 1927 he headed for the south-east of Asia, visiting a number of Indonesian islands and then Singapore for a few weeks, marveling all the time at signs he encountered there reflecting ancient cross-cultural contacts that had impacted on the culture of the region permanently and meditating on their possible implications for contemporary times.

In other words, when he accepted invitations to talk as well as tour Japan, China and the Indonesian Archipelago, Tagore had as one of his goals reclaiming connections that had frayed since imperialism changed the lifestyles and the cultural modes of South, Southeast and East Asia. In fact, as Krishna Dutta & Andrew Robinson noted in *Rabindranath Tagore: the Myriad-Minded Man,* even before Tagore had embarked on his first tour to East Asia, he had been influenced in this line of thinking by his painter nephew Abanindranath Tagore (of the Bengal "Oriental school" that wanted to counter western influences on Indian artists) and Abanindranath's Japanese friend Okakura Kazuko, who had "famously" written "Asia is one", implying thereby the necessity of reviving past connections of spiritual value as an antidote to the western imperial dominance of recent centuries culturally as well as economically (Dutt and Robinson, (159).

But Tagore's reaction to the Japan he encountered was mixed. On the one hand, and as Yasunari Kawabata, the man who would be the second winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature after Tagore had won it in 1914 had written in 1969, he remembered that Tagore had talked approvingly in a presentation of Japan as giving rise to "a civilization which is perfect in its form, and has evolved a sense of sight which clearly sees truth in beauty and beauty in truth" (Quoted by Dutta and Robinson, 202). On the other, to Tagore there were signs strewn everywhere of uglification because of a nationalistic ethos that had appeared in recent times urging the need to progress at any cost by industrializing and by expanding markets aggressively. This contrasted with the memories Tagore had retained from his study of Japanese civilization and admiration for its arts, and that he glimpsed every now and then during his visit in the delicate artistry in display everywhere in sculptures, architecture, costumes, rituals and plays, for he could sense that they could be endangered. It is thus that he wrote in a 1939 letter to the Japanese poet Yone Noguchi, who had admired him and had exchanged letters with him over the decades of "the rapacious imperialism which some of the *nations* of Europe were cultivating with the ideals of perfection preached by Buddha and Christ [and] with the great heritages of culture and good neighborliness that went [in]to the making of Asiatic and other civilizations" (*Letters*, 497).

Noteworthy here is that though Tagore knew that Indian civilization possibly had no direct contact with the Japanese one in ancient times, he felt that Buddhism had come to the island nation from the subcontinent via China, and

thus in a sense had linked South Asia with this part of Asia. He would endeavor to revive the link in Viswa-Bharati by opening a department of Japanese Studies there, now housed in its Nippon Bhavana. As Tagore goes on to say in his letter to Noguchi, with whom he was now differing over Japan's role in the Second World War, "I felt it to be my duty to warn the land of *bushido*, of great art and traditions of noble heroism, that this phase of scientific savagery which victimized western humanity and led their masses to a moral cannibalism was never to be imitated by a virile people who had entered upon a glorious renascence and had every promise of a creative future before them". [498] He adds, "Japanese and Chinese people, let us hope will join hands together in no distant future, in wiping of memories of a bitter past." (*Letters,* 498-99).

That East and Southeast Asia was once linked to South Asia for unselfish reasons, unlike western eyes that now coveted materialistic ties with these regions, is a theme Tagore keeps coming back to in his writings occasioned by his trips there. In his lecture, "Nationalism in Japan", too, he reminds his audience of "those days when the whole of Eastern Asia was united with India to the close ties of friendship, the only natural tie which exists between nations" (439). He saw such a tie as quite contrary to the kind of ties coveted by western imperial/colonial interests. Tagore felt that such a purely Asian network revealed "a living communication of hearts, a nervous system evolved through which messages ran between us about the deepest needs of humanity" (439).

Such were the messages Tagore felt he had to emphasize as well as transmit as a representative of an India that wanted to renew spiritual ties with East Asia in this particular trip to Japan. As opposed to western civilization that he now termed "carnivorous and cannibalistic" (440), he wanted the ideal embodied in *maitri* or amity, that is to say, an active interest in bonding with other peoples that he once felt existed and that needed to be renewed (452). This was also the message underlying his 1924 trip to China. As Dutta and Robinson observes in their 1995 biography, *The Myriad-Minded Man*, in his trip to the country that he year he had kept insisting that it was essential to follow the route of friendship characterizing Indo-Chinese in earlier times as opposed to imitating western materialistic and parasitic interests that marked their ties to the country of Asian continent since the middle of the nineteenth century.

In Volume 2 of the *English Writings of Tagore*, the Indian writer's "Talks on China" are prefaced by Liang Cho, who was the President of the Universities Association and must have had the formal duty of introducing him to the audience. Setting Tagore's visit in context, Cho points out that first Buddhist and then Hindu scholars from India had kept visiting China for centuries and that Chinese civilization was influenced in all kinds of positive ways as a consequence of such visits. Not surprisingly, Tagore responded warmly to such an introduction and in his opening talk, "To My Hosts", he emphasized that the time had come to

once again establish "bonds of spiritual relationship" (595) and "re-open the channel of communion which I hope is still there" despite being occluded in memory, since "though overgrown with weeds of oblivion its lines can still be retraced." Disinterested ties concentrating on spiritual bonding, Tagore stressed in his China talks as he did in his Japanese lectures as well, that would not only unite Asian nations but also be an antidote to crass materialism, "mechanical method or organization" and the worshipping of "the idols of money and power." Instead of pursuing such goals, these nations should be pursuing the path laid out of achieving "spiritual perfection of life" that had been followed for centuries since the time of Ashoka (598). In another talk of his China visit that is reprinted in the appendices of Volume 2 of *The English Writings of Tagore*, "To Students at Hangchow", he concludes his presentation, through a fervently phrased wish, "Let all human races keep their own personalities, and yet come together, not in a uniformity that is dead, but in a unity that is living" (645).

That such unity could be based to some extent on a rediscovery of past Pan-Asian ties as well as a repudiation of Western-imposed market dependence and unequal transactions, was a theme, then, Tagore would be emphasizing time and again from the second decade of the twentieth century in his travels across the continent. Such was the hope as well that at least partially induced Tagore to visit the Indonesian archipelago islands in 1927. Here too his major goal in undertaking these trips to these islands is to rediscover connections that had once linked East Asian regions with South Asia and to revive them for the sake of *maitri* and to counter market-driven and imperial greed-sustained ties. In his book *Java Jatrir Patra* that was translated into English in 2010 as *Letters from Java: Rabindranath Tagore's Tour of South Asia 1927* we see Tagore wondering in places like Bali at what he saw were signs of Hindu religious rituals and cultural practices that had clearly persisted despite the ocean crossing and the vast stretch of time that had passed. He was also struck then by the attractive mutations of such practices which in some places he felt could revitalize Indian cultural practices even now. In other words, encountering what had been preserved over time could be inspirational and could lead to efflorescence of things such as clothes design even in present-day Bengal. In Bangi, Bali he is enthralled by the costumes, dance spectacles and Puranic plays he comes across. Scenes there even remind him of Japan and make him wonder at the possibilities of trans-Asiatic links in history that were salutary and worth contemplating for possibilities of renewal in the present. Not that Tagore was absolutely uncritical about what he saw, for he noticed as well mutations that revealed signs of etiolation. After all, he was only interested in reviving what had life and could be made relevant to the present. Moreover, and never averse to experiments and the possibilities of improving the world through science, he is happy to see Dutch agricultural innovations in Soeerakarta contributing to agricultural productivity in a plantation.

In other words, cultural transference not only meant renewing the positives inherited from past cross-cultural connections but also benefitting from scientific advances made in the west for the common good of humanity.

To conclude, then, Tagore is stirred in his visits to East and Southeast Asia by thoughts that are not meant to repudiate the good things of the west or to hold on to traditions that are moribund. His trips to Japan, China and the Indonesian archipelago were not meant to perpetuate regressive or moribund societies. What he was stirred by in these visits was on the one hand the Pan-Asian spiritual bonds that existed then that could be renewed as an option against the nationalistic expansiveness and insatiable acquisitive tendencies of the west and the possibilities from the past to transform lives of the peoples of Asia in the West. It was as bad to be homebound and stationary as it was to be go-getting. As he deliberates on what he has seen in his visits to these islands in his trip there, he writes a long thought-provoking passage in the amazing ultimate letter of *Letters from Java: Rabindranath Tagore's Tour of South Asia 1927* which I can only extract very selectively at this time: "We of the east have had to acknowledge defeat at their hands. Why? Chiefly because we are static and they are dynamic…. we are so thoroughly walled round by our homes…We are often indifferent to subjects of knowledge that are ultimately related to ourselves" (136). Learning from the past and renewing Pan-Asian bonds are important but so is embracing the positives of western society and culture and load-shedding atavistic impulses.

Let me conclude also by stressing that Tagore's lectures and comments about learning from the past in renewing Pan-Asian ties and forging bonds that would be empowering in combatting western nationalism in the twentieth century, and his belief that reviving historical ties of the Asian countries had positives for him and his contemporaries got mixed reviews in Japan and China. As Kyoko Niwa says his entry on Japan in *Rabindranath Tagore: One Hundred Years of Global Reception* (2014), at best Tagore's reception was mixed while it was "true there was great excitement among ordinary people" … the 'educated class' remained more or less indifferent" (9), for western culture had more attraction for them than an India poet wanting them to anew ancient ties and forego what the west demonstrated to be the strengths of progress and their belief in the need for "the rapid modernization and Westernization of Japan" (20). In China, too, there was a mixed reception. As Tan Chung and Wei Liming put it in their entry on China in *Rabindranath Tagore: One Hundred Years of Global Reception*, though he was received with greater acclaim and admired with greater fervor and by greater numbers than in Japan, he was so misunderstood at one point by some students in Peking inclined towards revolution who apprehended that "Tagore's spiritual power might harm the Chinese revolutionary cause" (45), that he felt that he had to cancel the rest of his trip and leave China. But almost a century later now, we in Asian can surely appreciate the vision he had of trans-Asian bonds

being strengthened at least in part through re-visioning our histories at this period of world history.

Japan

Datta and Robinson

[visit dates, 1916 and 1924]

Initial contact—"Bengal school of painting" rejection of European models, Abindranath Tagore's friend Okakura Kakuzo, "the Japanese pioneer in reviving the Japanese people's interest in their own artistic heritage" Becomes friendly with RT "influenced" RT "towards seeing Indian culture as part of a civilization common to Asia..."Asia is one" wrote Okakura famously (DR, 159)

1916 Japanese nationalism and militancy made him hesitate and postpone trips. But agrees ultimately, "I gave up Japan but Japan is insistent" (DR, 200)

"With one part of his mind, Tagore truly believed, following Okakura, that "Asia is one>" But a different party, grimly prescient, totally contradicted this. Tagore never abandoned 'Asia is one altogether, but in the 1930s he increasingly saw India and China as an entity, with Japan having sold its soul to western-style nationalism" (200-201)

Decides to go en route to lecture tour to USA. Background World War I in Europe, the rise of nationalism worldwide in cahoots with industrialism

"Japan's contrast between traditional beauty and imported ugliness was almost more than Tagore could bear throughout his three-month stay. Writes epigrams on fans that came out in *fireflies*; "enchanted" with the women welcomed by Buddhists in a station in Shizuoka reverently till "tears of joys came to my eyes" 9202) but disconcerted by signs of "progress", industrialization and nationalism in Japan.

After he became the 2nd Asian writer to win the Nobel Prize, Yasunari Kabata, who had remembered seeing photos of Tagore in his visit as a 17-year-old wrote after getting the award about his predecessor— "he gave an impression, to the boy I was then, of some ancient Oriental wizard" (DR, 202).

Kawabata remembered Tagore's comment in his 1916 Japan lecture in a 1969 speech thus— "It is the responsibility which every nation has to reveal itself before the world…[Japan] has given rise to a civilization which is perfect in its form, and has evolved a sense of sight which clearly sees truth in beauty and beauty in truth" (quoted by DR, ibid)

He told the distinguished audience present in Kanneiji Buddhist temple on June 13, "I sincerely hope that the Japanese people will not forget the old Japan. The new japan is only as imitation of the West. This will ruin Japan." But Japanese enthusiasm was doused by such comments and Japan's ascendant nationalists began ignoring him. "The nationalism that Tagore forcefully decried as western in original and inimical in spirit to japan was serving japan well in Korea and China, they felt." Reception in subsequent visits to japan in 1924 and 1929 were "cooler and cooler still, "afraid of his idealism" as Tagore himself commented in an address to Indians in Japan in his 1924 trip— "They thought that idealism would weaken their morale" (Quoted by DR,203).

Letters

[In 1937] torn between his old admiration for japan and his horror at Japan's militarism in China.

[Letter to Yone Noguchi, Japanese poet who had written to him wanting him to support the Japanese against the Americans at the start of the 2nd World War] [1 September 1938]

When I protested against "westernization" in my lectures in Japan, I contrasted the rapacious imperialism which some of the *nations* of Europe were cultivating with the ideal of perfection preached by Buddha and Christ with the great heritages of culture and good neighborliness that went [in]to the making of Asiatic and other civilizations.

Volume 2 of *English Writings of Tagore*: "Nationalism in Japan"

439 "I cannot bring to your mind those days when the whole of Eastern Asia from Burma to Japan was united with India to the closest tie of friendship, the only natural tie which exists between nations [as opposed to imperialism or colonizer/colonized]. There was a living communication of hearts, a nervous system evolved through which messages ran between us about the deepest needs of humanity. We did not stand in fear of each other, we had not to arm ourselves to keep each other in check; our relation was not that of self-interest, of exploration and spoliation of each other's pockets ideas and ideals were exchanged, gifts of the highest love were offered and taken; no differences of languages and customs hindered us in approaching heart to heart; no pride of race or insolent consciousness of superiority, physical and mental; marred our relation; our arts and literatures put forth new leaves and flowers under the influence of this sunlight of united hearts; and races belonging to different lands and languages and histories acknowledged the highest unity of man and the deepest bond of love. May we not also remember that in those days of peace and goodwill, of men uniting for those supreme ends of life, your nature laid by for [440] itself the balm

of immortality which has helped your people to be born again in a new age, to be able to survive its old outworn structures and take on a new body….

[as opposed to western civilization that is "carnivorous and cannibalistic"]

"The ideal of 'maitri' is at the bottom of your culture—f"maitri" with men and "maitri" with nature. And the true expression of this love is the language of beauty, which is so abundantly universal in this land.

452 [World war I in Europe] For when this conflagration consumes itself and dies down, leaving its memorial in ashes, the eternal light will again shine in the East—the east which has been the birth-place of the morning sun of man's history. And who knows if that day has not already dawned, and the sun not risen, on the easternmost horizon of Asia? And I offer, as did my ancestor rishis, my salutation to the sunrise of the East, which is destined once again to illumine the world.

China

Dutta and Robinson

[in 1916 wanted China to avoid route taken by Japan to imitate the West and uphold the dictum of his friend Okakura Kakuzo that "Asia is one" and oppose western concepts of democracy and nationalism]

[249] In Rabindranath's mind, his 1924 visit [to China] was an opportunity to revive the historic impulse that had taken Buddhism from India to China in the first millennium AD. [not for trade or empire] [Indian Buddhist missionaries braving the perilous trip in the eight century] Thus Tagore, though not a Buddhist, was reviving Sino-Indian contacts after nine centuries of silence—a fact that he and his party would be reminded of time and again in China.

{enthusiastic Chinese reception initially but soon hostilities at Tagore's opposition to Chinese modernizing impulses and initiatives and favoring of "so-called spiritual civilization of the orient" [251]

[According to Dutta and Robinson Tagore eventually realized] he was out of step with national feeling, in China and Japan as in India. But he defended his view vigorously, if illogically.

Letters

[307] In April-May 1924, despite the country's disturbed condition, he visited Peking and several other cities, [accompanied by others] and was received by large crowds. He saw himself, as did his Chinse hosts, as renewing the contact between India and China begun by the early Buddhist missionaries, and he

developed a conviction that Buddhism was the dominant cultural influence in China.

English Writings, Vol. 2, "Talks in China" (May 1924)

[learned but warm intro by Liang Chi Chao, President Universities Association] [history of contacts between India and china—perhaps first during King Asoka's rule, but for sure in 1st Century A.D. when many Hindu scholars visited India and a large number of Chinese ones went to India to study. The relationship continues for the next 700 years at the least. {China was influenced in the fields of human relationships, freedom of expression, literature, the arts and music, architecture and sculpture. Buddhism underlying exchanges but separation with colonization]

To My Hosts

595 [Time has now come for] establishing bonds of spiritual relationship. The time is at hand when we shall once again be proud to belong to a continent which produces the light that radiates through the storm-clouds of trouble and illuminates the path of life.

596 Men, at their highest are pathmakers, paths not for profits or for power [unlike colonizers], but paths over which the hearts of men can go out to their brothers of different lands.

597 My friends I have come to ask you to re-open the channel of communion which I hope is still there; for though overgrown with weeds of oblivion its lines can still be traced. I shall consider myself fortunate if, through this visit, China comes nearer to India and India to China—for no political or commercial purpose, but for disinterested human love and for nothing else.

[disappointment with Japan on his 1916 trip there because of crass materialism and lack of humility and display of arrogance]

598 In Asia we must unite, not through some mechanical method of organization, but through a spirit of true sympathy.

[a world worshipping "idols of money and power" and neglecting "spiritual perfection of life"]

599 Our institution of Visva-Bharati represents this ideal of co-operation, of the spiritual unity of men.

Leave Taking

615 Our ancestors had a great ideal of the spiritual relationship between peoples [although communication between two parts of the world beset with difficulties]. Nevertheless, a thousand years ago, they could speak in your language. Why?

Because they realized the importance of the work in hand. —how invaluable was this bond of unity between nations, which could surmount the differences of languages. It is the one bond which can save humanity from the [616] utter destruction with which it is threatened today [because of] selfishness

Satyam [Supreme being as "truth"]

630 the noxious plant of national egoism

Appendices: Talks in China

To Students at Hangchow

645 My friends, this is my mission. I have come to ask you to re-open the channel of communion which I hope is still there; for though overgrown with weeds of oblivion, its lines can still be traced. I shall consider myself fortunate if, through this visit, China comes nearer to India and India to China—for no political or commercial purpose, but for disinterested human love and for nothing else….Let all human races keep their own personalities, and yet come together, not in a uniformity that is dead, but in a unity that is living.

Tagore and Rokeya: Autodidacts as Educational Pioneers

Mohammad A. Quayum*

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1980-1932) are two of the most iconic figures in Bengali, nay South Asian literature and culture. They are both celebrated in India and Bangladesh. Tagore's songs are sung daily as the national anthems of the two countries; universities and university residential halls have been named after them[1]; a school and a library have been named after Rokeya in West Bengal,[2] and Bangladesh celebrates 9 December, Rokeya's birth and death anniversary, as the Begum Rokeya Day. In a BBC opinion poll conducted among the listeners of BBC's Bengali Service in 2004, Tagore and Rokeya were voted among the Top 10 "Greatest Bengalis of all time"—Rabindranath in the second place, just behind Bangabandhu (Friend of Bengal) Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920-75), the founder of Bangladesh and Rokeya in the sixth place, ahead of such acclaimed Renaissance figures as Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-91) and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), and the only woman to make into a list of Top 20 ("Listeners Name 'Greatest Bengali'"). This is an extraordinary feat by any measure, as it refers to thousands of years of Bengali history.

Tagore and Rokeya are, no doubt, canonised for their immense literary gift. Tagore was the first non-European to secure the Nobel Prize in 1913 for his collection of poetry, *Gitanjali*. He was also Knighted by King Gorge V of England in 1915 for his contribution to literature, an award he relinquished in 1919 as a mark of protest against the heinous killing of 412 innocent Indians at a political rally in Jallianwala Bagh, Punjab. In 1940, Tagore was accorded an honorary doctorate by Oxford University, for, as the citation read, being "Most dear to all the Muses" (Kripalani 389). He has been dubbed "Kabi Guru," "Gurudev," "Biswakabi" and "Bengali Shakespeare," all in recognition of his illustrious literary career.

***Professor Mohammad A. Quayum is an Honorary Professor at Flinders University (with full academic status) Australia, and has taught at universities in Australia, Bangladesh, Singapore, Malaysia and the US. He has published extensively on American literature, Asian Anglophone literature and Bangla literature. He has gained international reputation for his books and scholarly works on South East Asian Literature in English.

[1] There are two universities in India named after Tagore—Rabindra Bharati University in West Bengal and Rabindranath Tagore University in Bhopal—and one in Bangladesh, Tagore University of Creative Arts. Bangladesh also has a university named after Rokeya, Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur. Besides, the first woman's hostel at the University of Dhaka was named Rokeya Hall (1964), while Jahangirnagar University has a student hostel named Biswakabi Rabindranath Tagore Hall.

[2] Jibantala Rokeya Mahavidyalaya and Ghola Begum Rokeya Library.

Of course, Rokeya's recognition and reputation as a writer did not have Tagore's global reach, mainly because the circumstances in which she wrote were far more adverse for women. She began writing when women were generally perceived as not intellectually fit to write, not just in India but in many quarters of the West. Not long before she commenced writing, in a letter to Charlotte Bronte (1816-55), English Poet Laureate Robert Southey (1774-1843) wrote, "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life and it ought not to be" (Bock 167). In spite of this inauspicious environment, Rokeya made her remarkable presence felt among her readers, critics and male counterparts. For example, Mohitlal Majumdar (1888-1952), a younger contemporary in Bengali literature, described her as the "soul and consciousness" (qtd. in Syed 17; Hasan 12) of her age. A few years later, another Bengali luminary, Abdul Quader (1906-1984), affirmed, "[Rokeya is the] greatest female writer in modern Bengali literature, irrespective of whether they were Hindus or Muslims" (qtd. in Quayum, "Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain" XXVII). Likewise, her biographer Shamsun Nahar Mahmud proclaimed, "The fate of the Bengali Muslim women has changed radically within the space of half a century, and there is no way to deny that this benevolent woman played the most significant role behind it" (67).

However, notwithstanding their phenomenal literary talent, their genius was not confined to writing alone but spread into many directions, including the sphere of education. They were visionaries who were also engaged in action; dreamers who became doers; idealistic and realistic in one breath. Like many other writers before and after them, they didn't dwell in an ivory tower or in the realm of divine illusion, but found their "freedom," in Tagore's phrase from *Gitanjali*, "in a thousand bonds of delight" (qtd. in Dutta and Robinson, "Rabindranath Tagore" 200). They believed that education was the key to (British) India's success. India could not become an independent, modern, progressive and self-reliant society without advancing in education and developing its own educational model that would make every Indian proud of their identity and help introduce justice, fellowship and harmony in society. Thus, for example, in his essay, "The Way to Get it Done," Tagore emphasised, "I repeat our education is the thing which we should first of all take into our own hands" (Das Gupta 320). He considered the lack of basic education as the main source of many of India's economic and social ills: "In my view, the imposing tower of misery which today rests on the heart of India has its sole foundation in the absence of education. Caste divisions, religious conflicts, aversion to work, precarious economic conditions—all centre on this single factor" (qtd. in Sen, "Rabindranath Tagore"). In a letter to Myron Phelps, Tagore further stated that the only way to eradicate India's festering socio-political condition was "to educate [the people] out of their trance" (Das Gupta 257).

While Tagore's focus in education was to uplift the life and circumstances of all Indians, irrespective of caste, class, religion or gender, Rokeya's immediate focus was on the education of women, and Bengali Muslim women in particular. Tagore believed that without education, and the right kind of education that had indigenous roots, Indians could never become an enlightened society; they could not overcome their inherent enemies like, borrowing Gandhi's expression, "Bigotry, Lethargy, Intolerance, Ignorance, Inertia and other members of that brood" (qtd. in Bhattacharya 2) and become a nation imbued with compassion, thoughtfulness, sensitivity, inclusivity and self-sacrifice, and embrace all fellow Indians as one, like the petals of a rose (Tagore's metaphor), and even extend themselves to the rest of humanity and existence.

Tagore believed in the education of feeling, sympathy, empathy and connectedness and not just of worldly success; of spirit and the senses and not merely mind and intellect; of love and creativity and not information and power alone; education that helps not only to secure a good living but teaches us how to live well; that which keeps us free from selfishness, material greed and dogmatism and attain "some inner standard of perfection… [and] self-emancipation" ("The Educational Mission" 628). Thus, in *Personality*, Tagore proclaims, "We may become powerful by knowledge, but we attain fullness by sympathy. The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence" (116; Samuel 349). In "The Religion of the Forest," elucidating the function of education, he further writes, "For us the highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it, but realising our own selves in it through expansion of sympathy; not alienating ourselves from it and dominating it, but comprehending and uniting it with ourselves in perfect union" (48-49).

Rokeya's emphasis was on the emancipation and empowerment of women in general and Indian women and Bengali Muslim women in particular. Like Tagore, she fought for justice, equality and inclusivity in society, and she believed that educating women was the best way to achieve them. Women were the most deprived group in society; they were discriminated against and marginalised in every regard. Women were treated with such disregard and contempt that their situation was no better than those of "slaves," "prisoners" and "animals," sometimes even worse than animals. Rokeya felt so anguished by the degenerate, downtrodden and defenceless state of women that she often resorted to animal imagery to describe their condition. In "Bengal Women's Educational Conference," for example, she contends:

> You might be surprised to learn that I have been crying for the
> lowliest creature in India for the last twenty years. Do you know who
> that lowliest creature is? It is the Indian woman. No one has ever

experienced any anguish for them…. If a dog is hit by a car, we hear an outcry in the Anglo-Indian media. But there is not a single soul in this subcontinent to mourn for incarcerated women like us. (Quayum, *The Essential Rokeya* 127)

In "Home," she further exemplifies, narrating her experience of visiting a Muslim home in the state of Bihar:

Do the readers think that Hasina or Jamila is at home? Definitely not!... The house belongs to Sharafat, and as it has a drove of sheep, flocks of ducks and hens, so also there is a group of women. Or the women could be described as "captives" because they have no family life! (*The Essential Rokeya* 43)

Rokeya believed that India was in a lopsided state because women were neglected and treated with disdain by men. They were often victimised in the name of culture and religion and deprived of all opportunities in life, especially education. This exclusion of women is the reason for India's stagnation. Using the metaphor of the bicycle in her essay "The Female-half," Rokeya rhetorically asks, how can a bicycle move forward when one of its wheels is smaller (women) than the other (men)? It will simply rotate in one place. In her allegorical narratives, "The Knowledge Fruit" and "The Freedom Fruit," Rokeya argues that India would not be able to attain its freedom from the colonial rule until women were given equal opportunities for education as men. Turning the Biblical story of the original sin of Adam and Eve on its head, Rokeya proffers in "The Knowledge Fruit" that since it was the Primaeval Mother Eve who had the first bite of the fruit of knowledge and Adam took only the leftover, it is women who were more deserving of education than men. In her utopian fictional *tour de force*, *Sultana's Dream*, Rokeya humorously extends this idea to show how the world would look like if women were given the right opportunities for education; the world would then turn into a quasi-paradise where there is peace, harmony and beauty but no violence and corruption—because violence and crime belong to the male domain. In "Bengal Women's Educational Conference," Rokeya brings home the argument to the Muslim community by suggesting that Muslims are the most backward and impoverished people in India only because they are blatantly indifferent toward the education of their women. She scathingly argues, tearing into the vanity and misogyny of Muslim men:

There are ten million beggars in India; of that, the majority are Muslims…. We, too, boast of nobility! Begging is the meanest of livelihoods, and Muslims outnumber other groups in this occupation. This is because they have rendered their female population totally useless by depriving them of opportunities to fulfil their physical and

mental potential. As a consequence, the children born of their womb become lazy and unwilling to work. So what else can they do to make their families proud except beg? (*The Essential Rokeya* 129)

Tagore and Rokeya set up academic institutions in British India to put their ideas into practice and fulfil their educational vision and mission. Tagore set up three institutions in Santiniketan, a place he once described as "the darling of our hearts" (Pal, "Travel Tales"), located about 158 kilometers northwest of Kolkata (Calcutta) in Bengal's rural hinterland, amongst Hindu, Muslim and Santal villages: Brahmacharya Asrama (1901; renamed Brahma Vidyalaya in 1925 and, finally, the Santiniketan School), Visva-Bharati University (1921) and the Sriniketan Institute of Rural Reconstruction (1922). Likewise, Rokeya pioneered a school for Muslim girls first in Bhagalpur, Bihar on October 1, 1909, and later, on March 16, 1911, at 13 Waliullah Lane, Calcutta—one of the earliest of such schools, risking the wrath and retribution of the religious "troopers" of her community, who were fiercely opposed to women's education.

However, it should be emphasised that neither Tagore nor Rokeya had much formal education; both were autodidacts who were largely self-taught and home-educated. Perhaps their self-education was the source of their greatness because they were not taught to toe the line or follow the rules and expectations of their society through a state-sponsored, structured education. Besides, self-education requires a lot of self-discipline and reflective capability. Since it's a kind of "discovery learning," it also allows more freedom and opportunity to experience and interact with knowledge and carve the individual's own path in life. Eventually, it is likely to make the individual more progressive, creative, dynamic and resilient as both Tagore and Rokeya were.

Tagore and Rokeya became autodidacts, not for financial reasons. In fact, both were born in large landholding (*zamindar*) families; Tagore in a family that had country estates in different parts of present-day Bangladesh and Rokeya in a landed aristocratic family in the village of Pairaband in the Rangpur district of British India, that now falls within the spatial boundary of Bangladesh. Tagore's trajectory of self-education was more by choice, but Rokeya's was purely involuntary and for the absence of choice.

Tagore was sent to school, like any other child, at a young age, but he was frequently absent, and his performance was unsatisfactory. He attended two different schools, Oriental Seminary and Normal School, within the first year of his education. At the age of ten, he was transferred to Bengal Academy and at thirteen to St. Xavier's School. He was too preoccupied with Bengali books and

magazines, and especially with *Baishnab Padabali*,[3] at this time. As a result, he was not promoted to the next class at the end of the year (1874), and that spelt the end of his education in Indian schools. At the age of seventeen (1878), he was sent to England to study Law, but this also resulted in no tangible outcome, as he returned home without a degree after about two years.

Tagore dropped out of the school system because he could not cope with its tyrannical, regimented, stuffy environment, that felt more like a factory, parrot's cage or a prison; "[it was like] a manufactory specially designed for grinding out uniform results," he laments in *Personality* ("My School" 641; Pidmore 358). He compares his listless, joyless, unhappy childhood education experience with the Chinese woman's experience of having her feet bound (Tagore and Elmhirst 115). His greatest disappointment came from the fact that being result-oriented, utilitarian and a tool of the economy, the focus of the school system was entirely on rote learning, on "thoughtless cramming of ill-digested subject matter" (Jalan 66), and none on creativity and imagination or free expression of oneself through cultural activities such as dance, music, drama, pattern and poetry.

Moreover, the child Tagore found that teachers in Indian schools were not sensitive, loving, motivational and inspirational but cruel, insulting and threatening towards their students, like, for example, Shibnath is in Tagore's short story "Ginni" (Housewife). Shibnath routinely humiliates his young students by giving them nicknames, as he does to Ashu one day by calling him "Ginni" or "housewife" in the presence of all his classmates and then walk to the staffroom to eat his meal, without even thinking how he has devastated the boy and disparaged him in the eyes of his friends. Teachers like Shibnath had no sense of how to treat children as children and would readily punish them if "they fail[ed] to behave like grown-up people and have the impertinence to be noisily childish" ("The Schoolmaster" 504). Besides, the teachers were not adequately trained. "They know neither good English nor good Bengali, and the only work they can do is misteaching," Tagore deplores in "The Vicissitudes of Education" (qtd. in Dutta and Robinson, "Rabindranath Tagore" 200), and adds in *Creative Unity*, "a teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame" (*Creative Unity*).

Although Tagore could not cope with "the grinding of the school system" (*Personality*, qtd. in Leser 114) and found its overall atmosphere cold, indifferent and bleak, his family environment was highly conducive to the fructification of his inherent talent, and that is where he got the education he needed in childhood;

---

[3] Broadly, devotional songs and poems inspired by the legend of Radha and Krishna and written between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.

in a surrounding that was vibrant, free, joyful, dynamic and "full of aspiration" (qtd. in Leser 115). The entire family was culturally oriented, enamoured with literature, music and art, and free from all cultural, social and religious orthodoxies. This freedom of mind and spirit and the family's appreciation for "art-leisure-pleasure" instead of just "work-survival-success," fed his imagination and gave him the courage, confidence and strength he needed to grow the way he wanted to, as a votary of love, truth, human fellowship and justice.

However, Rokeya grew up in a far more hostile environment. While Tagore's decision to discontinue education was voluntary, Rokeya was deprived of education by default, only because she was a girl. In keeping with the pseudo-religious practice of the time, her dogmatic, sanctimonious father decided not to send Rokeya to school. Her father was modern enough to marry a European woman as one of his four wives (Ray 17; *The Essential Rokeya* XVII) and provide English education to his two sons by the first wife, Rokeya's mother, and even send the eldest son to England for study. Yet when it came to the education of his daughters, he considered it futile. The only education he allowed them was a smattering of Arabic and Persian so that they could read the Qur'an and retain their family heritage and Islamic identity. They were also strictly forbidden to learn Bengali and English, the two languages that expatriate, aristocratic Bengali families like Rokeya's saw as "un-Islamic." They associated Bengali with the Hindu religion and English with Christianity and the Western civilisation, both of which would presumably adulterate their morality and faith. Moreover, Rokeya and her sisters were forced to live in strict purdah from the age of five, a "deadly" practice (Rokeya's characterisation) that would prohibit them from coming in the presence of not only men but also women outside their close family circle. Thus, Rokeya was forced into a life of ignorance and isolation from a very young age.

When Tagore failed to adjust to the Indian school system, he found his moral and intellectual nourishment from his family circle. Likewise, when Rokeya became a victim of her gender, it was her two siblings and later her husband who became her source of sustenance. Her elder sister Karimunnesa, who herself was a victim of the androcentric culture of the time and learnt the Bengali language of her own volition, ignoring her father's injunctions, became the main inspiration for Rokeya to not only learn the Bengali language but also to take it up as one of her creative mediums, as Kariumnnesa herself was a "born-poet" and "probably the first Muslim female poet in Bengali in the modern era" (Syed 12; *The Essential Rokeya* XVIII). Similarly, Rokeya learnt the English language from her elder brother, Ibrahim Saber, who taught her the language enthusiastically, often late at night, after their parents had gone to sleep. Rokeya acknowledges her debt to both Karimunnesa and Ibrahim Saber by dedicating her book *Motichur*, Vol. II to her sister and her novel *Padmarag* to her brother. She is also equally grateful to her husband, Khan Bahadur Syed Sakhawat Hossain, who not only became an

ardent champion of her writing, creating the necessary space for her to cultivate her talent but also left behind a legacy of Rs. 10,000 for her to start a school for Muslim girls, knowing where Rokeya's passion lay.

Tagore started his Santiniketan School, first named as Brahmacharya Asram, on December 23, 1901, with only five students, including his son, Rathindranath. It was modelled after the traditional religious school of a *topobon* or ancient forest hermitages. "The ideal of Brahmacharya was the keynote of everything" (*On the Edges of Time* 45), Rathindranath recollects in his memoir. The lifestyle adopted at this school was one of simplicity and austerity, which took pride in Indian poverty. In his memoir, *On the Edges of Time*, Rathindranath further recalls:

> The yellow uniform, which covered up the poverty of clothes; a pair of blankets, which served as our only bedding; the vegetarian meals comparable to jail diet in their dull monotony—these were the standards laid down. Nobody wore shoes or even sandals and such luxuries as toothpaste or hair oil were taboo. (46)

The school itself was a "mudhouse… a most inconveniently long and narrow shed" (*On the Edges of Time* 44), without any furniture. Classes were held under trees, in keeping with the ancient forest sanctuary tradition as well as Tagore's inherent love for tress and nature in general, as portrayed in his short story "Balai" and elsewhere. Tagore did this for two reasons, to expose the children to nature and their surroundings, and secondly, to keep them away from any potential infatuation with the European culture. Tagore didn't have any prejudice against the European civilisation as such, but at the same time, he did not want the children to turn into what he later humorously dubbed as "Ingo-Bangas," Anglophile Bengalis who had little or no appreciation for the Indian way of life and went head over heels for the British culture. Explaining this, in a letter to the Maharaja of Tripura, Tagore wrote in 1902, soon after the inauguration of the school, "I wish to keep my students away from all the luxuries of European life and any blind infatuation with Europe and thus lead them in the ways of the sacred and unsullied Indian tradition of poverty" (Dutta and Robinson, *The Myriad-Minded Man* 133).

Tagore's school was a long-cherished dream in his mind to offer an alternative to the traditional Indian school system, built on colonial ideals or British educational practices. He not only wanted to "rescue" the children, as he said, somewhat hyperbolically, to an audience of school students in Tokyo, from their "suffering at the hands of the school-master" (Bhattacharya 4), or from "the melancholy experience of his own schooling" (Pridmore 358), but also to offer a model of education that would incorporate Indian values and help produce enlightened individuals rather than clerks and factory workers, or people who

were fact-oriented, routine-oriented, mechanical and focused on success, power and profit but not imaginative, creative, loving, companionable and compassionate. Love was one of the basic principles of Tagore's education, because "From love the world is born, by love it is sustained, towards love it moves, and into love it enters" (*Sadhana*), he expressed in *Sadhana* and added in *Personality*, "It is absolutely necessary for [children's] mental health and development that they should not have mere schools for their lessons, but a world whose guiding spirit is personal love" (qtd. in Pridmore 365).

Tagore also emphasised the principles of freedom and free interaction with nature at his school. Freedom was vital for the holistic growth of the child, and interaction with nature would establish an intimacy between the child's inner self and the world outside; enhance their appreciation of the joy and beauty of existence. "I had never even tried to 'impose' my 'ideal' on you, believing firmly that each of you must develop in your own individual way" (Kupfer 208), Tagore wrote to his son Rathindranath. He didn't want education to stifle the natural curiosity of children and their individual perspectives on life with excessive school discipline and repressive attitude of teachers, like in the case of the parrot in Tagore's allegorical short story "The Parrot's Training," where the bird is captured from its "nest," forced into a cage, deprived of all freedom and subjected to a ritual of rote-learning that eventuates in its death. The mission of education should not be to "[force] upon the flower the mission of the fruit" ("The Schoolmaster" 505), but to let the child grow as a child, whose only love is life and "has no conscious object of life beyond living" ("The Schoolmaster" 505).

Tagore believed that the best teachers were "the lovers of men [mankind]" (*Letters from Abroad* 14). They could see the world from a child's perspective and "admit that children are children" ("The Schoolmaster" 504). In this context, in his memoir *On the Edges of Time*, Rathindranath recollects the teacher-student relationship he experienced at Santiniketan:

> All the teachers lived with us in the same dormitory, and we shared joys and sorrows equally amongst us. There was a wonderful feeling of genuine camaraderie. The teachers never resented the many practical jokes we played on them because they knew there was respect underneath the occasional harmless fun we indulged in. (46)

Tagore maintained a regular curriculum at his school which included teaching "Bengali, Sanskrit, English, arithmetic, history, geography and science" (Jalan 62), but his teaching method was different. He would allow the children to climb trees in the middle of their lessons or stop a lesson midway so that they could appreciate "the song of a bird in the branches overhead" (Pearson and Dey 58). He would also often take the students for excursions to nearby forests so that they could appreciate nature first-hand and establish an "intimate communion" with it (*My Reminiscences*). There would be no lessons in the evening as that was the

time for leisure activities such as songs, dance, music and acting—pursuits that would hone their intuitive faculties, cultivate their feelings and make them complete human beings. Tagore once said that he was "a poet first and a poet last" (Kumkum 2); his school was "A Poet's School" (Dutta and Robinson, "Rabindranath Tagore" 199); therefore, artistic activities occupied a significant place in his scheme of education. Art was the best way to beat the post-industrial preoccupation with money and matter and harness the creative, moral and spiritual aspects of people.

In the early years, Tagore's school had a distinctive religious and nationalistic quality to it as is evident from its very name "asram," which refers to a place of spiritual and religious retreat or a place where Hindus gather for religious instructions and meditations. Besides, Tagore introduced several religious activities for the students, such as recitation of the Upanishadic verses and meditation in the morning and afternoon. He also introduced the practice of "reverential bowing" or *pranaam* by students to their teachers as a way of showing their *bhakti* or devotion to a *guru* who was looked upon as a "personalized deity" ("Guru"). Moreover, Tagore still condoned the caste system at his school, seeing it as an "outcome of [a] spirit of toleration" (Basu 163) and got his students to follow the "caste regulations that involved living with their preceptors and practising a simple and austere life" (Chunder). As O'Connell maintains, during this period, Tagore's vision was "informed by nineteenth-century Hindu nationalism and revivalism" (O'Connell, *Rabindranath Tagore* 64).

However, Tagore gradually moved away from his early religious and nationalist attachments and increasingly became inclusive, multilateral, multicultural and internationalist in outlook. Of course, in spite of his early religious and nationalist inclinations, he was never dogmatic in his faith and remained a spiritualist in the tradition of Upanishadic mysticism all his life. Tagore explains this personal development and the development of his school with the analogy of a "ripening fruit":

> Because the growth of this school was the growth of my life and not that of a mere carrying out of my doctrines, its ideals changed with its maturity like a ripening fruit that not only grows in its bulk and deepens in its colour, but undergoes change in the very quality of its inner pulp. (Pritchard 104)

Tagore upgraded his school to a university on 23 December 1921, exactly twenty years after the inauguration of the school, often describing it as an "International University" or "world university," where he wanted to unite all cultures and harmonise knowledge from different parts of the world, to eventually

create, as he stated in his essay "An Eastern University, "[a] great federation of men… a unity, wider in range and deeper in sentiment, stronger in power than ever" (Bhattacharya 2). It became a manifestation of Tagore's increasingly global outlook or embodiment of what Nussbaum describes as cosmopolitan education, which she considers as Tagore's most important contribution to contemporary education. The university was founded with a Sanskrit motto, *yatra viswam bhavati eka-nidam*, taken from a Vedic text meaning "Where the world meets as in one nest" (Kripalani 267). Even before it was formally launched, Tagore knew exactly what he wanted to accomplish with it. In a letter to Nepal Chandra Ray, a fellow teacher at Santiniketan, he wrote as early as 3 November 1918, "Visva-Bharati will not be a mere school; it will be a pilgrimage. Let those coming to it say, oh what a relief it is to be away from narrow domestic walls and to behold the universe" (Bhattacharya 8). At least two famous alumni of the university, Satyajit Ray (1921-92) and Amartya Sen (1933-), have testified to this all-encompassing approach of Tagore's education at both the Santiniketan School and Visva-Bharati University. For example, Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen has the following to say about his education at the Santiniketan School:

> Academically, our school was not particularly exacting (often we did not have any examinations at all)… [b]ut there was something remarkable about the ease with which class discussions could move from Indian traditional literature to contemporary as well as classical Western thought, and then to the culture of China or Japan or elsewhere. The school's celebration of variety was also in sharp contrast with the cultural conservatism and separatism that has tended to grip India from time to time. (Sen, "Tagore and His India")

Likewise, in an article in *The Guradian* in 1991, Satyajit Ray had the following to say about his experience at Visva-Bharati:

> I consider the three years I spent in Santiniketan as the most fruitful of my life…. Santiniketan opened my eyes for the first time to the splendours of Indian and Far Eastern art. Until then I was completely under the sway of Western art, music and literature. Santiniketan made me the combined product of East and West that I am. (Sen, "Tagore and His India")

Tagore started his Sriniketan Institute as the Agriculture Faculty of Visva-Bharati, "near the village of Surul, within two miles of Santiniketan" (Das Gupta 137), only a year after the official opening of the University. Whereas the objective of the University was to produce enlightened members of society, equipped with the moral values of sympathy, compassion and self-sacrifice and initiate "tomorrow's history… with a chapter on internationalism" (Das Gupta

86), the purpose of the Institute was relatively more immediate, practical and, in Tagore's own phrase, "small" ("City and Village" 518). It was to, as Tagore explains in the *Visva-Bharati Bulletin* in December 1928, "to bring back life in its completeness into the villages making them self-reliant and self-respectful… and competent to make an efficient use of the modern resources for the improvement of their physical, intellectual and economic condition" (Das Gupta 135). It was to uplift the state of the village farmers who were increasingly being abandoned by the wealthier class for city life and who, in their elite status, saw these village people as "*chhotolok* meaning, literally, small people" (Das Gupta 133). Tagore wanted to "flood the choked bed of village life with the stream of happiness" through this village reconstruction programme and thus "retard the process of race suicide" ("City and Village" 518).

Like Tagore, Rokeya also started her first school with only five students, but while Tagore had an equal number of teachers, Rokeya was the sole teacher at her school. This became an immediate problem for the latter as Rokeya had never been to school herself and therefore had no experience in school administration or clue as to how one person could teach five pupils at the same time. "When I first began the school with five students, it seemed most surprising to me as to how one teacher could teach five students together and at the same time" (32), she recounted to her biographer Shamsun Nahar Mahmud. She was confronted with yet another problem at this time, which forced her to close down the school and move to Calcutta permanently. Rokeya was living in Bhagalpur, Bihar, during this period, where she had moved to live with Sakhawat's family after their marriage in 1896, and she continued to live there even after Sakhawat's death on 3 May 1909. Rokeya was Sakhawat's second wife, but their marriage was generally happy. However, when Rokeya, a childless widow,[4] decided to devote herself to something she had been passionately writing about since 1903, i.e., women's education, and founded a school with the bequest left behind for this purpose by her husband, it affronted Sakhawat's daughter by his first wife and her dogmatic husband. They could not simply accept the fact that Rokeya had inherited money from her husband and that she wanted to spend that money on the education of Muslim girls, both of which were unheard of in those days and considered blasphemous in many myopic Muslim circles.

Rokeya founded her school in Calcutta in 1911, this time with eight students, renting a small room at Waliullah Lane and named it after her husband, Sakhawat Memorial School for Muslim Girls. However, she was met with many challenges in running and developing the school, some of which are similar to Tagore's but many are unique to her only because she was a Muslim, a woman

---

[4] Rokeya gave birth to two baby daughters but both of them died early, one at the age of five months and the other at four months old (Quayum, "Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain" XXIII).

and a widow. For example, when Tagore started his school at Santiniketan, he didn't have to face any social resistance or stigma, because although the school was unorthodox—"a poem in the medium not of words," as Tagore described it in his essay "The Vicissitudes of Education" (Dutta and Robinson, "Rabindranath Tagore" 199)—there was nothing unconventional about giving education to boys. Of course, the school became co-educational in a few years (1909), but, again, since the Hindus and especially the *Brahmo Samaj* community were well ahead of Muslims in women's education, there was no social reprisal as such for this effort. Tagore had two advantages in this regard—he was a man and a highly talented and reputable one at that in a largely patriarchal society and he came from, as O'Connell maintains, "a distinguished family whose members were participants in three major revolutions affecting India: religious, cultural and national" ("Rabindranath Tagore on Education").

Thus, while Tagore's gender and his family background acted in his favour, Rokeya felt encumbered by both. She was vulnerable as a woman and more so because she was a widow. As a Muslim woman Rokeya was expected to live in strict purdah and submit to the male-centric norms of society; remain pliant, patient and obedient. Besides, as a widow, she was to remain totally invisible and voiceless, at the mercy of society. No agency on her part and active effort to educate and empower women would be tolerated by the hidebound segment of her community, and this is precisely what happened when Rokeya took up the mantle of educating Muslim girls. The religious zealots immediately launched a vitriolic campaign against her. Some accused her that "a young widow had set up a school only to show off her beauty to society" (Sufi 84; my translation). Others alleged that her "companions were prostitutes and the scum of society" (Bagchi x), and yet others went to the extent of branding her as "a whore and an embezzler of funds" (Gupta 28).

Another challenge for Rokeya was increasing the number of students and expanding her school. This became a serious impediment as the Muslim community, enshrouded in all kinds of disinformation, superstition and decadent ideas, was averse to the education of girls. There was a prevalent thought that education would result in widowhood for women, one that Tagore successfully encapsulates in his short story, "Khata" (The Exercise Book). Moreover, Muslims strongly believed that education would westernise the women and turn them towards Christianity; make them overbearing and arrogant towards men—charges that were labelled against Rokeya herself by some of her detractors. For example, one critic complained, "[To her] everything Indian is bad and everything Euro-American good" (qtd. in Tharu 342). Another suggested that Rokeya's works were influenced by the Madras-based Christian Tract Society and their publications on Indian reform (ctd. in Sufi 79). Yet another proposed that the whole purpose of Rokeya's writing was to persecute the men (ctd. in

Anisuzzaman 49). In Rokeya's short story "Souro Jagat" (The Solar System), when Gauhar, an enlightened father of nine daughters, shows eagerness to send his girls to school, his brother-in-law, Jafar, vehemently opposes it, fearing that this would turn his nieces into Christians. At another point, he sarcastically comments on the detrimental effect of women's education, "When ants grow wings, they like to fly; when women get education, they contradict and condemn men" (Quadir 88; my translation).

No doubt, Rokeya, like Tagore, had an inclusive imagination. Like Tagore, she believed that there was much to learn from the western history and culture, but, again, like Tagore, she spurned mimicry or mindless imitation of the West. Parroting another's culture would corrupt the native sensibility of the individual and diminish their sense of identity. In this regard, in her essay "Woman's Downfall," Rokeya affirms, "the purpose of education is not to blindly imitate a community or a race. It is to develop the innate faculties of the individual" (*The Essential Rokeya* 29). In "The Female-half," she chastises the Parsi women for renouncing their purdah practice, merely in imitation of the western way of life and without fully comprehending its consequence: "Now the Parsi women have come out of purdah no doubt, but have they overcome their mental slavery? Certainly not! What mark of their intelligence do we see in their act of renouncing the purdah?" (*The Essential Rokeya* 33), Rokeya contends. In the short story, "Nurse Nelly," she demonstrates the devasting ramifications of blind imitation of western practices in the character of Nayeema, a nineteen-year-old girl who, seduced by the "salvation-mongering" Evangelical missionaries, converted to Christianity and changed her name to Nelly, which ended up not only destroying her own life but her entire family.

Tagore's school had a religious character at the outset, but he gradually moved away from it to make it more multicultural and international. Rokeya's school remained largely religious till her death, and yet it also had a plural and international character to it. As mentioned earlier, Rokeya began her school particularly for the education of Muslim girls, to rescue them from the prevailing patriarchal interpretation of Islam. She believed that a proper religious education would help the Muslim women to understand their place in the religion, as Islam has granted certain rights and privileges to women, especially since Prophet Muhammad has made education mandatory for both men and women.[5] With this in mind, she introduced the teaching of Qur'an at her school, "not… senseless recitation of Arabic alphabets like a parrot" (*The Essential Rokeya* 130) but a true understanding of it through the reading of its vernacular translation. She also maintained a prayer room on the school premises, "with basins for ablutions for

---

[5] Rokeya reiterates this point in several of her essays, including "Bengal Women's Educational Conference" and "God Gives, Man Robs."

day scholars as well as boarders" (Gupta 29). Knowing that mothers wouldn't allow their daughters to study at Rokeya's school if the purdah norms were violated, she encouraged purdah for all girls and even bought several fully-curtained vehicles to ferry the students to school and back home. In fact, Rokeya herself maintained strict purdah both in and outside the school to convince the mothers that she was a faithful woman and not what the gossip-mongers spread about her.

In spite of Rokeya's emphasis on the religious aspect of the school, she maintained an inclusive, modern curriculum, where, among others, "maths… science, geography, history and public administration" (Gupta 28) were taught. In this regard, Fateha Khanam, a close associate of Rokeya, explains in a letter to the well-known Bengali writer Abul Fazal (1903-83): "Everything is taught in her school, from Qur'an recitation and its *tafsir* [exegesis] to English, Bengali, Urdu, Persian, Home Nursing, First Aid, Cooking, Sewing, and whatever else are essential for Muslim girls to learn" (Sufi 47; my translation). English was a compulsory subject at the school. Even "Extra-curricular activities like music and sports were included… and the girls were exposed to a diverse range of literary and cultural activities" (Gupta 28). For the latter, interestingly, students "staged Rabindranath Tagore's dance dramas, performed Sukumar Ray's plays, recited Ghalib's poetry, and sang songs of Kazi Nazrul Islam and Atul Prasad Sen" (Gupta 33). Moreover, although Rokeya's school was located in metropolitan Calcutta unlike Tagore's, she advocated "open air schooling as far as practicable" (*The Essential Rokeya* 171).

Rokeya believed in holistic education like Tagore. "We do not consider the pursuit of academic degrees as real education" (*The Essential Rokeya* 29), she writes in "Woman's Downfall," and adds that education should not be a mere "gateway to professional life" (*The Essential Rokeya* 28), although finding a "livelihood," to be "gainfully employed" was important for women in attaining their "freedom" (*The Essential Rokeya* 31). In "Educational Ideals for the Indian Girls," Rokeya further explains that education is not "mere book-learning" but a way to develop all the faculties of the individual, "physical, moral and mental" (*The Essential Rokeya* 171). In "Woman's Downfall," she argues this point more fully:

> God has given us hands, legs, eyes, ears, imagination and the power to think. If we strengthen our hands and legs through exercise, do virtuous deeds with our hands, observe attentively with our eyes, listen carefully with our ears, and learn to make our thinking ability more sophisticated through reflection, then that is true education. (*The Essential Rokeya* 29)

In "The Dawn," she contends, "By education, I mean wholesome education; the skill to read a few books or write a few lines of verse is not true education. I want that education that will enable them to earn their rights as citizens…. Education should cultivate both the body and mind" (*The Essential Rokeya* 137). In "Educational Ideals for Indian Girls," Rokeya goes on to suggest that since education is meant as "preparation for life" and "for complete living," students should be trained intellectually, physically as well as morally; "moral education [should] not be neglected" (*The Essential Rokeya* 171), she affirms. Moreover, education should harness both the modern and the ancient, the material and the spiritual, so that students develop a balanced awareness of the various competing forces in life and not lose their sense of identity as Indians while acquiring western knowledge. In this context, she writes:

> We must assimilate the old while holding to the new…. Our aim should be to harmonise in due proportion the two purposes, spiritual and secular, in the education we impart…. We should by all means broaden the outlook of our girls and teach them to modernise themselves… [but we should not sacrifice] the elements of good in [India's] age-old traditions of thought and method… [so that] a new educational practice and tradition may be evolved which will transcend both that of the East and West. (*The Essential Rokeya* 171-75)

There is a clear echo of Tagore in this statement, as Tagore also wanted to assimilate the secular and the spiritual, modern and traditional, East and West, in his educational vision and thus transcend all binaries and make it unique, edifying and all-round. On the constructive union of the East and West, Tagore for example wrote, "When the streams of ideals that flow from the East and the West and mingle their murmur in some profound harmony it delights my soul" (*The Religion of Man* 88).

Tagore started his school on a Vedic model, yet it was not "exclusively Hindu [even at the outset], since three of the five teachers were in fact Christian" (Pritchard 102). He also started enrolling Muslim students and invited Muslim scholars to be affiliated with his institutions not long after. This includes such famous Muslim writers/scholars as Hassan Shahid Suhrawardy (1892-1963), Syed Mujtaba Ali (1904-74) and Khan Abdul Ghani Khan (1914-96). Moreover, he introduced a chair of Islamic studies at Visva-Bharati in 1927, Persian Studies in 1932 and founded a Cheena Bhavan (Chinese Hall) and a Chinese Studies Department in 1937. In addition, as Tagore explains in "Ideals of Education," "[he] invited thinkers and scholars from foreign lands to let… boys know how easy it is to realise our common fellowship… and that it is the puny who with their petty vanities set up barriers between man and man" (612).

Rokeya's school also maintained a similar multi-faith environment from its inception. As Sarala Ray said in her obituary of Rokeya, "To her Hindu and Mahomedan had no difference" (Bagchi, "Towards Ladyland" 751). She ran the school "and even conducted all-male school managing committee meetings with the help of an educated, non-Muslim woman" (Gupta 29). She also had non-Muslim students and teachers at her school. When Sufia Kamal, a distant relative of Rokeya, was not allowed to enrol at her school despite Rokeya's personal appeal to her mother, she regretfully said, "I have my school—many girls study there, Hindu and Muslim, but the daughters of my relatives do not study there" (Bagchi, "Two Lives" 56). Likewise, in her memoir, *Ekale Amader Kal*, Sufia Kamal recollects, "Hindu, Muslim, and Christian girls all studied in Rokeya's institution" (Bagchi, "Two Lives" 56). According to Sufia Kamal, there were also several Hindu teachers, including one named "Maya" and "two British Christian women teachers at Rokeya's school… [and they remained there] till they were white-haired and old; one of them taught English, the other the piano" (Bagchi, "Two Lives" 57).

Tagore's school used Bengali as the medium of instruction from its commencement. He did so from his conviction that vernacular education was natural, whereas education in a foreign language was artificial. Vernacular education enhances the creativity of students; it helps them to comprehend their history and culture better, and keeps them away from raw colonial influences. By contrast, English education results in regurgitation and puts a wedge between the learners and their identity. It is with this in mind that Tagore wrote several Bengali textbooks for his school to replace those in English and asked his colleagues to do the same. Rokeya, however, used Urdu as the sole medium of instruction at her school for many years, much against her wishes. Like Tagore, she had a predilection for Bengali as it was the vernacular language of Bengal, but as Rokeya writes sarcastically in a letter to the editor of *The Mussalman*, "the purdanashin Mohamedan girls in Calcutta are not willing to learn Bengali even without fees" (*The Essential Rokeya* 178). Rokeya's family language was Urdu but her principal creative medium was Bengali (although she wrote several pieces in Urdu and English as well), therefore she tried, again and again, to introduce a Bengali section or at least Bengali as a subject in her school but her writings indicate that it remained an uphill task for many years as the Calcutta-based Muslims chose to speak Urdu, though often a corrupt version of it, only to assert their religious identity and differentiate themselves from Hindu Bengalis. Rokeya expresses her frustration against this strange custom in several of her letters and essays. In the same letter quoted above, for example, she caustically comments:

> I have been living in this town for the last seven years at a stretch, and during this long period, I had occasion to come in contact with a good many respectable Mohamedan ladies and I did not remember to

have heard Bengali spoken by any of them, even in cases where I found broken and miserable Urdu spoken…. They can speak only bad Urdu, but still, they must speak Urdu! (*The Essential Rokeya* 177)

In "Bengal Women's Educational Conference," she sounds even more vexed:

In running the Sakhawat Memorial School for the last sixteen years, I have come to realise that the Muslims in Bengal have no mother, that is, they have no mother tongue. They consider Urdu as their mother tongue, no doubt, but the mangled Urdu they speak tortures every tissue of the eardrum. (*The Essential Rokeya* 131)

Notwithstanding this encumbrance, Rokeya continued trying to introduce Bengali at her school and eventually succeeded in "the mid-1920s" (Gupta 31). In 1927 she successfully introduced a standard Bengali section side by side with the Urdu section (Nahar 701; Gupta 32).

For both Tagore and Rokeya, running their educational projects became a herculean struggle. They had to often strive to raise funds to keep the institutions afloat. For Tagore, the burden was more acute during the early years when his income was scarce but he wanted to provide free education to the children. In *On the Edges of Time*, Rathindranath recounts:

However simple, the strain on Father's resources to maintain the school must have been great. The institution had no income of its own besides the annual Rs. 1, 800 drawn from the Santiniketan Trust. For several years, students were not charged fees of any kind. They were given not only free education, but food and very often clothing as well. The whole burden had to be borne by Father, when his own private income was barely Rs. 200 a month. My mother had to sell nearly all her jewellery for the support of the school, before she died in 1902. (47)

After he won the Nobel Prize, Tagore frequently went on lecture tours to different parts of the world and the money he raised from these tours, "$700.00 a scold" (Sen, "Foreword" 23), he donated all to his school coffer. He also contributed most of his Nobel Prize money to the school fund and even urged Mahatma Gandhi to help him raise money.

For Rokeya, the problem remained serious throughout her life because the legacy she inherited from her husband was "not sufficient to meet the [school's] requirements" (*The Essential Rokeya* 175). She would often appeal "to the generous Muslim public to extend their helping hand" (*The Essential Rokeya* 175)

but to little avail. She noticed that the Muslim community was ungrudging in its support for the education of boys but remained apathetic when it came to the education of girls. This partial attitude of the affluent segment of her faith group infuriated Rokeya. It made her feel like a nuisance and a beggar. Therefore, from time to time, she would write to the editors of the Muslim led newspapers to ask for help, mixing it with a tone of indignation. For example, after her appeals for support in building a boarding house and buying a few transport vehicles for girls failed, she wrote to the editor of *The Mussalman*:

> I regret to say that the response to our appeal [for building a boarding house for girls] has not yet been adequate. After about a year's effort we are still short of the amount required for the purchase of the necessary materials by a sum of Rs. 280. Is this not enough to fill one's soul with a deep sense of shame and bitterness!
>   In this connection, I may be excused for mentioning that in order to add something to the Omnibus Fund, I advertised in your paper to sell some of my books at a reduced price for [a] month or so. But such is the public spirit and sense of appreciation of our cause by the members of our community that only Rs. 6 worth of books have been sold during the month of Ramazan!... You cannot banish all the females from your society, nor can you bury your daughters alive like the Arabs of the past. (*The Essential Rokeya* 176-77)

This lack of funds stymied the expansion of Rokeya's school as she had to turn down many applications from new students for the lack of purdah buses, and those from outside Calcutta for want of a hall of residence. Rokeya also spared no effort to obtain government grants but received them only on an *ad hoc* basis and sometimes "made conditional on our raising a substantial amount… from private sources" (*The Essential Rokeya* 176). Moreover, from 1927 onwards, she tried heart and soul "to get the government sanction a plot of land and funds for a school building" (Gupta 30), but with no success during her lifetime.

Tagore and Rokeya both gave their utmost to fulfil their educational mission, but it is Rokeya who dedicated her entire life to ensuring the success of her school. She remained in charge of the day to day running of the institution, from teaching, administration and soliciting of funds to everything else. She was so engrossed with the school that she almost abandoned writing for several years and produced little of significance from 1908 to 1922. This was undoubtedly a tremendous sacrifice for Rokeya, but perhaps worthwhile because education and empowerment of women was her ultimate goal. It is with such sustained and selfless effort that she gradually built her school. By 1915, the number of students increased to eighty-four, and the school was upgraded to an upper primary school. By 1927, the number grew to 149 and the school was elevated to a high school

with all ten grades. Rokeya also opened a boarding house for her school at this time to accommodate students who came from remote rural districts of Bengal. She moved campus several times to adapt to the increasing size of the school, and finally, in 1931, a year before her death, she rented a property on Lower Circular Road to house the school there.

Tagore extended his educational mission to mitigate the sorrow and poverty of Bengal villagers by establishing the Sriniketan Centre for Rural Reconstruction. Likewise, Rokeya established an association for Muslim women in 1916, Anjuman-i-Khawateen-i-Islam, to extend her literacy programme to the slum dwellers of Calcutta. She would get the volunteers to go from neighbourhood to neighbourhood and open adult education centres for imparting elementary education, especially to the widows and Untouchables. Their objective was to teach the women the rudiments of reading, writing, sewing, embroidery or matters related to child care or personal hygiene. They would also provide financial assistance to low-income families and help the mothers to marry off their daughters. In this regard, Sufia Kamal narrates how, when they would visit these slums to help out the women, sometimes the hostile men would prevent them from entering the area; sometimes, the Urdu-speaking Muslims thought that the Hindus had come to work with them (Akhtar and Bhowmik 267-68). While these volunteers, comprising both Hindu and Muslim women, went from door to door to uplift the condition of poor and disadvantaged women, they also sought to create a sense of sorority among them so that they could share their gendered experiences, and ultimately find a collective voice to fend off the patriarchal hegemony.

Tagore and Rokeya are two of the most outstanding figures in the annals of Bengali and South Asian literature and culture. They were also trailblazers in the field of education, although both of them were autodidacts, with little or no exposure to formal education. They came from the opposite spectrums of Bengali society—one a man, a Hindu *Brahmo*, from a culturally dynamic and progressive family, and the other a woman, a Muslim widow, from a culturally orthodox family. Yet they shared the same fervour about the role and importance of education in advancing their society and fought against all odds to execute their vision into reality. Tagore eventually built three institutions in Santiniketan which became a model of education that harnessed the local and global, urban and rural, nature and science, East and West and sought to bring people of all religions, cultures and colours into one nest. His institutions signified a new era of unity of humanity, rising above parochialism, sectarianism and xenophobia, which have been the greatest blight on our civilisation in the modern era. Rokeya, on the other hand, built her school with the singular motive of educating girls, especially Muslim girls, who she believed were the most hapless, luckless and tyrannised segment of the population. Her pioneering role as a "flaming feminist" (Glenza),

to borrow the expression of the late American Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg to describe herself, and dedicated efforts to uplift the condition of women through education has altered the course of South Asian history. As Sarmistha Dutta Gupta tellingly argues, Rokeya's repeated efforts to introduce Bengali at her school until she eventually succeeded in the mid-1920s and her recurrent reminders to Bengali Muslims to embrace their mother (Bengal) through their mother tongue (Bengali) and not cling on to Urdu which was an alien language to them, eventually became so inspirational to the Bengali Muslim women of East Pakistan that they took up a pivotal role in the Language Movement of 1952, when the Pakistani junta wanted to replace Bengali with Urdu as the country's lingua franca. This gradually paved the way for the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, through a bloody war that claimed nearly three million lives.

On hearing the news of Tagore's death, in a letter to Rathindranath, Italian physician and outstanding educator of the twentieth century, Maria Montessori (1870-1952) wrote:

> There are two kinds of tears, one from the common side of life, and those tears everybody can master. But there are other tears which come from God. Such tears are the expression of one's very heart, one's very soul. These are the tears which come with something that uplifts humanity, and these tears are permitted. Such tears I have at this moment. (Dutta and Robinson, "Rabindranath Tagore" 202)

Perhaps it will not be an exaggeration to say that Tagore and Rokeya are both deserving of such veritable tears for all that they did to enliven the circumstances of their community, not just as writers and reformists but also as educators who worked relentlessly to put their educational vision into action and change the socio-cultural landscape of South Asia and beyond.

Works Cited

Akhtar, Shaheen, and Moushumi Bhowmik, editors. *Women in Concert: An Anthology of Bengali Muslim Women's Writings, 1904-38.* Kolkata, Stree, 2008.

Anisuzzaman. "Narimukti, Samakal o Begum Rokeya" (Begum Rokeya, Women's Emancipation and Her Age). *Begum Rokeya: An Immortal Icon*, edited by Baby Maudud, Dhaka, Mawla Brothers, 2011, pp. 45-51.

Bagchi, Barnita, translator and editor. *Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain: Sultana's Dream and Padmarag*. New Delhi, Penguin, 2005.

Basu, Tapan. "Caste Matters: Rabindranath Tagore's Engagement with India's Ancient Social Hierarchies." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2012, pp.162-71.https://www-tandfonline-

com.ezproxy.flinders.edu.au/doi/full/10.1080/00856401.2011. 648910. Accessed 12 Nov. 2020.

Bhattacharya, Kumkum. *Rabindranath Tagore: Adventure of Ideas and Innovative Practices in Education*. Berlin, Heidelberg, Springer, 2014. SpringerBriefs on Key Thinkers in Education.

Bock, Carol. *Charlotte Brontë and the Storyteller's Audience*. University of Iowa Press, 1992.

Chunder, Rajarshri. "Tagore and Caste: From Brahmacharyasram to Swadeshi Movement." 19 Sept. 2018, https://www.sahapedia.org/tagore-and-caste-brahmacharyasram-swadeshi-movement-1901%E2%80%9307. Accessed 12 Nov. 2020.

Das Gupta, Uma, editor. *The Oxford India Tagore: Selected Writings on Education and Nationalism*. New Delhi, Oxford UP, 2009.

Dutta, Krishna and Andrew Robinson. *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*. London, Tauris, 2009.

---. "Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)." *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Educational Thinkers*, edited by Cooper Joy A. Palmer, London and New York, Routledge, 2016.

Glenza, Jessica. "'Flaming feminist' Ruth Bader Ginsburg Wants Five More Years – At Least." The Guardian, 30 July 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jul/29/flaming-feminist-ruth-bader-ginsburg-five-more-years-supreme-court. Accessed 7 Apr. 2022.

Gupta, Sarmistha Dutta. "From Sakhawat Memorial School to Rokeya Hall: A Journey Towards Language as Self-Respect." *Asiatic*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2013, pp 22-38.

"Guru." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/topic/guru-Hinduism. Accessed 21 Aug. 2021.

Hasan, Morshed Shafiul. "Rokeya o Tar Jagriti-sadhana [Rokeya and Her Struggle for Emancipation]. *Rokeya Rachanabali* [The Collected Works of Rokeya]. Dhaka, Uttaran, 2008.

Jalan, R.V. "Tagore: His Educational Theory and Practice and Its Impact on Indian Education." 1976. University of Florida, Gainesville. PhD dissertation.

Kripalani, Krishna. *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biography*. London, Oxford UP, 1962.

Kupfer, Christine. "Inside Out, Outside In: Thinking a Tagorean Future of Education." *Literature Compass*, vol. 12, no. 5, 2015, pp. 206-18.

Leser, Irena. "The Role of the Arts in Tagore's Concept of Schooling." *CEPS Journal*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2015, pp. 111-28.

Mahmud, Shamsun Nahar. *Rokeya Jibani* [The Life of Rokeya]. 1937. Dhaka, Shahitya Prakash, 2009.

Mustafa, Sabir. "Listeners Name 'Greatest Bengali.'" BBC News. 14 April 2014. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3623345.stm. Accessed 12 Aug. 2021.

Nahar, Miratun, editor. *Rokeya Rachanasamagraha* [The Collected Works of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain]. Kolkata, Bishwakosh Parisad, 2001.

Nussbaum, Martha C. "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism." *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, edited by Joshua Cohen, Boston, Bacon Press, 1996.

O'Connell, Kathleen. *Rabindranath Tagore: The Poet as Educator*. Kolkata, Visva-Bharati, 2002.

---. "Rabindranath Tagore on Education." *The Encyclopaedia on Informal Education*. http://www.infed.org/thinkers/tagore.htm. Accessed 12 Sept. 2021.

Pal, Sanchi. "Travel Tales: Exploring Tagore's Santiniketan, An Abode of Learning Unlike Any in the World." *The Better India*. https://www.thebetterindia.com/66627/santiniketan-rabindranath-tagore-bengal/. Accessed 12 Sept. 2021.

Pearson, W.W., and M.C. Dey. *Shantiniketan: The Bolpur School of Rabindranath Tagore*. New York, Macmillan, 1916.

Pidmore, John. "The Poet's School and the Parrot's Cage: The Educational Spirituality of Rabindranath Tagore." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2009, pp. 355-67.

Pritchard, Matthew. "A Poem in a Medium Not of Words: Music, Dance and Arts Education in Rabindranath Tagore's Santiniketan." *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education*, vo. 13, no.1, 2014, pp. 101-14.

Quadir, Abdul, editor. *Rokeya Rachanabali* [Complete Works of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain]. 1973. Dhaka, Bangla Academy, 1999.

Quayum, Mohammad A. "Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain: A Biographical Essay." *The Essential Rokey*a, edited by Mohammad A. Quayum, Leiden, Boston, Brill. 1913.

---, editor. *The Essential Rokey*a: *Selected Works of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*. Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2013.

Ray, Bharati. *Early Feminists of Colonial India: Sarala Devi Chaudhurani and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*. New Delhi, Oxford UP, 2002.

Samuel, Francis A. "Tagore's Vision of International Education: Relevance and Implications for Today." *The Educational Forum*, vol. 74, no. 4, 2010, pp. 347-56.

Sen, Amartya. Foreword. *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*, edited by Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge UP, 1997.

---. "Tagore and His India." *New York Review of Books*, 26 Jun 1997, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1997/06/26/tagore-and-his-india/. Accessed 21 Sept. 2021.

---. "Rabindranath Tagore." *The Nobel Prize*, https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1913/tagore/article/. Accessed 22 Sept. 2021.

Sufi, Motahar Hossain. *Begum Rokeya: Jiban o Shahitya* [Begum Rokeya: Life and Works]. Dhaka, Subarna, 2001.

Syed. Abdul Mannan. *Begum Rokeya*. Dhaka, Abosar, 2011.

Tagore, Rabindranath. *Letters from Abroad*. Madras, S. Gareson, 1924.

---. *The Religion of Man*. London, Allen and Unwin, 1931.

---. *The Religion of Man*. Boston, Beacon Press, 1961.

---. *Personality*. Madras, Macmillan, 1985.

---. "The Schoolmaster." *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. *Vol. III. A Miscellany*, edited by Sisir Kumar Das, New Delhi, Shahitya Academy, 1996, pp. 504-9.

---. "City and Village." *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. *Vol. III. A Miscellany*, edited by Sisir Kumar Das, New Delhi, Shahitya Academy, 1996, pp. 510-18.

---. "Ideals of Education." *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. *Vol. III. A Miscellany*, edited by Sisir Kumar Das, New Delhi, Shahitya Academy, 1996, pp. 611-14.

---. "The Educational Mission of the Visva-Bharati." *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. *Vol. III. A Miscellany*, edited by Sisir Kumar Das, New Delhi, Shahitya Academy, 1996, pp. 626-30.

---. "My School." *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. *Vol. III. A Miscellany*, edited by Sisir Kumar Das, New Delhi, Shahitya Academy, 1996, pp. 641-45.

---. *Creative Unity*. The Project Gutenberg EBook of Creative Unity, 2007, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/23136/23136-h/23136-h.htm. Accessed 23 Sept. 2021.

---. *My Reminiscences*. 1917. The Project Gutenberg EBook of My Reminiscences, 2007, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/22217/22217-h/22217-h.htm. Accessed 23 Sept. 2021.

---. "Ginni" (Housewife). *Galpaguccha* [Collected Short Stories]. Kolkata, Visva-Bharati, 2008.

---. *Sadhana: The Realisation of Life*. The Project Gutenberg EBook of Sadhana, 2013, http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/6842/pg6842-images.html. Accessed 23 Sept. 2021.

---. "The Parrot's Training." https://www.tagoreweb.in/Stories/english-stories-213/the-parrots-training-4018. Accessed 23 Sept. 2021.

Tagore, Rabindranath, and L.K. Elmhirst. *Rabindranath Tagore: Pioneer in Education*. London, John Murry, 1961.

Tagore, Rathindranath. *On the Edges of Time*. 1958. India: Visva-Bharati, 1981. 2nd ed., https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.45780/2015.45780.On-The-Edges-Of-Time_djvu.txt. Accessed 23 Sept. 2021.

Tharu, Susie and K. Lalita, editors. *Women Writing in India: 6000 B.C. to the Present*. Vol. 1. Delhi, Oxford UP, 1995.

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

Mohit Ul Alam*

Abstract

In early modern England, equivocation became a major area of debate between the reformers and the Jesuits. The reformers were Protestant, and the Jesuits belonged to that order of Catholicism, which upheld the act of equivocation as permissible in a crisis where speaking or maintaining the truth was difficult. In preparing this essay, I have depended substantially on two essays, one by Frank L. Huntley, entitled, "*Macbeth and the Background of Jesuitical Equivocation*" published in 1964, and the other, entitled, "English Epicures and Scottish Witches" (2006) by Mary Floyd-Wilson.[1] In the light of these two essays, I have argued in this paper that though Shakespeare used James's approved resentment of witchcraft, he was tactful enough to portray the witches as uniquely Scottish, thus vengeful and bitter, as opposed to the harmless English witches. Howell V. Calhoun differentiates between the Scottish witches, who like the Continental witches were eviler as opposed to the English witches, who were homely and comical.[2] Secondly, in conformity with James's low opinion about the Highlands people, whom he thought to be vulnerable to the influences of witches, Shakespeare shows Macbeth, being a Highlander too, to be likewise permeated by their influences. Lastly, the point I make is that Macbeth internalizes the equivocal quality of the witches to such a degree that he too can produce language in an equivocal sense, thereby becoming an agent free from the witches' clasp, and owning responsibility for his action. Thus, Macbeth becomes a tragic hero according to the Shakespearean code—which is, a character must be responsible for his action.

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

---

*Professor Mohit Ul Alam is a renowned Shakespeare scholar of Bangladesh. He was the Vice-Chancellor of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University for a full tenure, and is at present Dean of Arts and Social Sciences at Premier University, Chattogram.

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

[2] Howell V. Calhoun, "James I and the Witch Scenes in 'Macbeth'," in The Shakespeare Association Bulletin, October, 1942, Vol. 17, No. 4 (October, 1942), pp. 184-189. Published by Oxford University Press; Stable URL: http://www.jstor.com/stable/23675 195.

King James VI was already the king of Scotland, when Elizabeth, Queen of England died in 1603. She died heirless, and in two months' time of her death, her grand-cousin James was invited to ascend the throne of England as James I. James united the two kingdoms—Scotland and England into one country, and of the many things he did in his unionist spirit, one was his move to give the royal patent to the leading London playing company, Lord Chamberlain's Men, which, thereby, became 'The King's Men'. The company, feeling obliged to the new king--as many scholars speculate--engaged their supreme dramatist, Shakespeare, to write a play that would please the king.[3] So, *Macbeth* is largely a gratificationary play highlighting James's preferences. That Shakespeare, the foremost English dramatist of the time, had written a Scottish play was itself a pleasing fact for James. Henry N. Paul insists that the play was performed at the court in July-August 1606, when James's wife Queen Anne's brother King Christian IV of Denmark was paying a royal visit to England—a view not evidential, but upheld by such postmodern critics as Greenblatt.[4] And, secondly, Shakespeare included a scene in *Macbeth*, the Porter Scene, 2.3., that closely resonates with the happenings of the Gunpowder Plot. Thirdly, the character of Banquo, who is rather drawn in a positive light than he appears in Shakespeare's sources, Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1577 and 1587) must have pleased James as he claimed Banquo to be the founder of his (James's) Stuart Dynasty.[5] George Walton Williams says that if Shakespeare did not have the idea of writing a play for royal contentment, he would have, by the logic of the play, made Duncan's ghost return rather than that of Banquo: "I repeat the question: why is the ghost not the ghost of Duncan? The immediate answer to this question is that the ghost is the ghost not of Duncan but of Banquo because Banquo is James's ancestor."[6]

---

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

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

[5] A. C. Bradley has, arguably, said that in drawing Banquo's character nobly as was to be expected by the king, Shakespeare yet gives some streaks to his character, which would not have pleased the king: "He has acquiesced in Macbeth's accession, and in the official theory that Duncan's sons had suborned the chamberlains to murder him."
A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy,* Third Edition with a *new* Introduction by John Russell Brown (London: Macmillan, 1992), p. 339.

[6] Williams, p. 18.

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

Given this background of an unificationary zeal, we must say that while the resentment of the Jesuitical equivocation as crafted within the structure of the play (as the Porter's speech suggests) had pleased James and Shakespeare's Protestant audience at the time, equivocation, as a speech mode, paradoxically, fertilized the language of the play too. That is, while within the play's religio-political context it is correct to resent the equivocal language of the witches, this very language, however, patterns and formats the play's central character, Macbeth, and the overall verbal sphere of the play. The celebrated figurative language of the play dramatizes what Macbeth terms as, ". . . nothing is but what is not" (1.3.144). And this very amorphousness of the language is, as we will show, the key for Macbeth to realize his own self. By learning from the witches the potency of the equivocal language, he then unlearns it for himself, and by the time he reaches his life's end, he also reaches the berth where it is not anymore equivocation but rather non-equivocation that establishes his character as a tragic hero.

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

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

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

Robert Parsons, as Huntley reports, was a famous defender of Jesuitical equivocation. He presented a hypothetical situation to clarify the relevance of equivocation when one's life was in crisis. He asked Thomas Morton, Bishop of Durham that when a band of killers was assigned with the task of killing Queen Elizabeth, and they asked him, "'Where is the Queen? We are sent to murder her," what his reaction would be. If Morton told a lie, he offended God. If he told the truth, he became an accessory to the murder of his sovereign. So, he should equivocate by saying, "I know not," keeping the other half unsaid, which is "to the end of telling you." In this way, Morton deceived the murderers, but not God, who knew what was true. This equivocal utterance, however, rescued the life of the Queen from the murderers, and he could also save his life thereby. Such an utterance, Parsons argued, was not lying but an escape route.[9]

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

In 1584, Queen Elizabeth issued an order that Englishmen following Roman Catholicism should not stay in England for more than forty days if they wanted to escape death. In 1591, she warned people not to fall into the trap of Jesuits' 'false pretense of religion'.[11] William Warburton, an eighteen-century editor of Shakespeare, who was also an Anglican Bishop by profession, stepped aside from his editorial neutrality by annotating the word "equivocator" (2.3.9), as 'a Jesuit; an

---

[7] Huntley, p. 392.

[8] Huntley, p. 392.

[9] Huntley, p. 393.

[10] Huntley, p. 392.

[11] Huntley, p. 394.

order so troublesome in Queen Elizabeth's and King James the First's time."[12] But even the Catholics denounced the Jesuits at one stage. Pope Innocent XI denounced the doctrine of equivocation in 1679.[13]

Sir Edward Coke, who administered the trial of Father Garnett, while acknowledging his great learning in theology, said acrimoniously that Garnett was "a doctor of Jesuits, that is, a doctor of five DD's, as dissimulation, deposing of princes, disposing of kingdoms, daunting and deterring of subjects, and destruction."[14]

When Macbeth and Banquo encounter the witches (1.3) on the heath, the Third Witch says to Macbeth that he will be the next king: "All hail Macbeth, that shall be king hereafter" (1.3.50). According to Huntley, what remains unsaid is "if you are willing to commit murder"[15]. This unsaid part can also be related to the latent ambition of Macbeth to become the king. On the Third Witch's saying to Banquo, "Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none" (1.3.67), Huntley states that the unsaid part can be completed by "if Macbeth murders Duncan and you but not Fleance"[16], which Macbeth will do. The witches volunteered the first meeting with Macbeth, but the second meeting is initiated by Macbeth himself, which is a proof that Macbeth has become their victim. They do not prophecy this time but produce apparitions who make predictions. The Second Apparition says to Macbeth: "laugh to scorn / The power of man, for none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth" (4.1.79-80), which, as Hunley says, can be completed by "not counting a Caesarian section".[17] But Macbeth only believes what he hears, not paying attention to the possibility of a different meaning. He blithely declares: "Then live, Macduff: what need I fear of thee?" (4.1.81). And next, he hears the Third Apparition uttering, "Macbeth shall never vanquished be, until / Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill / Shall come against him" (4.1.91-93). Macbeth is complacent, and it does not yet dawn on him that a strategic army ploy might make the Birnam forest walk.

---

[12] Huntley, p. 390.

[13] Huntley, p. 390.

[14] Huntley, p. 390.

[15] Huntley, p. 397.

[16] Huntley, p. 397.

[17] Huntley, p. 398.

Huntley explains that the Birnam forest would not walk if only Macbeth omits the possibility of the wartime "exigencies of military camouflage."[18]

These examples of equivocations show that lies can be embedded in half-uttered lines, which Macbeth only realizes too late in life that he has been cheated by the witches all through: "I pull in resolution, and begin / To doubt th'equivocation of the fiend, / That lies like truth" (5.5.41-3). It can be imagined why both Elizabeth and James feared the equivocal potency of speech, particularly when endorsed by religion. For instance, Macbeth's realization here of the witches' equivocations as lying not only justifies the Porter's welcoming the equivocator to hell, but also comes in agreement with James's view of the nefarious powers of the witches. In 1590, while James was coming back to Scotland with his newly-married wife, Anne of Denmark, they survived a severe sea storm on the North Sea. James later on attributed the raising of the storm to the witches whose trial is known as the North Berwick Witch Trials, in which 70 persons, most of them women, were burnt on the stake being suspected as witches, and historical sources say that James himself interviewed many of the suspects. His book, *Daemonology* (1597;1603) was written after his traumatic sea journey to the North Sea, and critic Howell V. Calhoun quotes a sentence from the book, where the king says that the witches, "ought to be put to death according to the Law of God, the ciuill and imperial law, and municipall law of all Christian nations."[19]

James's view of the witches, however, has given scope to critics to draw a line of difference between the Scottish concept of witches and that of the English. Like Calhoun, whom we earlier mentioned as having told that the Scottish witches were aligned with the Continental witches,[20] Mary Floyd-Wilson argues that though Shakespeare wrote a Scottish play to gratify King James, he did not deviate from the general opinion held by the English against the Scots. Despite efforts at unification by writers like Bacon, Floyd-Wilson says that ". . . this did not change the fact that the more chauvinistic English writers characterized the Scots—particularly the

---

[18] Huntley, p. 398.

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

[20] Calhoun, p. 184.

Highlanders—as stubbornly uncivilized."[21] Though Shakespeare was aware of the English habit of despising the Scots, yet he was careful enough only to selectively portray King James's resentment of the Highlanders Scottish, who were held to be "intemperate barbarians, . . . godless, and . . . cannibalistic."[22] And both the Macbeths were Highlanders. Thus, Shakespeare's portrayal of the Macbeths could not hurt James's Scottish sensibility as he was not opposed to a negative portrayal of the Macbeths, who belonged to the Highlands.

Floyd-Wilson borrows a word, "passibility"[23] from Timothy J. Reiss to suggest that the witches were held elemental, that is to say, an inseparable part of the environment, and the Highlanders were susceptible to them: "People were embedded in extended circles of shaping forces that included one's diet, one's family, the state, the natural environment, and the cosmological spheres."[24] She further suggests that "the play's supernatural ecology rests on analogous conceptions of passibility and influence."[25] She then adds that "As Highlanders, the Macbeths' extreme passibility makes them especially susceptible to the elements."[26] In defining Macbeth's passibility she explains that even Macbeth's "resilient or hardened nature" as a soldier does not stop him initially from remaining "exceedingly passible—receptive to the witches' temptations, to Duncan's virtues, and to his wife's spirited rhetoric."[27]

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

---

[21] Floyd-Wilson, p. 207.

[22] Floyd-Wilson, p. 207.

[23] Floyd-Wilson, p. 197.

[24] Floyd-Wilson, p. 199.

[25] Floyd-Wilson, p. 201.

[26] Floyd-Wilson, p. 201.

[27] Floyd-Wilson, p. 201.

[28] See also Calhoun on the relationship between the witches and weather, p. 187.

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

As Macbeth rides the crest of success, King Duncan awards him the title of Cawdor: "No more that Thane of Cawdor shall deceive / Our bosom interest. Go pronounce his present death, / And with his former title greet Macbeth" (1.2.64-66). Duncan's meaning becomes equivocal as Macbeth will turn out to be the same betrayer as Cawdor was. So, Duncan's statement that "There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face" (1.4.11-12) is doubly ironical as he is again reposing his trust in the wrong man.

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

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

Hamlet's "To be or not to be" dilemma is refocused in Macbeth's first soliloquy, "If it were done, when 'tis done" (1.7.1-28), and the equivocal temper persists here in the hidden part now not remaining unstated, but rather stated. That is, speaking no longer like the witches, as because he has internalized the equivocal speech pattern,

---

[29] Floyd-Wilson, p. 200.

Macbeth does furnish the hidden part of the statement in this soliloquy. That is to say, the negative side of the mission of killing becomes clear to him, but it does not remain unuttered, but rather uttered. The assassination could be done if it were the only single act that would not have any consequence: "this blow / Might be the be-all and the end-all, here." (1.7.5) "Here" means the living world where there exists the court of law, where "the even-handed justice" (1.7.10) serves the same "poisoned chalice" (1.7.11) to the offender. So, the equivocal pattern stands thus: Macbeth would have killed King Duncan if the "judgement here" had not stood in the way. When Macbeth has internalized the equivocal system, he knows both the stated part and the unstated part. This realization may pose as a reply to Braunmuller's great question that if Macbeth had taken all action being influenced by the witches and Lady Macbeth, then how would he be a tragic character as he cannot own responsibility for his action![30] But if our argument is valid, we see that Macbeth has not only been permeated by the equivocation of the witches, he has also internalized it so much that he can own responsibility for his action, as he is filling up the unsaid or hidden part of the equivocal utterances. As much as Macbeth internalizes the pattern of equivocation, by so much he is freeing himself from the witches and from Lady Macbeth, and by so much he is becoming an individual to be held responsible for his action. That is, from a person acting under influences, Macbeth becomes an individual with the freedom of the will and makes rather a questionable use of it. In the same speech Macbeth evokes the famous image of the "naked new-born babe," (1.7.21) which, according to Cleanth Brooks, provides the equivocal metaphor of "pity" (1.7.21) that the loss of Duncan will arouse, and, of the "heaven's cherubin," (1.7.22) empowered with the divine power: "is Pity like the human and helpless babe, or powerful as the angel that rides the winds? It is both; and it is strong because of its very weakness."[31] The naked babe will let everybody know about the murder, and, in reaction, the sea of human tears will submerge the wind. So, from the earlier earthly equation between crime and punishment, Macbeth now connects the crime

---

[30] A. R. Braunmuller, ed. *Macbeth* (The New Cambridge Shakespeare, 1997; 2008), pp. 40-41: "If the prophecies are true before the play begins, or before Macbeth and Banquo hear them, or before Macbeth and Banquo have acted, where is the willed action that allows the audience to discover responsibility and hence to experience guilt? If Macbeth could never act otherwise, could *not* [sic] choose to murder Duncan, and if, putatively, Banquo could never resist thoughts of usurpation, 'the cursed thoughts that nature / Gives way to in repose' (2.1.8-9), where is the tragedy, the dire consequence of an ignorant or misunderstood act, of these events? If, alternatively, the prophecies only become true when they are enacted by responsible and hence arguably tragic and guilty human agents, how may they be called 'prophecies' at all?"

[31] Cleanth Brooks, "The Naked Babe and the Cloak of Manliness," in *Harold Bloom's Shakespeare through the Ages:* Macbeth, edited with an introduction by Harold Bloom, Volume Editor: Janyce Marson (New Delhi: Viva Books: 2010), p. 253.

with the heavenly disclosure. With such an arcane feeling that the murder will somehow be exposed, Macbeth says to his wife, "If we should fail?" (1.7.59). Lady Macbeth in an incredulous voice utters: "We fail?" (1.7.60) and then asking Macbeth to "screw your courage to the sticking place" (1.7.61) elaborates on her very practical plan of over-wining the "two chamberlains" (1.7.64) to send them to "swinish sleep" (1.7.68), and then smear them with Duncan's blood, and lay the knives on them to blame them as the killers (later on Macbeth will spread the fiction that they were suborned by Duncan's two sons, as they had fled the country), and then daringly confirms: "What not put upon / His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt / Of our great quell?" (1.7.70-2) And then finally, "Who dares receive it other, / As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar, / Upon his death?" (1.7. 78-80)

Though Lady Macbeth has earlier shown her passibility by inviting the evil powers to "unsex" (1.5.41) her "from the crown to the toe" (1.5.42) and turn her "milk for gall" ((1.5.49), here, in 1.7., however, she sounds unequivocal, without any trace of passibility. We can see through her equivocal speech, though she does not know that Macbeth has already hinted at the angelic powers that might introduce certain physiognomic traits by which Macbeth himself will advertise the crime.

If Macbeth has internalized the equivocal spirit, Lady Macbeth, after her initial passibility, rather gets over it since Duncan's killing and Macbeth's succeeding him on the throne, and remains outside the orbit of equivocation. That is why, from the regicide scene (2.2) onward the distancing between the murderer and his accomplice gets wider and wider with each scene. Apparently, there is no logical connection between committing a murder and hearing a spiritual voice, but Macbeth, after killing Duncan, does "hear a voice cry, 'Sleep no more / Macbeth does murder sleep'" (2.2.36-7), which with the support of Thomas de Quincey, I would suggest that it is the awakening of his conscience, which oxymoronically expresses the equivocal pattern that if somebody murders and feels bad, it means his conscience is waking up: "the knocking at the gate is heard, and it makes known audibly that the reaction is commenced; the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish."[32] De Quincy's 'reaction' in terms of this present essay, is the filling up of the other part of equivocation—if a murder is committed, it will not pay. However, this distancing between the equivocally impregnated Macbeth and the unequivocal Lady Macbeth is vividly clear in the following transactions between them. Macbeth's hands are

---

[32] Thomas De Quincy, "On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth"* in *Harold Bloom's Shakespeare through the Ages:* Macbeth, edited with an introduction by Harold Bloom, Volume Editor: Janyce Marson (New Delhi: Viva Books: 2010), p. 96.

stained with Duncan's blood, and he thinks "Neptune's ocean" (2.2.61) will not wash this blood clean, to which Lady Macbeth bluntly says, "A little water clears us of this deed" (2.2.68). The same kind of reaction that she will show in the Banquet Scene (3.4.), when Macbeth is utterly horrified by the vision of Banquo's ghost and falls into an extreme paroxysm, Lady Macbeth prescribes his distraught to be the result of fear that has produced "the air-drawn dagger" (3.4.57), and that has now made Macbeth address incoherently at something which is nothing but "a stool" (3.4.65). So, for Lady Macbeth the visionary dagger was Macbeth's mere hallucination, and Banquo's macabre ghost is merely objectified as a piece of stage prop. Her interpretation of course is realistically correct, but what is recognized in this expression is her failure simply to understand the trauma that flesh is heir to or the equivocal inseparability between words and things.

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

That Macbeth wants to know his future is also prompted by the fact that as he has internalized the pattern of equivocation, therefore, he must wish to have the unknown known to him. On their second meeting, the witches receive their guest with a newly-prepared broth[33] and cajole him into a spirit of bonhomie. Making a slight rearrangement, the witches produce no more predictions by themselves but invite their masters (in fact their subordinates), whom Macbeth, however, cannot ask any question. At the beginning of this paper, we showed how Macbeth missed out

---

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

on the equivocal meaning of the prophecies, and so we need not repeat them here, but we can add the fact that predictions now are made to cheat Macbeth once again. But he must still inquire as to know the exact shape of his future and whether the prophecy about Banquo's children will come true: "Tell me, if you art / Can tell so much, shall Banquo's issue ever / Reign in this kingdom?" (4.1.100-02). For Macbeth's satisfaction, they present a show of eight kings, the last with a glass in his hand, and then finally appears Banquo's ghost much to his irritation: "Thou crown does sear mine eyeballs" (4.1.112). And this presentation is done without any attempt at equivocation. A long line of kings passes before Macbeth's eyes to his great exasperation: "What, will the line stretch out to th'crack of doom?" (4.1.116) Then Macbeth understands, though cheated he was, that the witches also told him the truth: "Horrible sight. Now I see 'tis true; / For the blood-boltered Banquo smiles upon me / And points at them at his" (4.1.121-23).

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

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

And the very first Macbeth that we heard of in the beginning of the play—"Valour's minion" (1.2.19) makes, as if a circular movement and comes back to his old self: "I'll not yield / To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet, / And to be baited

---

[34] It is only one son mentioned in this scene (4.2), but in the next scene (4.3) Macduff wants to confirm from Ross whether Macbeth has killed all his children: "And all my children?" (4.3.1.78 with the rabble's curse" (5.8.27-29). And in the following line he dispenses with the last vestiges of his illusion of the absurd: "Though Birnam Wood be come to Dunsinane, / And thou oppos'd, being of no woman born, / Yet I will try the last" (5.8.30-2).

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

Works Cited

Bloom, Harold. *Bloom's Shakespeare through the Ages*: *Macbeth*, Viva books, New Delhi, 2010.

Bradley, A.C. *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 3rd ed, Macmillan, 1992.

Calhoun, Howell V. "James I and the Witch Scenes in *Macbeth*.'" *The Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1942, pp. 184–89. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23675195. Accessed 21 May 2022.

Clark, Sandra & Pamela, Mason. *Macbeth (ed), The Arden Shakespeare,* Bloomsbury, 2015.

Gaskill, Malcolm. "Witchcraft and Evidence in Early Modern England." *Past & Present*, no. 198, 2008, pp. 33–70. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25096700. Accessed 21 May 2022.

Huntley, Frank L. "Macbeth and the Background of Jesuitical Equivocation." *PMLA*, vol. 79, no. 4, 1964, pp. 390–400. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/460744. Accessed 21 May 2022.

Paul, Henry N. *The Royal Play of Macbeth,* Macmillan, 1950.

Rowe, Katherine. *Macbeth (1st ed.),* Cengage, 2012.

Williams, George Walton. "'Macbeth': King James's Play." *South Atlantic Review*, vol. 47, no. 2, 1982, pp. 12–21. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/3199207. Accessed 21 May 2022.

The gendered body in Manto's Stories

Nandini Chaudhary Sen, PhD*

"The Partition of the country and the changes that followed left a feeling of revolt in me ...when I sat down to write I found my thoughts scattered. Though I tried hard I could not separate India from Pakistan and Pakistan from India… My mind could not resolve the question: what country did we belong to now, India or Pakistan?"(Manto qtd. in Mahey 153)

Abstract

Saadat Hasan Manto (1912 -1955) was a realist and a humanist who has been compared to Maupassant for his art of story- telling. Manto, the quintessential feminist, portrayed women as heroes during the Partition pointing out that they were the ones who suffered the most heinous acts of that of being abducted, gang raped and separated from their families, and yet these women found compassion, patience and resilience in themselves to help build back the families from the rubble they had been reduced to. Manto was accused of obscenity which he had to defend in court and someone who defined the Progressive Writer's Movement. Manto described the female anatomy in great detail however, it wasn't in order to titillate. He merely recorded what he saw – a man lusting for the smell of the prostitute's armpit in "Bu", the violent intercourse in "Thanda Gosht", the hapless girl who has been subjected to multiple gang rapes trying to lower her shalwar when she hears the words 'Khol Do' in the story by the same name and the rare courage of Mozel whose naked body saves the lovers. This Paper will look at Manto's engagement with the female body chronicling his passionate commentary on the society he lives in.

Keywords: Manto, Gender, Body Politics, Short Stories.

Manto brought to centre the power and plight of the woman's body as he saw the Partition as a space which not only violated the sanctity of nationhood but as something which violated bodies of men, women and children who became collateral damages to the diabolic misdeeds of the politicians. The woman's body becomes the site of both rape and resistance at the same time in the game of nation-building. According to Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* "where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault 54). The women trapped in the meaninglessness of Partition are forced to pay for it with their bodies and in the Foucauldian sense, the bodies become the quintessential sites of resistance. Manto wrote in Urdu, he was a prolific writer of twenty -two short stories, a novella and film scripts. He wrote in the language of the masses using cuss words and slangs, casting his craft in realist mode. His language was that of the streets, shorn of any

---

*Dr Nandini C Sen teaches English at Bharati College, Delhi University, India. She was a Fellow at the prestigious Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. She is the proud recipient of the Charles Wallace Fellowship for Academic Research in London, the Ambassador for Peace Prize for her work towards educating slum dwellers, and the Write India award for her creative writing.

ornamentation and dished out in its rawest form resulting in a sense of deep unease on the part of the reader.

The Partition

The opening lines of the seminal book by Kamla Bhasin and Ritu Menon, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* emphasize the importance/horror of the Partition which divided people's lives into two distinct halves. In everyday parlance, the Partition was talked about as something that divided/disrupted lives. There was life before/after Partition. The Partition had not merely divided a nation-state but had divided every life it had touched into two sordid halves. "For a long time ever since we were children, it was a word we heard every now and again uttered by some adult in conversation, sometimes in anger, sometimes bitterly, but mostly with sorrow, voice trailing off, a resigned shake of the head, a despairing flutter of the hand. All recollections were punctuated with "before Partition" or "after Partition" marking the chronology of our family history" (Bhasin and Menon 56). The Partition of India was a significant event which saw the British India being divided into the Republics of India and Pakistan respectively. A worse saga written in blood and gore is yet to be orchestrated in the history of the fledgling countries as they were divided into two nations. Manto was extremely troubled by the Partition and his angst was reflected in the numerous stories he wrote castigating and critiquing the event. He was forced to leave Bombay, a city that he loved and which loved him back, and move to Lahore, a place where he could never settle in mentally. His love for Bombay, his friends and the film industry remained with him till the very end. The forced move to Lahore was fraught with trauma, a serious drinking problem and penury leading to his untimely death. However, the trauma of the Partition fuelled some of his brilliant literary works which continue to remind of the horrors of the times much after their maker had left the world.

The mindlessness of the Partition saw frightening massacres of at least a million Hindus and Muslims. Thousands of children were orphaned and left behind and around 75,000 to 1,00,000 women were raped and their families torn apart (Tiwari 55). The gendered study of the Partition entails the study of literature of the times along with the available histories in order to get a sense of the human tragedy of the times. The subaltern gender study of the Partition has seen significant scholarship – the notable scholars being Kamala Bhasin, Urvashi Butalia, Gyanendra Pandey, Ranabir Samaddar, Mushirul Hassan and many others who emphasise the role of memory in recreating the historical event.

The significant literary works coming from the likes of Saadat Hasan Manto, Khushwant Singh, Bhisham Sahni, Krishna Sobti, Chaman Nahal, Qurratulain Haider among many others chronicle the suffering and trauma without seeking to be didactic. In many senses, the literary output of the times paints a larger picture of the trauma, displacement, horror and untold suffering that the people were forced to endure due to the mindlessness of a political act. The greatest sufferers were the women whose bodies rendered them as pawns over which the lines of the Partition were drawn.

The gendered body politic

The complex relationship between the woman's body and nation-building has been played out in all parts of the world and the Partition saga was no different. Blatant politics and fetishization of the body remained at the heart of the man-made disaster and it can be safely argued that all the communities – Hindu, Muslim and Sikh brought into the colonial and the nationalist discourse where a woman is treated as a cultural repository and her virginity or the loss of it as a marker of triumph or defeat as the case might be. According to Jisha Menon,

> When British India was partitioned into India and Pakistan in 1947, the violence between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs was enacted upon the bodies of the women of all three communities. Official numbers of abducted women during Partition are 50,000 Muslim women in India and 33,000 Hindu and Sikh women in Pakistan. The multiple forms of sexual violence included inscribing tattoos on their bodies, parading them naked in sacred spaces like temples, mosques, gurudwaras and cutting their breasts off. Sometimes families traded their women in exchange of freedom, at other times women were urged to take their own lives in order to protect communal 'honour.' Many women simply disappeared. The symbolic elevation of 'woman' as the embodiment of the sanctified, inner recesses of culture and tradition ironically positioned real women as targets of violent assertions of family, community and nation. (30)

The societies were innately patriarchal with several instances of female mortality even as a girl child was born. Anjali Bhardwaj Dutta in her essay titled "Gendering Oral History of Partition Interrogating Patriarchy" talks of the Punjabi community where female infanticide was rampant. She cites the example of how when a daughter was born, the mother would forcibly harden herself and face the wall even as the nurse/ midwife killed the newborn child. She quotes Heera Lal Chabra who had witnessed the burial of two of his sisters. "I was all of eight to 12 years, when I remember accompanying my father for the burial of my sisters, whom I now suspect were poisoned by my mother with the milk of 'Ak' tree. Having daughters was like incurring a lot of expenditure.

My father had a small shop in Rawalpindi, probably he could not afford a decent marriage for them. Moreover, you have to be so protective towards a daughter... anyway after their death, nobody ever talked about them and we told everyone they had died of illness." An oft quoted proverb at such a burial would be "Gur Khaien, powneekuttenn, Aapnaaieen, bhaiyanghulleen (Eat your raw sugar, and spin your thread, but go and send a boy instead.)" (Dutta 2230). Dutta however, goes on to argue that in the strife torn Partition times, the women did enjoy some agency since the regular patriarchal normative family structure had been disrupted temporarily.

The history of Partition in the official historical versions discusses the displacement in terms of numbers which was anything upward of 2 million people who were forced to leave their homes and find shelter elsewhere. About a million were raped, maimed or slaughtered. It was a massacre which can only be compared to the holocaust. The trauma of the Partition was such that even recreating memories is exceedingly painful. According to Urvashi Butalia,

> The violence that women faced in the aftermath of Partition is shrouded in many layers of silence. If in historical accounts we hear little about the rape and abduction of women, what we do know about violence in general relates only to men of the "other" community. There is seldom, if ever, any acknowledgment (except perhaps in fiction) that Hindu and Sikh women could have become the targets of Hindu and Sikh men. Yet in the upheaval and the disruption of everyday life, Hindu men could hardly have become miraculously innocent. One of the myths that survivors increasingly- and tenaciously-hold on to is how communities and families stayed together in this time of crisis: how then can they admit to such disruption from the inside, and by their own members? (47-48)

Butalia recounts the story of one Mangal Singh who had come to Amritsar with barely no possession of his own. His family in Pakistan had been a joint family of three brothers, their wives and numerous children. Mangal Singh was said to have killed several members of his family. When he finally opened up about it, he likened the killings to that of martyrdom. It was better to die than live and fall prey to men of other religions. Butalia quotes Mangal Singh mourning the lives of seventeen members of his family who had supposedly "offered themselves" up for killing rather than be dishonoured.

> Fear? Let me tell you one thing. You know this race of Sikhs? There's no fear in them, no fear in the face of adversity. Those people [the ones who had been killed] had no fear. They came down the stairs into the big courtyard of our house that day, and they all sat down and they said, You can make martyrs of- we are willing to become martyrs, and they did. Small children too.

> what was there to fear? The real fear was one of dishonour. If they had been caught by the Muslims, our honour, their honour would have been sacrificed, lost. It's a question of one's honour ... if you have pride, you do not fear. (49)

In times of extreme strife, the discourse had shifted from saving lives to saving the 'honour' of the women. This led to mass suicides and even killings by one's own people. The myths of communities rallying together were untrue as was the reluctance to talk about these events. The trauma continued to remain bottled up long after the gruesome events had unfolded. The trauma, thus, became a part of the psyche, a story that was never to be told.

Manto, the Story Teller

Manto's storytelling is intensely humanistic as well as realistic. Unable to make sense of the Partition, Manto expressed himself through his stories, acutely conscious of the difficult times he was living in. The stories are, however, not of despair or anguish but a stark depiction of life exactly as he was experiencing it and, in the process, what remains with the reader is the deep humanist values with which he depicts all his characters. The greatest part of his writing comes between 1936 and 1955 – the years beginning with the Amritsar massacre in 1919 and the Partition in 1947. In his two hundred odd stories, he paints a vignette of human trauma – there are no oppressors or oppressed in his stories, merely humans who are victims of the times they are living in, where sanity and madness go hand in hand and where all the values the human beings cherished have come to naught. The stories are dark and vile, calling out for attention and depicting a world which had retreated into insanity.

Manto was born to a Kashmiri Muslim family on 11th of May 1912 in Samrala in Punjab district. His early education was at Muslim School in Amritsar. He was a young lad when the Jalianwala Bagh massacre took place. Manto was influenced by the Communist ideology and looked at Bhagat Singh as his inspiration. He was to later find himself at the Aligarh Muslim University where he participated actively in the Progressive Writers Movement. Although he spoke in Punjabi, he chose to write in Urdu. His writing earned him severe notoriety and he was dragged to court over obscenity charges. Post Partition he was forced to move to Lahore, a city he could barely call his own. While his fame as a writer grew, his personal life was fraught with penury and a severe drinking problem. Manto died at a very young age of forty-three unable to survive what he called a 'dual existence' and living in exile from the city and people whom he had loved. The last years of Manto's life from 1948 to 1955 saw the birth of 127 stories which are some of the very best in his literary career.

However, the stories rarely fetched any money in his lifetime and caused him severe mental trauma due to the numerous court cases he was forced to fight.

Siya Hashiye (1948) is Manto's portmanteau of Partition tales. The stories are short, pithy – some barely a few lines long. The brevity of expression and complete lack of emotion in the narration adds to the sordidness of life and times. Manto does not judge, he merely reports, his sympathy lies with both the perpetrator of violence as well as the one at the receiving end. He pegs this as the bitter fruit of the times which had rendered millions homeless and had seen the worst genocide which is comparable only to the Holocaust horrors. However, in these feverish outpourings of grief, anger, helplessness and disgust is also seen Manto's immense empathy for the women who were caught in a maelstrom which they had no hand in making and being subjected to physical assault, rape and death as part of the nation-building enterprise. In one of his essays titled "A Question is produced", Manto talks about the woman question in Pakistan.

> Should women cover themselves?
> If yes, what about nurses?
> Should women wear their hair in one pigtail or two?
> Is it fine for women to walk confidently?
> Should women mount a horse wearing a shalwar or a sari?...
> One question that's produced in the minds of our leaders concerns the 50,000 girls who were left behind during Partition and are being used by the enemy. The leaders have been troubled by this for nine months. It's possible that along with the question of these 50,000 girls another 50,000 little questions will be produced (in fact a few thousands might already have been produced) (Manto qtd. in Patel 100)

"The Return"

Manto's famous "Khol Do" literally meaning 'open up' has been translated as "The Return" by Khalid Hassan. 'The Return' deals with losing and finding young Sakina during the riots. It is a brief story wherein the father happens to lose his daughter during an effort to flee the land. The story begins abruptly mirroring the confused state of the father as he gains consciousness after being attacked. "Then his eyes moved and, suddenly caught the sun. The shock brought him back to the world of living men and women. A succession of images rushed through his mind. Attack… fire…escape…railway station…night…Sakina. He rose abruptly and began searching through the milling crowd in the refugee camp" (Manto 8). When Sirajuddin's head clears up, he remembers the events leading up to the present situation. He had seen his wife being butchered; her stomach cut open brutally who had begged before being attacked that Sirajuddin should flee along with Sakina.

The father and daughter had run for their lives only to be attacked again. Somehow Sirajuddin had managed to find himself on the other side of the border but Sakina had gone missing. Sirajuddin had approached a group of men who had volunteered to bring the women from the other side of the border. Seeing their zeal for rescuing women, Sirajuddin had been hopeful as he was sure that the young men would somehow manage to find his daughter. It is this hope that kept him going. The men continue to assure Sirajuddin that their search is on and Sakina will be found. One day he sees a woman being carried into the camp hospital who looks as good as dead. He recognises her to be his daughter but is not sure whether she's alive or dead.

The doctor looked at the prostrate body and felt for the pulse. Then he said to the old man, pointing at the window, 'Open it'. The young woman on the stretcher moved slightly. Her hands groped for the cord that kept her shalwar tied around her waist. With painful slowness, she unfastened it, pulled the garment down and opened her thighs. "She is alive. My daughter is alive,' Sirajuddin shouted with joy. The doctor broke down into a cold sweat" (Manto 10). The story is hard-hitting and Manto keeps it conversational and non-judgemental. The men who had sworn to protect Sakina had raped her continually till the girl had been reduced to a corpse and she had been dumped on the railway track and left to die. The act of Sakina loosening her shalwar drawstrings is juxtaposed to the father's innocence and love as he rejoices at seeing her alive. The shock value and pathos are brought home through the last line as the doctor is seen breaking into a cold sweat.

"Colder than Ice"

'Thanda Gosht' literally meaning cold meat is one of Manto's sordidly hard -hitting stories depicting the horrors of Partition where an arsonist is rendered impotent when he realises that he has raped a dead woman. Ishwar Singh and Kalwant Kaur are lovers, their lovemaking is depicted in coarse everyday terms. While Singh is the quintessential macho man, Kalwant is every bit the hardy Sardarni who enjoys their lovemaking to the hilt. The foreplay is discussed in coarse, lewd terms: "Kalwant Kaur's upper lip began to quiver. He peeled her shirt off as if he was skinning a banana. He fondled her naked body and pinched her arm. 'Kalwant I swear by the Guru, you are not a woman, you are a delicacy', he said between kisses (Manto 19). Kalwant is burning with desire but Ishwar is unable to perform. In a rage, she attacks him convinced that there is another woman who is at the root of this malaise. Ishwar confesses to his having had another woman, an extremely beautiful woman who he had carried off after murdering six members of her family. Ishwar had joined a gang of arsonists, looting and plundering with great abandon bringing his spoils to his beloved Kalwant. The killings and the deaths seem to have no effect on the couple – a chilling reminder to the fact that this had become the norm in the cruel times of the Partition:

"When they began to loot the Muslim shops and houses in the city, I joined one of the gangs. All the cash and ornaments that fell to my share, I brought back to you" (Manto 21). Kalwant had worn the ornaments and had posed for her lover but when he went away suddenly without making love to her, she realised that something was seriously amiss and she insists upon him telling her what was the matter. Ishwar recounts the macabre story with great difficulty. He talks about the killings with reasonable ease which makes it all the starker and horrific: "There was this house I broke into… there were seven people in there, six of them whom I killed with my kirpan one by one… and there was one girl…. She was so beautiful… I didn't kill her… I took her away" (Manto21). Ishwar Singh carries the girl on his shoulders thinking that she had fallen into a dead faint and mesmerized by her beauty, he decides to make love to the unconscious girl. "…then I laid her down on the grass, behind some bushes and…first I thought I'd shuffle her a bit… but then I decided to trump her right away" (Manto 21).

The story ends starkly with Ishwar Singh confessing to his horror upon realising that he had tried to rape a dead woman: "'She was dead… I had carried a dead body…a heap of cold flesh…jani, give me your hand.' Kalwant Kaur placed her hand on his. It was colder than ice" (Manto 21). Interestingly Manto does not pass any judgement and the reader is forced to empathise with Ishwar Singh, a man who has murdered, attempted rape and whose manhood has been decimated after his attempt at raping the dead body.

Mozel

Mozel is the story of a Jewish girl who sacrifices her life trying to save a Sikh girl during the riots in Bombay. The story is both blatantly sexual as well as extremely irreverent as far as religion and religiosity are concerned. Mozel is described in overtly sexual terms, right from the outfit she wears to her purported ease around men: "She wore a loose gown out of the neck of which showed at least three fourth of her big, blue-veined breasts. Naked arms were covered with fine down as if she had had a haircut in a saloon and the soft fine hair had blown onto her arms" (Narang 113). Mozel was nothing like any woman Trilochan had known before – she was assertive, outspoken and completely irreverent, smoking like a chimney and flirting indiscriminately. She deliberately mocks him for being a Sikh, something Trilochan loathes. From the hair to the wearing of the underwear is an object of ridicule for her but even though she sounds irreverent, Trilochan knows in his heart that she puts on an act. She allows him to fondle her but does not allow anything beyond that. Trilochan finds himself hopelessly in love with this taciturn girl, allowing her to change his ways. He shaves off his hair and beard in a desperate attempt to please her. She promises marriage but runs away on the scheduled day. This was the last straw for Trilochan who continues to nurse a deep grudge against her but allows himself to fall in love with a Sikh girl who happens to be the exact opposite of Mozel:

"Kripal Kaur who was a pure girl and with whom he was in love, was in danger" (Narang120). The story plays around Mozel's irreverence towards Trilochan's faith, right from ridiculing his overgrown hair and beard to the underwear he wears: "Don't talk to me like this… you are a Sikh and I know that you wear under your trousers a silly looking underwear that resembles knickers. Like your hair and the beard, this too is part of your religion… you should be ashamed of yourself. You are a grown up person and can not understand even this much that your religion is hiding itself in your underwear" (Narang120).

During the riots Trilochan finds himself in a quandary. His new found love is stuck in a nearby building where there is a strict curfew and a lot of bloodshed has been reported in the area. It is at this stage that Mozel reappears in Trilochan's life again and coaxes him to go with her in order to save the girl. A frightened but desperate Trilochan follows Mozel into the curfew induced area where she talks her way into the building, bribing the police officer with a cigarette and playing her Jewish identity to the hilt. Once inside Kripal Kaur's house, Mozel takes off her loose gown and puts it on the terrified girl. She remains stark naked as she puts her robes on Kripal Kaur and forces Trilochan to escape with her: "Mozel took off her loose gown and put it on Kripal Kaur. As for herself, she stood there absolutely naked. Quickly she loosened the drawstring of Kripal Kaur's salwar, pulled it down and said to Trilochan, 'Go take her…'" (Narang 129). She goes on to create a distraction by running up the stairs allowing for Kripal to escape. In the end, when Mozel is lying in a pool of blood, Trilochan makes an attempt at covering her body. The ever-defiant Mozel rejects being covered by Trilochan's turban: "Mozel removed Trilochan's turban from her body. 'Here, take it… this religion of yours…' and her arm fell listlessly on her breast (Narang 131).

Conclusion

Manto remained a true chronicler of the world which he was witnessing – a world divided by religion, boundaries and politics of hate but united by kindness, humanity and love. It is this that found its way into his storytelling where the author's role remains that of a reporter rather than a commentator. However, in spite of the deliberate distancing what shines through is Manto's immense love for his fellow beings making him the conscience keeper of his times. Manto is especially sensitive to the women as they are twice colonised and marginalised within the patriarchal, religious and riot-driven world of the Partition. Whether it is the raped and battered Sakina or the ever-challenging Mozel, Manto's women characters invariably play out with their bodies which remain synonymous to the nation which is in the throes of a painful division.

The sexualised depictions which landed Manto in the court of law is a natural coming together of his realism coupled with the ethos of the Progressive Writer's Movement. The contradictions of the times he lived in is best summarised by Manto in an essay titled "Story teller and the Problem of Sex" where he writes,

> If you notice an increased concern about the man – woman relations then it is very natural. Nations can be separated from nations on political grounds, one religion can be separated from another religion on the basis of faith, law can force asunder two pieces of land but no politics, no faith, no law can separate man from woman.

> Every age would try to fill the gap between man and woman, every age, every measure of time has tried to preserve or destroy the wall between man and woman. Those who consider this relationship as nakedness should be sorry for the nakedness of their own awareness. Those who weigh it on the measure of tradition, should know that tradition is nothing but a kind of rust that has covered the knife of society. (Manto qtd. in Narang 215)

Works Cited

Butalia, Urvashi. "from The Other Side of Silence." *Manoa*, Vol. 19, no. 1, 2007, p. 41-53. *Project Muse*, doi:10.1353/man.2007.0034.

Datta, Anjali Bhardwaj. "Gendering Oral History of Partition." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 41, Issue 22, 2006, pp.2229-2235.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Pantheon Books, 1997.

Mahey, Arjun. "Partition Narratives: Some Observations." *Translating Partition*, edited by Ravikant and Tarun K Saint, Katha, 2001, pp. 135-58.

Manto, Saadat Hasan. *Mottled Dawn*. Penguin Random House, 2011.

Menon, Jisha. "Aur Kitne Tukde." *Feminist Review*, No. 84, Oct. 2006, pp. 25-47.

Bhasin, Kamala and Ritu Menon. *Borders & Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*. Kali for Women, 1998.

Narang, Harish. *Manto, My Love.* Sahitya Academy, 2016.

Patel, Aakar. *Why I Write: Essays by Saadat Hasan Manto*. Tranquebar Press, 2014.

Tiwari, Sudha. "Memories of Partition: Revisiting Saadat Hasan Manto." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 48, No.25, 2013, pp. 50-55.

A Critical Understanding of a Bangladeshi Caste Narrative

Panna Majumder*

Abstract

Caste narrative by a Dalit is not common in Bengali literature. But that does not cancel out the presence of casteism in Bangladesh. In the post-independence Bangladesh Harishankar Jaladas renders a historical service to the 'low caste' people by narrating their fundamental mode of living soaked with non-recognition, caste shaming, anxieties and insecurities which are originally crafted through a Brahminism-scripted chaturvarnic order. An insider of the 'low caste' fishing community Harishankar Jaladas recalls both the savoury and the unsavoury memories in his life narrative, *Nonajole Dubsantar* (2018), the textual base for this research article. The casteist interrogations and exclamations made in this text by the larger society and the responses by the author frame out this research thematically. The research focus is to make an attempt to critically analyze some of the concerns surfaced in this personal narrative in the form of tensions which will be exploited for facilitating the understanding of the politics of caste narrative and familiarizing the salience of the said narrative to the readers.

Key words: caste narrative, low caste, chaturvarnic order, unsavoury memories, politics of caste narrative.

Introduction

Jaladas' life narrative offers a cluster of concerns relating to caste. An approximate exhaustive list might include Dalit self-writing, caste violence, caste humiliation, systematic subjugation, transacting and negotiating caste identity, casteism and economic mobility and untouchability though it is by no means a list to demarcate what is caste and what is non-caste narrative. Caste narrative primarily focalizes caste with its sure byproduct, untouchability exhibiting a comprehensive image of all the auxiliary tools devised by Brahminical establishment to bolster a divisive chaturvarnic order of caste super-ordination and subordination. The narrative selected for this research paper is by a Bangladeshi Dalit writer, Harishankar Jaladas whose life narrative *Nonajole Dubsantar*('Faring through ordeals') (2018) will be inquired with criticalities so as to form a critical insight to understand the politics of caste narrative. A unique reality to Hindu society, casteism, as Louis Dumont finds, can be characterized as separating, divisive and hierarchical: "*separation* in matters of marriage and contact, whether direct or indirect (food); *division* of labour, each group having, in theory or by tradition, a profession from which their members can depart only within certain limits; and finally *hierarchy*, which ranks the groups as relatively superior or inferior to one another"

———————————————
*Panna Majumder teaches in the Department of English, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet, Bangladesh.

(21). The segmental focus of this paper roughly coincides with Dumontian observation as the projected caste tensions stretched in three segments namely untouchability, humiliation and upward mobility are essentially an eventuality of a divisive politics jealously followed and maintained by the Brahminical system which can be held responsible for the crisis and responses from a casteist socio-cultural milieu.

Untouchability

Caste narrative triggers a widespread reassessment of Brahminism-instigated Savarna establishment, a comprehensive order to hierarchize the Hindu society on four varnas ascribing different roles and rights to each. To focus on this, I will narrow down the discussion to the notion of untouchability which will be further narrowed down to "Hereditary Untouchability" (Ambedkar), a shastra-backed belief that a particular caste is permanently polluted. Originally prepared by the Government of India in 1935 B. R. Ambedkar\s exhaustive state-wise list mentions the fishing community of Bengal ('*Jalia Kaibartta*') as a schedule caste and so one of the castes stigmatized with 'hereditary Untouchability'. Jaladas, a *Kaibartta*, becomes a living and permanent pollution by default. Marginal literature focusing casteism typically records instances of untouchability and as a linear approach, Jaladas' *Nonajole Dubsantar* incorporates dehumanizing experiences on the part of the untouchables gushing out of 'untouchable' stigma. The command of stigma relating to touch is so immediate and effective that the relational aspect ceases to hold appeal before a case of untouchability. To elucidate the criticality associated with touch two instances can be cited. Conversation between the author's childhood friend, Nepal Chowdhury and his father adequately informs us of how the evil of casteism in the form of 'hereditary Untouchability' runs across generations:

> The Nepals had a piece of land adjacent to our homestead. While working with his father in the land he would feel thirsty. He would ask, 'Baba, I am thirsty. May I go to Harishankar's house? May I have water there?' His father would raise eyebrow…. A custom-blind as Nepal father was he would say, 'What do you say, my son? How on earth can you have water from a fisherman's house? We are Hindu. We cannot take water from their touch.' (186)

Before we critique untouchability let us take the second instance. Once the author along with his friend Nepal Chowdhury spent some nights at Nironjon Mallik's village house. Nironjon Mallik was the newly-appointed assistant teacher at the Patenga Board Primary School and happened to make friendship with Nepal and thereby came to know the author. However, they were received warmly at Nironjon's house. Years passed and once the author came to know from Nepal Chowdhury what happened afterwards:

> After we left their house Nironjon shared the piece of information that you are not a Hindu; you are a fisherman. This infuriates her. …She said, 'you bring people home from low caste. He dined with us; he used the quilt.
> Nironjon Babu's mother was old. She has none but Nironjon to help. Knowing that I was a fisherman's son she took my used quilt and shawl to wash in the pond in that winter. Exhausting as the work was she did wash all by herself. Only then she looked happy for the purifying act. (187)

In a routine exercise of the caste-ascribed role both Nepal Chowdhury's father and Nironjon Mallik's mother screen the polluted from the non-polluted and feel complacent in their role. The caste-ethos reaffirms the Brahminical tenet that "The touch of the Untouchables causes pollution at all times" (Ambedkar). So the sneering comments by Palash Majumder and others at Jaladas' authorial ambition (190) can be understood in the context of an all-time-polluted status.

Touch in Brahminical order signifies decisively for compartmentalization which promotes and promisesupgradation for all. The notion of Brahminical hegemony gives a "relative sense of social dominance in everyday forms of interaction [to provide] the grounds for social essence" (Guru 89). In a very shrewd move, Brahminical system assures all the castes with a relative superiority to the immediate lower caste and so all the castes mechanically work as a watchdog to appropriate the 'social essence' and thereby perpetuate the Varna order with no challenge from any quarter. This explains why "[t]he Shudra/Ati-Shudra caste did not object to the discriminatory treatment that they received from the upper caste, because Brahminical hegemony also gave them a relative sense of social superiority over other caste groups which were immediately below them on a scale of continuous hierarchy". In a mode of cross-referencing this comes handy since the author's father's casteist comment: "Baap Shankar, they are *methor*. Don't touch them" (194) evidently proves that the notion of caste hierarchy measured through a sensory act: touch runs across castes. It is not coincidental that occupations, in the above-cited Dumontian phrase "division of labor", are hierarchized accordingly and the touch has consistently been standardized to maintain relative superiority.

Humiliation

Humiliation possesses higher degree of singularity for its obvious philosophical overtone and also for its generative aspect in relation to the humiliating verbal exchanges. This accounts for why this segment has been intended on the analytical possibility of the responses to humiliating expressions contextualized in a caste-centric social-intercourse. Caste humiliation, a form of violence directed to the "lower caste" members, is a socially-sanctioned practice

orchestrated by the chaturvarnic order in which the powerful upper caste Hindu establishment becomes instrumental for its comprehensive indoctrination. Needless to say this ideological reinforcement actualizes the subjection of Dalits in myriad manners – a foreseeable move to devitalize the Dalits with "erosion of agency" (Vasavi 3766). But humiliation, to a contrary effect, appears to be restorative as it triggers resistance in the form of responses from the Dalits and thereby turns instrumental to reversing the functionality of humiliation. So, the supposed function of humiliation (to dehumanize) is essentially challenged by an instant counter which reconfigures the functionality of humiliation (to reclaim the agency). Dalit life-narrative tendentiously offers an episodic documentation of unsavoury moments which Rangrao Bhongle attributes to the very "authenticity of experience" (159). Harishankar Jaladas' experiential authenticity makes the self-narrative a solid opportunity to study humiliation and thereby to attempt a fresh assessment of humiliation with crucial implications. In this section, critical aspects in humiliation will be investigated and the life-narrative will be referred to for understanding if those implications correspond to the projected casteist humiliation ideally.

Humiliation, "essentially a communicative interaction" (Palshikar 5431), promises a qualitative change of status for the stakeholders in the given moment through verbal exchanges conditionally by active participation of the humiliated in the experience of a piece of insult. Manifesting residual resentment both the participants in the act of humiliation appropriate the right to agency and rewrite the social sphere which remains the perspective of transformation. The casteist humiliation as recorded in Harishankar Jaladas' life narrative can be posited as a threshold to critique how toxic social intercourse becomes instrumental to one's self-assertion which reconfigures relational rubrics for the humiliated and the humiliator. As it happens in the narrative the author is confronted socially by a certain Haradhon Babu, a casteist mind and a guest to a house the author was requested to visit to know someone of whom he was requested to write. Despite the author's respectable social standing his 'low caste' birth makes him vulnerable to Haradhon Babu's casteist slur which hints at transacting caste-marker ('Jaladas') for a graceful social existence: "Let me tell you, Shankar Babu, affidavit your name and that will keep your children safe from all the malice in future at least" (202). With measured theatrics jaladas retorts and thus exploits the "disruptive element of power" (Palshikar 5431) inherent in humiliation:

> Putting a deliberate stupidity on my face I told, "Aptly said. How About Chakrabarty? If I am to cheat, why not cheating of first rate. How's that?"
> Now Rakhal Dash spoke up, "No problem on our side."
> With a wonderful composure in my voice I replied, "My name's Harishankar Chakrabarty; father's name's Judhisthir Jaladas. Won't you people say then that I am a bastard? Shuktara Jaladas, wife of Judhisthir

> Jaladas bore a bastard child by a Chakrabarty? You counsel me for becoming a bastard from a fisher man's son?"
> Saying it all I left Rakhal Babu's drawing room. (202)

Sarcastic as the answer is, the retort to the humiliator does spot another grave concern felt by the "low caste" Hindus namely assuming new surnames, a means to avoid widespread humiliation directed at the "low caste" people and to circumvent exclusion tension. To resume our previous point, the humiliated sarcastically throws a practical challenge to the humiliator and thereby the whole section in unprecedented consequentiality arising out of attempted camouflaging of caste marker. What signifies most is the stance taken by the humiliated by countering a humiliating proposal which demands the status quo to be revised. The author's exit as a symbolic move can be interpreted against what John Dewey states how the words "common, community and communication" are critically interrelated: "There is more than a verbal tie between [the] words common, community, and communication. Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common" (qtd. in Pals To make our intended focus we will narrow down the discussion to the notion of untouchability which will further be narrowed down to "hereditary Untouchability" (Ambedkar), a shastra-backed belief that a particular caste is permanently polluted. hikar 5431).To contextualize Jaladas' humiliating experience what fundamentally surfaces in the form of a question is does commonality exist between the author and Haradhon Babu, the respective representatives of "low caste" and upper caste Hindus to form a community and initiate a communication? Clearly, caste considered to be an alterity upsets the commonness and so resists the other two: community and communication as per Dewey's sequential unfolding of the consequentialities. Caste humiliation intervenes and explores the impasse; it further disturbs the existing caste complacency by making a "low caste" representative voice for his caste identity. This explains why the very act of humiliating encounter can be considered to be the momentum for reevaluation of the Savarna order.

Upward Mobility

Caste narrative offers cases of desperation for upward mobility presumably for its promise to integrate the "low caste" members into the mainstream. Masking one's "low caste" surname by an "acceptable" one is the easiest route. Jaladas mentions of this trend in his life narrative: "…I noticed the trend in changing surname among the Hindus. '*Dey*' becomes '*Dutta*'; '*Sarkar*' '*Sen*", '*Das*' '*Dasgupta*', '*Jaladas*' '*Sengupta*' and '*Shil*' '*Shushil*'. *Napitpara* is becoming *Norosundorpara*. Too messy for us to know who is who! Because of this unfair masking in surname I don't have the least of faith in such marker these

days" (78). Camouflaging caste identity by assuming a new surname is becoming the first step to placing one's candidature for upward mobility as it gives the two groups a shared ground to coexist. Jules Naudet mentions Raj Anand's analysis of a shared space for integration:

> Social mobility implies that the group of origin and the group of destination share a common set of values, cultural and symbolic references, though they might remain different in terms of social hierarchy. If the two groups are not integrated within a common universe, then there is no social mobility and only economic mobility stands as a possibility....Social mobility can indeed hardly be conceived without a minimal identification with dominants, without a certain desire to become like them. (433-434)

Integrating into the mainstream requires a shared medium or space to feel identical. For the majority "low caste" Hindus adopting a new and safe surname facilitates this integration plan. It appears to be a safe route to bypass social exclusion experienced by the "low caste" members. The "integrational aspect of social mobility" (433), as Jules Naudet shows through Raj Anand's analysis, demands shared or "combined alterity" between the group of identity and the group of desire or destination and a newly-assumed surname supplies that demand. Harishankar Jaladas's *Nonajole Dubsantar* seemingly mediates between the Dalit community (the group of origin) and the gentry (the group of desire). His personal narrative largely surfaces the tension though the author himself remains alive to the need for "an alternative moral framework upholding social mobility so that the struggle against caste oppression did not dissolve into individual trajectories of upliftment" (434). Back in his school days he was advised by the Headmaster for adopting a new surname as a part of rehabilitation plan in a casteist Hindu society. He declined to assert that he wanted to shine in his own feather:

> I could do something shrewd. I could shroud my identity under a upper caste marker. When I was a ninth grader my school Headmaster, Shree Dhrubobroto Chakrabarty suggested me to do it at the time of my registration. Without consulting my father I replied to my teacher then and there that 'Sir, I won't take peacock's feather. If ever this crow can sound like a peacock, my life will find its meaning'. (259)

Negating the route to rehabilitation Jaladas did make an existential choice and he records the pain of not being acknowledged as an individual with achievement. His choice for keeping his own caste identity uncompromised is intersected by the unavailability of the shared ground with the group of desire or destination and so, he is not taken into the fold. In a reverse reflection, his not qualifying into the

upper caste Hindus' circle is a sure recognition of his fight against the identity-erasing trend. His Dalit identity is loudly acknowledged by the upper caste and others when they do not fail to put the tag, 'Jaillya' (185). They do not see him as a writer, they see him as a 'smelly writer of Bangladesh' (96). So, the 'low' caste reference persistently pops up making it obvious that casteist mind will stay and so will the audacity to defy it through articulation.

Concluding Remarks

An exhaustive selection as these critical aspects are caste narrative reaches beyond these surely. It should never be confused with the idea that these alone can adequately tag a text as a narrative relating to caste. A narrative by a Dalit or a 'low caste' member features plethora of experiences of caste persecution; it can manifest its caste nature in as many ways as the projected low caste members come to pay under the system. So criticalities stem from caste sufferingsand they are countless. The major scriptures in Hindu religion vouch for a consolidation of the casteist imperatives and tenets which are tendentiously dehumanizing and breathe toxicity in everyday existence of the 'low caste' life. Though several movements namely Lokayata, Jainism, Buddhism and Bhakti appeared in the form of challenges to question the legitimacy of the cognitive base, Brahminic orthodoxy, Brahminism continues to prevail with all the repressive apparatus and ruse even till date. But with the Dalits' rise, the long-held tradition of acquiescence is being rethought over. Clearly caste narrative, more specifically Dalit writing is floating a new challenge for the chaturvarnic order by questioning the ethical validity of Brahminical base and a new social order independent of casteism will surface making the moment of caste disintegration a necessary corollary. Though the dissolution of such a system is not guaranteed any sooner, Dalit writers' effort to forge a 'counter culture' (Kumar 58) should stay as a mobilizing force, a promise in which the politics of the caste narrative lies.

Note
The corresponding parts of the text by Harishankar Jaladas have been translated by the author of this article.

Works Cited

Ambedkar, B. R.. *THE UNTOUCHABLES WHO WERE THEY AND WHY THEY BECAME UNTOUCHABLES ?* vol. 7 (2), http://library.lol/main/B340595D7D2D438CAF1C5341CFFD90D5 Accessed 23 March 2020.

Bhongle, Rangrao. "Dalit Autobiographies: An Unknown Facet of Social Reality." Indian Literature, vol. 46, no. 4 (210), 2002, pp. 158–60, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23345666. Accessed 20 March 2022.

Dumont, Louis. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*. Translated by Mark Sainbury, et el.. Oxford UP, 1999.

Guru, Gopal. "Limits of the organic intellectual: a Gramscian reading of Ambedkar." *The Political Philosophies of Antonio Gramsci and B.R. Ambedkar*.Ed. Cosimo Zene. New York: Routledge, 2013. 87-100.

Kumar, Raj. *Dalit Literature and Criticism*. Orient BlackSwan, 2019.

Jaladas, Hari Shankar. *Nonajole Dubsantar*. Prothoma, 2018.

Naudet, Jules. "'Paying Back to Society': Upward Social Mobility among Dalits." Contributions to Indian Sociology, vol. 42, no. 3, Oct. 2008, pp. 413–441, doi:10.1177/006996670804200304. Accessed 25 January 2022.

Palshikar, Sanjay. "Understanding Humiliation."Economic and Political Weekly, vol. 40, no. 51, 2005, pp. 5428–32, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4417556.Accessed 20 March 2022.

Vasavi, A. R. "Caste Indignities and Subjected Personhoods." Economic and Political Weekly, vol. 41, no. 35, 2006, pp. 3766–71, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4418645. Accessed 12 March 2022.

Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger: A Tale of Two Halves!*

Nasih Ul Wadud Alam*

Abstract

This research analyzes the Indian author Aravind Adiga's novel The White Tiger (2008) from a neo-liberal perspective. Adiga depicts the tale of a neo-liberal man named Balram Halwai, who, in order to get into the top-half of social strata, kills his master to taste the sweetness and bitterness of being a neo-bourgeoisie. This paper aims to discuss how the Indian neo-liberal state brings out the murderous mentality in Balram. The objective of this paper is to show how Balram, failing to break the cycle of his proletariat state, kills his master for enjoying his capitalistic life which brings about his expanding business networks. Looking at Balram's transformation from a neo-liberal perspective will help us go deep into his deeply troubled mind.

Keywords: Neo-liberal, neo-bourgeoisie, transformation, troubled mind

Aravind Adiga (1974-), winner of Man Booker Prize (2008) for his novel, *The White Tiger* (2008), begins his novel with a chronology of letters written by Balram to Wen Jiabao, the Chinese Premier. In the novel, Balram alias Munna is dubbed as "The White Tiger" when he succeeds in answering a school superintendent's question, "In any jungle, what is the rarest of animals - the creature that comes along only once in a generation?" (*The White Tiger* 35*)*. The novel deals with Balram's rise to the top. When Balram begins writing the letters, he is already a bigwig in the call-center industry at Bangalore. In his letters, he depicts his humble beginning of life as ricksawala Vikram Halwai's son in a poverty-stricken village called Laxmangarh. Adiga shows the two halves of India. On the one hand, Adiga shows his wealthy characters' subterfuge mentality. On the other hand, he sheds light on his subaltern characters' attempt to become bourgeoisies at the cost of empathy and humanitarian concerns.

In "Neoliberalism and Allegory", Betty Joseph states that in a neo-liberal society one class tries to work for others out of humanitarian belief, and another class ignores other peoples' plights (*Cultural Critique 72).* Similarly, *The White Tiger,* by showing Balram's rags-to-riches life, depicts a similar picture of class disparity that Joseph alludes to. In the novel, the poor driver Balram manages to be in his master Ashok's good books by informing him that the first-car driver Ram Persad is hiding his true religious identity. Balram uncovers that Ram Persad is a Muslim but pretends to be a Hindu. Ram Persad's removal from the job floods Balram with newer opportunities to put his own house in order. Balram shows signs of being a neo-liberal man by attempting to erase his competitors from the capitalistic mode of production.

_____

*Nasih Ul Alam taught in the Department of English, Kazi Narul University, Bangladesh and Chittagong Independent University. He is now doing his doctoral work at North Dakota State University, USA.

Balram hardly has any remorse for his actions that harm others. He justifies his hand in killing his former master by asking Jiabao in one of his letters, "Isn't it likely that everyone who counts in this world, including our prime minister (including you, Mr. JiabaAo), has killed someone or other on their way to the top?" (*The White Tiger* 318). The capitalist Balram follows his slain master's footsteps by helping the have-nots like Asif financially. The incident happens when one of Balram's (who goes by his ex-master's name Ashok Sharma in his newfound life in Bangalore) drivers, Mohammad Asif, hits a bicycle boy who falls prey to that injury caused by that car. Balram saves Asif from lawsuit and further punishments, much to the displeasure of the victim's brother; to whom the assistant commissioner of police says, "The number plates will be changed tomorrow. We'll say it was a hit-and-run. Another car will be substituted. We keep the battered cars for the purpose here. You're very lucky that your Quails hit a man on a bicycle" (*The Whiter Tiger* 309). Adiga shows the way things run in a neoliberal state like India. He sheds light on the corruption of his country.

Adiga's character Balram knows that money is the final determiner for getting rules changed in India. Police signify the system of corruption in society. For example, the assistant commissioner is a part of a corrupt system. He wants to establish his power over the assistant commissioner by making him wait to get the bribe. At the same time, Adiga shows that neo-liberals like Balrams use money as a pawn for being a humanitarian and establishing ideological apparatuses besmirched with corruption rooted at the core. Balram forgives Asif because he has got renewed respect for Muslims (*The White Tiger* 311), and he collects the victim's address and places 25000 Indian rupees as a mark of compensation inside a brown envelope lying on the table (*The White Tiger* 312). Balram saves Asif although at the cost of the victim's sufferings, the penances he offers (25000 rupees) is a scant return for the loss of a human life which cannot be measured with any value. However, Balram offers to look after the victim's brother to build up his father's career. The Adigan dystopic world is reflection of the shenanigans surrounding the Indian neoliberal state.

Toral Gajarwal in "The Last and the First" opines that *The White Tiger* is not a realistic novel. He quotes Amitava Kar "I find Adiga's villains utterly cartoonish, like the characters in Bollywood melodrama". She blatantly views Adiga's "presentation of ordinary people that seems not only trite but also offensive" (*Economic and Political Weekly 21)*. Adiga's wonderful depiction of the harsh reality of India seems to have been utterly ignored by Gajarwal. Calling the novel melodramatic, offensive, and trite underrates our mentality of drawing out realistic street tales as they are often observed in daily mundane affairs. Adiga's use of bawdy language alloys with the creeping frustration he feels about India. However, Gajarwal rightly dubs *The White Tiger* as "a tour of the Darkness without a proper tour guide" (22) and criticizes the framework of this novel for being less didactic and not punishing the unscrupulous characters of the novel.

Sitaram Yechury's "Neo-Liberalism, Secularism and the Future of the Left in India" shows a Forbes Magazine 2009 report that identifies that the "fourth and fifth richest persons in the world are Indians" (*Social Scientist* 14). However, the article highlights the same Forbes statistics that show the income inequalities for 47 % of Indian children are suffering from malnutrition, and 78% of women "are anemic" (14). According to Sundhya Walther, "The novel uses the trope of animalization—the animalization of human beings and human spaces—as a metaphor for the inhumanity of India's economic growth" (*Modern Fiction Studies*, 580) which again establishes the point that Adiga has tried to portray the real India although in a fictive setting.

According to Neil Devotta, Neoliberalism does not allow democratic ideas to flow across ("Neoliberalism and Illeberalism in South Asia"). He cites corruption and censorship in the media as some of the salient features behind the rise of social injustice in India. Samir Kumar Das opines that the new-liberal agencies in India have given more privileges to Indian capitalists for deploying their "sovereign power" upon the people who do not have the means to circumvent powerful orders ("Development State and Its Sovereign Gaze" 49). Santanu Rakshit in "Return of the State: End of Neoliberalism? An Inquiry into the Indian Governmentality" blames neo-liberalists for maximizing "all economic variables" (82) at the cost of social welfare in return for "a higher moment of movement of Capital (global)". Sudipta Bhattacharyya in "Challenges of the Welfare State under Neoliberalism" urges that neo-liberal states need to reconsider their "poverty reduction strategies" because the existing system has "prolonged industrial stagnation and poverty" that creates a "reserve army of unemployed youth" (125). The 2007 *Times of India* advertisement ran "There are two Indias in this country. One India is straining at the leash, eager to spring forth and live up to all the adjectives that the world has been recently showering upon us. The other India is the leash (quoted in Betty Joseph, 69).

From Swapna-Banerjee Guha's article, "Neoliberalising the 'Urban': New Geographies of Power and Injustice in Indian Cities", we come to know how the Indian government has been trying to encourage the private owners to invest more money for the development of "project works" in the country (*Economic and Political Weekly* 98). Guha also mentions the government incentives to proliferate the quality and number of IT sectors in Bangalore (101). Balram, now the IT head of a call centre, is part of that middle-class community which is bearing the souring grapes of urbanization evicting and displacing thousands of people from home every year. According to Arundhati Roy, the displaced people "are made to feel proud of something" which "they can count as personal accomplishment" (*The Algebra of Infinite Justice 290-1).* Displaced people are a part of the larger capitalist network which identifies anyone protesting "development projects" as "terrorists" (*The Algebra of Infinite Justice* 203). Like most other Indian

capitalists, Balram uses the labor of proletariat for establishing his own empire of capitalism. He ensures that he has all his apparatuses aiding him to segue into a powerful position.

Balram's universe centers on the division between haves and have-nots as we see in the Indian neo-liberal state. Balram says, "India is two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness." (*The White Tiger* 14). In the Adigan Dark world, there is a scarcity of jobs. People have conceded defeat to the challenges of life. The narrator says, "They have no job to do today. They know they won't get any job today. They've given up the fight" (54). Balram does not like the dark world. When he becomes rich, one of the first things he buys is a chandelier (7) which removes darkness from his room. Despite having the light around his place, his heart is full of darkness because he has not had the kind of education that he would have liked to enlighten his mind. Balram does not want to be in the rooster coop "just like poor guys in the poultry market" (*The White Tiger 175)*. He finds being rich the sole motivation to pull himself out of trouble. Balram thinks he has managed to break the shackles of social restrictions by earning money and becoming a master himself. Although he considers himself to "have broken out of the coop" (*The White Tiger 320)*, I would like to differ here by alluding to Althusser who in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" writes, "Thus ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects….ideology has always-already interpellated as subjects; which amounts to making it clear that individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which leads us to one last proposition: *individuals are always-already subjects.* Hence individuals are "abstract" with respect to the subjects which they always-already are" (700).

Therefore, I do not think Balram has successfully disengaged himself from the coop. Even in his libertine life, there is no freedom. He is outside the existing coop to be in another coop. He is already subject to the juggernaut of capitalism from which there is no other way out. Although Marx in *The German Ideology* argues that the class struggle will have its "natural end" (657), Adiga, in *The White Tiger* shows that there will be no end to class struggles in neo-liberal states or sub-continental states. In the novel, he castigates the traditional Indian family for people to be "tied to the coop. . . . Only a man who is prepared to see his family destroyed—hunted, beaten, and burned alive by the masters— can break out of the coop" (*The White Tiger* 176). In other words, Balram or Adiga for that sake does not foresee the end of class struggles very soon. Balram's propensity to kill is borne out of his emphasis on identity formation.

If we put Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's concept on "The Master-Slave Dialectic", we will find similarities with Balram's life cycle. For example, Hegel writes, "without the discipline of service and obedience, fear remains at the formal stage, and does not extend to the known world of existence" (635-6).

Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* criticizes Hegel for not giving subalterns a vision to change their fate. He opines that Hegelian masters "laugh at the consciousness of the slave" ("Resistance and Opposition" 253). Hegel stresses that masters do not allow any subversive elements to ease through but Said finds more hope in giving voice to the oppressed that would alter their own fate through resistance against the bourgeoisie. In the novel, Balram is more Saidian than Hegelian. Balram remains obedient to his master Ashok at first. He capitalizes on Ashok's over-reliance on him. With his behavior, Balram manages to remove the fear Ashok has of him. Although Balram has achieved his apparent freedom, for Hegel, it would be "a freedom which is still enmeshed in servitude" (636).

Balram's sudden rise to the top with a murderous deed would not keep him at the top in the long run because it is his individual sense of liberty that will not have global support and objectivity (Hegel 636). Hegel rightly says that slaves do not find freedom ultimately. Balram has broken free but only in the short term. He is still a subject to the state. In the Saidian mold, we can say that Balram has found freedom but in the long term, he is always already subject to state ideologies. Therefore, Balram is not free. When Balram is a slave, he is a subversive element. When he becomes a master, Balram is almost the copycat of his previous master Ashok. In Balram's defense, he is more humanistic to Ashok.

In the novel, Ashok turns alcoholic when Pinky leaves. The thought of death possesses Ashok's mind. Then, Balram thinks of Ashok monetarily. Hearing about Ashok's loss of interest in leading his life, Balram thinks to himself, "The point of living? My heart pounded. The point of your living is that if you die, who's going to pay me three and half thousand rupees a month?" (159). Therefore, Ashok is nothing but a commodity for him. Balram wants to respect his master, but Ashok's womanizing nature cuts that off. His master's change in attitude hurts him. Balram does not start treating his master's taking of women well. He even "spat over the seats of the Honda City and wiped them clean" (*The White Tiger* 204) because one of Ashok's bed partners sits on it. Balram starts having physical relations with public properties just like Ashok does. In his unconscious mind, he follows his master's lifestyle, albeit grudgingly.

Balram announces himself as a "self-taught entrepreneur" (*The White Tiger 6*) who is not formally educated but has finished reading the works of Rumi, Iqbal, and Mirza Ghalib. Balram considers himself to be "changed from a hunted criminal into a solid pillar of Bangalorean society" (*The White Tiger 292)*. Balram's likeness for Black Fort close to his Laxmangarh is something for us to ruminate on. This Black Fort is possibly established by "the Turks, or the Afghans, or the English, or whichever foreigners were then ruling India . . . centuries ago," and it "is as beautiful as anything seen in Europe" (21). But the fort has this Conradian 'fascination of the abomination' kind of beauty. Balram is awed by the beauty of the fort and afraid of the certain sense of mystery it brings.

As a curious child of thirteen, he gets afraid of the presence of a "black thing" (41) when he tries to go inside the fort. Out of fear, he retreats. Although that black thing which he discovers a little bit later to be a cow, he does not gather the courage to return to that fort then. Despite all that, the fort gives him a glimpse of the beauty surrounding the world which he hopes to enjoy with the help of money fulfilling his pledges in his teenage life not to get stranded in life as a slave (41). However, his frustration grows up when he finds at the age of twenty-four that a lot has not been changed in his fate: he panders to Ashok. The last time he goes there as Ashok and Pinky's chauffeur, the fort reminds him of the destiny he wants to set out for himself, the expectations he has as a thirteen-year-old boy and the reality he is facing as a 24-year-old driver.

Adiga puts emphasis on "Fixing the economic disparities" (*The Independent)* to address growing socio-political troubles in India. His novel shows the consequences of a chaotic system. Ulka Anjaria in "Realist hieroglyphics: Aravind Adiga and the New Social Novel" heaps praise on the novelist for eking out a dystopian image of India but without being too explicit in his manners of articulation. Anjaria stresses Adiga's hieroglyphic nature of depiction and use of "associated imagery to highlight and criticize the exclusions and moral failings of India's recent economic success" (*Modern Fiction Studies* 115). Weihsin Guiln in her "Creative Destruction and Narrative Renovation: Neoliberalism and the Aesthetic Dimension in the Fiction of Aravind Adiga and Mohsin Hamid" Author(s): dubs Balram's murder of Ashok as "creative destruction" that aids him to plagiarize another person's name (*The Global South* 182). His determination for not staying inferior propels him to have 26 running vehicles, 16 drivers working in shifts and more richness than his previous master (*The White Tiger* 301). Balram does not feel that he has stolen money from his master. He thinks the money is borrowed from his slain master.

Balram, hearing the news of the Chinese Premier's arrival, takes the onus on himself to be a representative figure from India. Adiga, understanding the sensitivity around his novel's murder case, protects Balram from being interrogated by law-enforcing agencies. Like Balram, Adiga feels the necessity of sharing intimate details (albeit utterly negative) about India. Balram, according to Adiga, "is obsessed with the outsider's gaze (a colonial legacy, probably)" and is "stimulated to think about his country and society by the imminent arrival of a foreigner" (quoted in Pathak, Anil "Deconstructing Disillusionment: The Voice of Educated Youth in *The White Tiger)*. Although Balram hides his criminal act in fear of social ostracism, he is confident of using money and his powerful status to alter the course of law.

The novel puts forward a lesson for the Indian stakeholders that the systematically flawed neo-liberal society will encourage criminals like Balram to live in impunity and go absconding because of the corrupt law-enforcing agencies.

Adiga does not talk about the positive sides of his country. It would have been better had he touched more upon the colonial periods, and the impact of them on colonized nations like India. Although Adiga's society is full of problems, still the country he is born into has seen a lot of progress since the era of private ownership started in the early 90s. Still, Adiga should be praised for following his heart and speaking his mind through the interlocution of Balram in *The White Tiger*. Balram is a killer, but we cannot blame him entirely. Even Adiga has a soft corner for Balram.

In conclusion, the neo-liberal society with its loopholes of law and law-enforcing agencies' lack of situational awareness gives him a sense of security and impunity. In "Ordinary Novels" Merritt Moseley argues that Balram shows his conscience and empathy for others only once, that too, comes "after having become a businessman employing drivers, he shows some sympathy to the family of one of their accident victims" (*Arts and Letters* 159). Moreover, Balram becomes a sympathetic bourgeois by showing the wider community that he is a helpful person, but Kathleen Waller rightly argues that "the lack of education paired with entrenched social hierarchy holds large numbers back from becoming dynamic individuals" (*CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 8). Adiga shows that the rich Adiga and the poor Adiga is morally susceptible, as is the neo-liberal India which has not stemmed the flow of inequality and allowed crooked individuals like Balrams to run merry ways.

Works Cited

Adiga, Aravind. *The White Tiger,* New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2008. Print.

Adiga, Aravind. "Aravind Adiga: You ask the questions". *The Independent,* 10 November. 2008.https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/aravind-adiga-you-ask-the-questions-1006643.html. Web. 27 May 2022.

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses". *Literary Theory: An Anthology,* Eds. Julie Rivkin & Michael Ryan. London: Blackwell, 2010. 693-702. Print.

Anjaria, Ulka. "Realist hieroglyphics: Aravind Adiga and the New Social Novel". *MFS Modern Fiction Studies.* vol. 61. Iss. 1. Maryland: John Hopkins Publication Press, 2015. 114-137. www.jstor.org/stable/26421776.

Bhattacharyya, Sudipta. "Rise of Finance Capital and Decline of the Nation-State". *Neoliberal State and its Challenges*. Eds. Bhupen Sarmah & Joydeep Baruah. India: Aakar Books, 2014. 117-33.

Betty, Joseph. "Neoliberalism and Allegory", *Cultural Critique.* vol. 82. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. 68-94. JSTOR www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/culturalcritique.82.2012.0068.

Das, Samir Kumar. "Developmental State and its Sovereign Gaze". *Neoliberal State and its Challenges*. Eds. Bhupen Sarmah & Joydeep Baruah. India: Aakar Books, 2014. Print.

Devotta, Neil. "Neoliberalism and Illiberalism in South Asia". *Neoliberal State and its Challenges*. Eds. Bhupen Sarmah & Joydeep Baruah. India: Aakar Books, 2014. pp. 21-39.

Gajarwala, Toral. "The Last and the First". *Economic and Political Weekly.* vol. 44. no. 50. Mumbai: Sameekhsha Trust, 2009. 21–23. JSTOR. www.jstor.org/stable/25663880.*,*

Gui, Weihsin. "Creative Destruction and Narrative Renovation: Neoliberalism and the Aesthetic Dimension in the Fiction of Aravind Adiga and Mohsin Hamid". *The Global South.* Vol. 7, No. 1. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013. 173-90. JSTOR. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/globalsouth.7.2.173

Guha, Swapna-Bannerjee. "Neoliberalising the 'Urban': New Geographies of Power and Injustice in Indian Cities". *Economic and Political Weekly.* vol. 44. no. 22. Mumbai: Sameeksha Trust, 2009. 95–107. JSTOR. www.jstor.org/stable/40279062.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. "The Master-Slave Dialectic". *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism.* New York: Norton (1st ed), 2001. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. 630-5. Print.

Marx, Karl. "The German Ideology". *Literary Theory: An Anthology.* Eds. Julie Rivkin & Michael Ryan. London: Blackwell, 2010.

Moseley, Merritt. "Review: Ordinary Novels". *The Sewanee Review.* Vol. 118. No. 1. Maryland, John Hopkins University Press, 2010. 154-160. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40542535

Pathak, Anil. "Deconstructing Disillusionment: The Voice of Educated Youth in *The White Tiger. The Indian Booker Prize Winners: Images and Imaginations.* Eds. V, Jha & R. Mishra.NewDelhi:Access,2014.Print. https://www.academia.edu/9396474/Deconstructing_Disillusionment_The_Voice_of_Educated_Youth_in_The_White_Tiger_

Rakshit, Santanu. "Return of the State: End of Neoliberalism? An Inquiry into the Indian Governmentality". *Neoliberal State and its Challenges*. Eds. Bhupen Sarmah & Joydeep Baruah. India: Aakar Books, 2014. pp. 75-97. Print.

Roy, Arundhati. *The Algebra of Infinite Justice.* London: Penguin, 2001. Print.

Said, Edward W. *"*Resistance and Opposition". *Culture and Imperialism.* New York: Vintage, 1994. Print.

Waller, Kathleen. "Redefinitions of India and Individuality in Adiga's The White Tiger". *CLC Web: Comparative Literature and Culture. Vol. 14. No. 2.* Eds. M.G. Ramanan and T. Mukherjee. Purdue, 2012. 1-8. Web. file:///home/chronos/u-ab2fb5f13f4b047eb331d3080ec90870dcbc18af/MyFiles/Downloads/Redefinitions%20of%20India%20and%20Individuality%20in%20Adigas%20The%20White%20Tig(1).pdf.

Yechury, Sitaram. "Neo-Liberalism, Secularism and the Future of the Left in India". Ed. Prabhat Patnaik. New Delhi: *Social Scientist*, 2011. 11-19. https://www.jstor.orgstable/41062145

Talking about Taboos: Engaging Students in Critical Thinking

K. Shelley Price-Jones*

Kevin G. Price**

Abstract

This paper evaluates a classroom innovation developed for General English language classes, in a Korean university setting, that draws upon students' funds of knowledge and was developed to encourage and engage students in the development of critical thinking skills. The research was carried out in Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced classes from the fall of 2017 to the fall of 2020 and includes nine classes taught offline with a total of 133 students, and two online classes with a total of 32 students: a total of 165 participants. Research analysis draws upon: exit surveys inclusive of both quantitative and qualitative components; field notes with transcribed student encounters; and student reflective writing assignments. The student data confirmed that this ongoing classroom process, both offline and online, engaged students, with 96.24% responding that the class was 'interesting/fun' and that it served to promote students' critical thinking with the overall Likert (1-10) scale for 'getting new ideas' being 8.15. It is the authors' express desire that this research will contribute to the growing body of critical thinking literature and observed classroom practices that can be utilized on and offline.

Key words: Critical thinking, ELT material-development, student engagement

1. Introduction

What is critical thinking? Ab Kadir (2017) related that while there is currently no universally accepted consensus regarding a definition, most teaching pedagogies reference critical thinking as a cognitive/higher order thinking skill that students should develop in order to have a successful 21st-century life with gainful employment. With respect to EFL/ESL classes this intellectual process has become one of the four teaching-practice C's: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (Ab Kadir, 2017, Yurtsever, & Dilara, 2021). Many educators in EFL/ESL courses develop classroom processes to reflect the C's so that they best meet the needs of their students at all English competency levels. This was the case with respect to this teaching innovation, and as Islam et al (2020) observed: ''Understanding the effectiveness of materials may require a number of semesters' (p 6827). In this respect, the research for this paper initially commenced by only examining those classes that took place face-to-face; however, the

---

*Kathryn Shelley Price-Jones has been teaching at the tertiary level in Korea for over twenty years and is currently an Assistant Professor.
** Kevin Grant Price has been teaching at the tertiary level in Korea for almost twenty years and is currently an Assistant Professor.

The covid-19 pandemic offered the authors the opportunity to also examine how the classroom process would function in online classes.

> The Covid-19 pandemic has made teaching online the 'new educational norm' in many countries (Tria, 2020). However, as Scarborough (2021) observed, synchronous 'online instruction ("Zoom Classes") can easily devolve into a professor lecturing 'into the void of black boxes' in classes that are poorly attended, and where students lack both meaningful interactions and participation (pp 1, 3). Development of classroom materials and processes that both educators and students are able to follow in the limited time that they spend together is thus crucial (Karalis, 2020, Kennette and Chapman, 2021). As Yeigh, and Lynch (2020) noted, teachers need to be both adaptable to their teaching situations and in the manner they express their professionalism. Online educators also need to become 'digitally savvy' (Ab Kadir, 2017. Lieberman, 2020).

> Whether the classes are online, or offline, in order to assist students in developing their critical thinking skills, dialogic questions are imperative. As Muirhead, observed in his article about teaching Philosophy classes, which were also established to promote critical, reflective thinking: 'Discussion questions can be used as a tool to help students uncover their underlying assumptions which form the basis of their ideas and beliefs. This is a difficult step for many students because they may have never really studied the rationale behind their views' (2003, p 64). This is the situation with both Korean and Chinese students. Their previous English education lacked opportunities to have meaningful discussions in English where they would have been able to hone their abilities to express their thoughts.

> Whether classes are offline, or online, the importance of students understanding the purpose behind all classroom practices can also not be understated. While Chen et al (2017) were only referencing online classes, their thoughts can easily be applied to all language classes. They observed:

> Students will not fully participate when they do not see the purpose of the discussion, do not understand what to contribute, do not receive responses to their posting, and cannot make sense of the discussion due to the structure of the online forum. Therefore, online discussions must be structured in a way that

> clearly communicates their purpose and student expectations, encourages students to co-construct knowledge, and facilitates meaningful discussion. (Chen et al, 2017, p. 166).

It was with these thoughts in mind that the taboo classroom process was created and used in both offline and online classes.

2. The Materials' Design and Methods

Having engaging classroom practices that students, with often mixed ability levels in one class can all use is always challenging. Textbooks created for a global market 'normally do not reflect the reality of the classroom in terms of the students' English proficiency level, interests, wants, and needs' (Mohseni, & Rahmanpanah, 2020, p 49) and the creation of 'home-made materials in order to achieve greater relevance and engagement is something both authors in this research undertake (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 158). Tomlinson (2012) observed that 'ideal materials aim to provide all the ways of acquiring language for the learners to experience and sometimes select from' (p. 143). The taboos class was designed by the primary author to be used in all General English classes with student competency levels ranging from Basic through to Advanced. The evaluation criteria were represented in the form of an exit survey that reflected the author's evaluation criteria and which had been previously utilized to assess other classroom practices (Tomlinson, 2012).

The topic of taboos was selected, and the classroom process developed, following a class conversation about the Korean taboo of writing a student's name in red ink. In an impromptu class survey, over half of the students did not consider this to be a serious issue and an animated discussion took place about how taboos change with time, and with individuals. A discussion about taboos was then perceived by the primary author to have student appeal, and following using Ellis's (1997) predictive evaluation, family, dating, student categories were selected as they represented those with which all students would have extant funds of knowledge. In her article, Maitra, (2017), refers to funds of knowledge, with their ties to a student's ethnic background, the language they speak, and the community they come from being an under-rated tool for use in the classroom. By drawing upon individual sstudents'funds of knowledge everyone in the class becomes a learner, including the educator. The taboo classroom process did exactly that.

3. Method

Research for this paper draws upon field notes, student essays, and quantitative and qualitative student reflections following participation in a classroom process that was not culturally located; drew upon their own funds of knowledge, and had

high levels of student engagement in both offline and online classes. The surveys and essays were from the fall of 2017 to the fall of 2020. The exit survey (see appendix B) ranked target areas through use of a Likert scale, and also had open-answer questions for students' opinions. These areas were specific: whether it made speaking easier, what areas they believed they benefited in (with respect to vocabulary, grammar, ideas, or other areas), and specific instances from the class that related to critical thinking. All eleven classes, with a total of 165 students, were from the same university and the classes were all taught in the same procedural manner. The surveys were voluntary and the students' informed consents to use the results were obtained. Both online and offline classes went for two 75-minute periods.

3.1. Research participants

Between the fall of 2017 and fall semester of 2020 the taboo survey and essays from eleven English university classes were drawn upon for data in this research. The classes, listed as Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced, were primarily composed of Korean, and Chinese students, with the underlying purpose of the classes being to develop students' communicative competence. By communicative competence Del Hymes, who coined the term, was referring to 'the actual use of language in a concrete situation, not an idealized speaker-listener situation in a completely homogeneous speech community' (Ohno, 2002, p. 26).

With respect to the survey carried out by students studying offline, 133 students provided us with their signed informed consent for participation in this research. Aside from one regularly-taught class there was a maximum of 20 students in each class, and this included online classes for which Chen et al (2017), when discussing past research undertakings, noted that 'the ideal online class size was between 12 to 16 students to achieve the highest level of interactions' (p. 167). This does not mean that larger classes are impossible. The authors also conducted the second part of the classroom process with two classes (Intermediate and Advanced) meeting together in one classroom to carry out the taboo survey. This worked exceedingly well, with over 30 students being present in the class. In a similar manner to Kim, Jung-Soo's (2013) findings it was the 'small group discussion model' that was 'superior in terms of promoting quantity and quality of participation' (as cited in Chen et al, 2017, p. 167), All classes also had randomness present, as students represented mixed levels of abilities, and came from different majors. While students were apprised of the course level, there was nothing in place to prevent a student with Basic English language abilities from self-enrolling in an Intermediate, or Advanced level class. In all research instances students' English levels ranged from very low basic to advanced and they ranged in years from freshmen to seniors.

3.2. Procedure for the Researched Classes – First class

The authors first spoke with the students about what taboos are and then introduced those taboos that are generally well known, such as a taboo against cannibalism, that all students were familiar with and could understand why this taboo was in place. The discussion then moved on to taboos that the students were not as familiar with. For example, dietary taboos in Judaism and Islam were addressed as well as the Catholic church's Seven Deadly Sins (lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride). Following this ,the students' attention was drawn to the Taboo survey (see Appendix A) that they would be using in the second class. Prior to the second class students were asked to consider three areas that they were familiar with and for which their funds of knowledge were extant. These were family, dating, and when being a student. The authors asked the students to consider each area and to write down what they considered to be three taboos, that they would rank as 10 (very serious) on a Likert scale, that existed in their families, three taboos that they believed were related to dating and three related to student behaviour.

3.3. Procedure for the Researched Classes - Second class

At the beginning of the second class students were divided into physical groups of three to four students in the classroom, and in groups of the same number in breakout rooms online. They were then to decide who would start the discussion and that person would then read their first taboo for family and the other students would rank that taboo from 1-10 (1 representing not serious at all and 10 being very serious) and provide reasons for why they believed as they did. The student who introduced the taboo would take note of the ranking and the reasons that the other students provided, as this information would be drawn upon for both the exit survey and essays. Once that student had finished asking all members in their group about their first taboo, the second person in the group would introduce one of their family taboos. At times students had similar taboos. If they and other students shared a specific taboo, they would note the information other students related when it was being discussed. At this point in the discussion the next taboo introduced would be one that people in the group had not previously mentioned. This procedure continued until all taboos regarding family had been discussed and the students then began discussing those that they believed were related to dating, in the same procedural manner as they had just carried out with family. Following discussions on dating, the students then discussed the taboos that they had for being a student. At the end of the class there was a short teacher-lead discussion about some of the highlights of what the students learned while carrying out their surveys.

4. Research Findings - Data received from students who undertook to complete the taboo survey, and from student essays.

Survey data for questions 1, 2, and 4

#1 Did you find the taboo activity interesting/fun?	96.24% responded yes (n=128 of 133 students). 3.76%, all Chinese students, responded no (n = 5 of 133 student)
#2 Did you find it was easier to talk to other people about your thoughts about taboos by the end of the class?	92.48% responded yes (n=123 of 133 students) 6.02% 6 Chinese students and 2 Koreans, responded no (n=8 of 133 students) Other response– 1 student said 'maybe'.[1]
#4 Do you believe that the taboo lesson would help students who are not used to speaking in English feel more comfortable?	92.4% responded yes (n= 118 of 133 students) 5.26% five Chinese students and 3 Koreans responded no (n= 7 of 133 students) Advanced 80% responded yes Intermediate 95.,6% responded yes Basic 82.9% responded yes[2] Other responses included references to some students' lack of confidence; how the group discussions helped people be more confident; how preparation for the class would help; and how some students used Korean too often.

---

[1] In the 2019 Fall, Intermediate class one student noted that they missed one of the classes.

[2] In the 2017 Advanced class, one student did not respond. In the 2018 Spring, Intermediate class, one student did not understand the question.

# 3. How useful was speaking about taboos, ranking from 1-10 (1 being not useful to 10 being very useful)	
• Making speaking easier	Overall: 7.56 Advanced level: 8.1 Intermediate level: 6.8 Basic level: 7.41[3]
• Learning new vocabulary	Overall: 6.2 Advanced level: 5.6 Intermediate level: 6.60 Basic level: 7.36
• Getting new ideas	Overall: 8.15 Advanced level: 8.6 Intermediate level: 7.52 Basic level: 7.92
• Other areas you felt speaking helped/did not help you with	Other responses included references to feeling more comfortable; learning about another culture/cultural areas; and wishing that there had been more time to speak with 'many more people'.

5. What was one taboo you were told about that you thought was only a low taboo ranking (under 5), but the other student thought it was a high ranking (7-10)? Why did you feel this way?

- Themes in the students' responses related to household rules; lying to your family; not being prepared for class; dating etiquette; drinking; effects of different backgrounds and lifestyles.

6. What was one of your taboos that you thought had a high taboo ranking (7-10), but the other student thought it was a low ranking? Why do you think they felt that way?

- Themes in the students' responses related to student behaviour in classes; family rules/culture; students' dress attire; old superstitions; gender; differences of opinion being related to cultural backgrounds; and dating.

---

[3] One student in the Basic class did not complete this part of the survey.

7. Are there any other comments that you would like to make?

- Themes in the students' responses related to being able to disagree with others; hearing other students' opinions; speaking with people they did not know; the benefits of speaking with people you do not know (to avoid confirmation bias); self-contemplation; learning about cultural differences; the desire to break school taboos; increased friendliness; growth environments; and wanting more time as talking about taboos was interesting and fun.

Data received from student essays:

Students in the online classes were given the following question based upon questions #5 and #6 of the exit survey for their essay: What did you learn from carrying out your three-area taboo survey? How did the other students respond to your taboos(did they think that they were important, or not)? What did you think about other students' taboos?

- Many of the themes noted by students in the offline classes in the exit survey were also addressed in the essays; however, the students' discussion and rationale were detailed and often noted: surprise, confirmation, and changed opinions, Students also sought to address why people had different opinions in more detail and this area of their essays contained reflection, critical awareness, and significant thought.

5. Discussion

Surveys are considered as 'non-threatening' (Davis, 2011, p. 8), as the students were given time to complete the survey and collection did not take place until the following class, or week. The results from the surveys submitted by the 133 students served to meet both teaching and research objectives. While the taboo survey did have several of the drawbacks that Davis addressed, namely 'simplified responses' and a lack of 'careful feedback' (2011, p. 8) at times, the researchers were supplied with useful data. The following discussion, presented in the same order as in the data section, addresses the sections of the survey, and themes drawn from the surveys and student writing that reflected critical thinking, namely references to recognition of confirmation/'Myside' bias, and gender bias.

With respect to question #1 about whether the students found talking about taboos to be 'interesting/fun' an overwhelming number (96.24%) responded that yes it was. This was also confirmed with teacher observations of significant laughter, smiles, and engagement during the class. There were no students who appeared to not be involved. Five Chinese students did note that it was not 'interesting/fun'

and they were students whose English abilities/lack of preparation for the class put them at a disadvantage.

With respect to question #2 about if they found it easier to talk with other students about taboos by the end of class the majority (92.48%) of the students agreed that this was the case. In most of the groups language was being recycled and as nervousness dissipated, confidence grew. One student noted 'maybe'. Unfortunately, there was no chance to ask the student why they said what they did. Eight students, six who were Chinese, and two who were Koreans, responded no. As with question #1 this answer was predominantly given by students whose English abilities were very low, or who had not prepared sufficiently for the class. Teacher observations of these students had been consistent throughout the semester, and their responses were not just related to this class. Despite numerous attempts on the part of the authors, these individuals were not engaged in learning English, and as Matusov (2020) observes, students should have freedom to study in the way they wish, and they should also have the freedom to not participate. This thought could also be seen in one of the student's comments: 'I think it is a student's freedom to study' (#13).

With respect to question # 4 about whether this class could help students who were at a Basic level be more confident when speaking 92.4% of the students overall responded 'yes'. What was interesting in this answer was that both the Advanced level (80%) and Basic level (82.9%) class were not as certain that it would. For those students who stated that it would not, the Chinese students were the same students who had responded 'no' for question #2. Of the Korean students, two had also stated 'no' for question #2. The one Korean student who responded 'yes' for both questions #1 and 2 may have based the decision following being in groups with some of the students who had said 'no', too. Student # 11, from the 2019, Spring Basic class, observed 'Some students used Korean sometimes so maybe it did not give help for them'. Another student (#1) from the 2019, Spring intermediate class also observed: 'If they prepare their answer well, it would be very helpful.' One student from the Advanced class was unsure and responded: 'I'm not sure. I want to say 'yes' because it was a small group talk which made people break a wall and approach.' Another student (#5) from an Intermediate class also referenced emotions as playing a significant role, noting: 'Some students are so good at English, so somebody may feel shame and envy.'

Shame plays a major role in educational settings in Korea. Lee's (1999) discussed how the notion of shame moved from being face-saving and family-oriented to being currently observed as reflecting personal incompetence. This can be seen in all educational settings as education has become, as Lee notes, the 'first priority'.

> In Korea, the kind of school a child attends is the yardstick of his ability. The school decides the future of the graduates; attending a first-class school is something to be proud of and the opposite is shameful. Such a trend has come to produce popular phrases as 'first-class disease,' or 'the entrance examination disease.' (Lee, 1999, p. 191).

While there has been significant improvement in Korean education since Lee wrote his article, the shame that students personally feel regarding their English competence, or lack thereof, has been a constant. Students feeling shame about their perceived/real lack of English abilities is also not solely related to Korea. In discussions over the years with students, from many countries in Asia, the emotion was well-known, as was envy.

The Likert scale for question #3 yielded some very interesting data. The highest overall score (8.15) was given to getting new ideas, and this represented the highest scores given by all levels in this survey question. That Basic level students learned more vocabulary than students in the Intermediate and Advanced classes was expected as they had the most to learn. That Advanced students (8.1) would feel more comfortable was also expected as their English levels were already sufficiently high and they only had to overcome the fear of meeting new people. What had been hoped for, but not predicted, was that all levels would find that they had learned significantly. In the comments students made references to being comfortable and learning about another culture/cultural areas, with one student observing in the 2019 Basic level class 'most people had similar taboos, ex violence w/ boyfriend, but Chinese taboos were interesting' (#10).

It was from questions 5-7 and the student essays that evidence of critical thinking and references to recognition of confirmation/'Myside' bias, and gender bias, were most often noted. Novaes (2018) observes:

> Myside bias is ultimately a form of mind-reading failure, which further suggests that it is best not seen as an adaptation, given the importance of being able to appreciate one's interlocutor's perspective for social interaction' (p 520), and 'cooperation is a key component of human cognition given our hypersocial nature' (p. 521).

Several of the students wrote in both the surveys and essays, how they changed their opinions regarding what they had previously thought about other people (nationality and gender) following the taboo survey, with several Basic level students relating that 'Taboos are culturally relevant, so we had to talk about history and culture. But it's funny' (#2); that 'Activities like taboo activity can let us have many topics to discuss and now other's thoughts clearly' (#14); that 'It

was somewhat very useful chance to learn about and understand other's view' (#7), and in perhaps an effort to be witty, 'It was a very useful time for me to contemplate whether I've been banned for dumbfounded taboos' (#6).

Intermediate level students also noted that they 'could learn new taboos in other countries' (#3) often noting those that were different, such as one student noting that Chinese students did not go Dutch on dates; 'Could feel cultural difference' (# 5); that it 'Was interesting that they disagreed with the others' (# 1); and that it 'Was nice to hear other students' opinions' (#3), One student in the Advanced class commented:

> … speaking with people that I don't know was very fresh experience!' 'It was fun lesson!' 'It would be good to talk to a student who has different background with you (for example, nation, region, sex, etc). Talking to a similar student is not helpful'.

The importance of speaking to other students was also observed in many of the essays that were written. While differences were discovered, similarities were also noted as well, with one Intermediate level student discovering that many of the taboos that she thought were solely Korean, also existed in Chinese culture. Another student's essay detailed his surprise at what other students thought with respect to blaming another person, and one male student related how he had initially not believed that touching a person without their permission was a taboo, but after listening to the female students speak he changed his mind. At times the comments and essays also included a continued defence of the student's position, such as a Basic level female student declaring:

> There was a taboo of 'not having a makeup in front of other guys' and I rated it low. This is because it is so strict for a girlfriend not doing makeup and it is violating a freedom to express herself (# 6).

As to why people held certain taboos, and disagreed with others, students in both the comments and essays observed that there were multiple reasons, including the 'growth environment really influences people's thinking' (Basic level #15); and that thinking is different because it is 'affected by the different background and lifestyle' (Intermediate, #4); and that personal experience (in this case with respect to cheating) influencing a person cheating in a relationship where the student thought that it should not be done, but another student related that 'sometimes it is necessary' (Intermediate, #4).

6. Conclusion and implications

This study evaluated the ongoing effectiveness, from 2017 to 2020, in both offline and online classes of a classroom process designed by the primary author that was related to students drawing upon their own funds of knowledge, not facts and content, with respect to taboos. Research data confirmed that the class worked well with most students who ranged in ability from Basic to Advanced levels.

The taboos class lacked specificity and the survey allowed the students to socially mediate their own thoughts in English, with the authors encouraging community and collaboration. Curiosity played a major role with students highly engaged in both relating their own taboos and learning about the taboos other students believed to be important. Questions were posed and responded to. Evidence was also discovered that this classroom process held most of the students' focus, both as individuals and in groups they were placed in, both on and offline. Moreover, as no two students had the same lists of taboos there were no classes that were the same. The classes were as distinct as the students themselves.

7. Limitations of this study and suggestions for future research

The bulk of the research data came from student surveys and it would have been good if the opportunity had been present to further question several students about the statements that they made. As it is, their comments could serve as starting points for future research that other academics will undertake.

References

Ab Kadir, M. A. (2017). What teacher knowledge matters in effectively developing critical thinkers in the 21st century curriculum? *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, *23*, 79-90. Chen, B., Denoyelles, A., Patton, K., & Zydney, J. (2017). Creating a community of inquiry in large-enrollment online courses: An exploratory study on the effect of protocols within online discussions. *Online Learning*, *21*(1), 165-188. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1140258.pdf

Chakraborty, R. (2017). A short note on accent–bias, social identity and ethnocentrism. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, *8*(4), 57-64. Retrieved from https://www.journals.aiac.org.au/index.php/alls/article/viewFile/3703/2979

Davis, J. M. (2011). Using surveys for understanding and improving foreign language programs. University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, Department of Second Language Studies, Retrieved from https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/handle/10125/14549/NW61-Davis.pdf?sequence=10, last accessed on 10/06/2017.

Dutilh Novaes, C. (2018). The enduring enigma of reason. *Mind & Language*, *33*(5), 513-524. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/mila.12174

Ellis, R. (1997). The empirical evaluation of language teaching materials. *ELT journal*, *51*(1), 36-42.

Islam, S., Hossain, F., & Rahman, M. (2020). Challenges of Materials Development for the Tertiary Level EFL Learners in Bangladesh: Materials Developers' Perspectives. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, *8*(12), 6818-6830.

Kennette, L., Chapman, M. (2021). Providing positive student feedback in an online environment. *Academia Letters*, Article 203. https://doi.org/10.20935/AL203. Retrieved from

https://www.academia.edu/45011764/Providing_positive_student_feedback_in_an_online_envi ronment

Kim, J. (2013). Influence of group size on students' participation in online discussion forums. *Computers & Education*, *62*, 123-129.

Lieberman, M. (2020, December 03). Like it or not, k-12 schools are doing a digital leapfrog during covid-19. Retrieved February 22, 2021, from https://www.edweek.org/technology/like-it-or-not-k-12-schools-are-doing-a-digital-leapfrog-during-covid-19/2020/06

Lee, Z. N. (1999). Korean culture and sense of shame. *Transcultural psychiatry*, *36*(2), 181-194.

Muirhead, B. (2003). Teaching philosophy courses to online graduate students. *United States Distance Learning Association*, 63. Retrieved from http://www.itdl.org/DistEdReader.pdf#page=90

Scarborough, R. (2021, February 04). Faculty as Nonpersons at Pandemic U. Academia Letters, Article 247.https://doi.org/10.20935/AL247. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/45081925/Faculty_as_Nonpersons_at_Pandemic_U?email_work _card=view-paper

Karalis, T. (2020). Planning and evaluation during educational disruption: Lessons learned from COVID-19 pandemic for treatment of emergencies in education. *European Journal of Education Studies*.

Maitra, D. (2017). Funds of knowledge: An underrated tool for school literacy and student engagement. *International journal of society, culture & language*, *5*(1), 94-102.

Matusov, E. (2020). A student's right to freedom of education. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, *8*, SF1-SF28.

Mohseni, M., & Rahmanpanah, H. (2020). Language Learning Materials Development for Teachers' Professional Development. *Journal of Language and Translation*, *10*(1), 49-64.

Ohno, Atsuko. 'Communicative competence and communicative language teaching.' *Retrieved from http://www.u-bunkyo.ac.jp/center/library/image/fsell2002_25-32.pdf on 7/24/2016* (2002): 25-32.

Peters, U. (2020). What Is the Function of Confirmation Bias? *Erkenntnis*, 1-26. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10670-020-00252-1

Tria, J. Z. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of education in the Philippines: The new normal. *International Journal of Pedagogical Development and Lifelong Learning*, *1*(1), 2-4. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/43283792/The_COVID_19_Pandemic_through_the_Lens_of_Ed ucation_in_the_Philippines_The_New_Normal?email_work_card=view-paper

Tomlinson, B. (2012). Materials development for language learning and teaching. *Language teaching*, *45*(2), 143.

Wittebols, J. H. (2020). Transforming Confirmation Bias to Generate Critical Consciousness in News/Information Literacy and Social Science Courses. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, *11*(2).

Yeigh, T., & Lynch, D. (2020). Is online teaching and learning here to stay? *Academia Letters*, 2. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/44834873/Is_Online_Teaching_and_Learning_Here_to_Stay?email _work_card=view-paper

Yurtsever, A., & Dilara, Ö. Z. E. L. (2021). The Role of Cultural Awareness in the EFL Classroom. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, *12*(1), 102-132.

Appendices

The Three Taboos/Sins Survey

Appendix A

In your opinion what are the three taboos/sins with respect to **Family**, **Relationships (dating)** and being a **Student** (three for each section). Write them in the column under "the deadly sins" Interview your classmates asking how they would rate each sin and find out how your classmates feel in relation to yourself.

For example:

> Surveyor: "How would you rate lying (let's say you picked this one) to your parents as a family taboo/sin?"
>
> Person surveyed: "I think it ranks about a 7."
>
> Surveyor: "Why do you think it is a 7? I think it is a 10!"
>
> Person surveyed: "Sometimes it is necessary to lie. I don't like my family to worry about me."

Family "Deadly Sins"	Name:	Name:	Name:	Name:	Name:
You should never:					
You should never:					
You should never:					

Relationship "Deadly Sins" (Dating)	Name:	Name:	Name:	Name:	Name:
You should never:					
You should never:					
You should never:					

Student "Deadly Sins"	Name:	Name:	Name:	Name:	Name:
You should never:					
You should never:					
You should never:					

Appendix B

Exit Survey

Name _____ Student number_____

1. Did you find the taboo activity interesting/fun?

    a. yes   b. no

    c. other
    _____
    _____

2. Did you find it was easier to talk to other people about your thoughts about taboos by the end of the class?

    a. yes   b. no

    c. other
    _____
    _____

3. Speaking about taboos was in ranking from 1-10 (1 being not useful to 10 being very useful)

- Making speaking easier   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Learning new vocabulary 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Getting new ideas   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- Other areas you felt speaking helped/did not help you with
  _____
  _____

4. Do you believe that the taboo lesson would help students who are not used to speaking in English feel more comfortable?

    a. yes   b. no

    c. other
    _____
    _____

5. What was one taboo you were told about that you thought was only a low taboo ranking (under 5), but the other student thought it was a high ranking (7-10)? Why did you feel this way?

_____
_____
_____
_____

6. What was one of your taboos that you thought had a high taboo ranking (7-10), but the other student thought it was a low ranking? Why do you think they felt that way?

_____
_____
_____
_____

7. Are there any other comments that you would like to make?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Types of Hedging Devices Used in the Editorials
of English Dailies of Bangladesh

Dr. Leonard Shankar Rozario*

Abstract

This study discloses and evaluates the types of hedging devices used in the English Dailies Editorials of Bangladesh. Journalists frequently employ hedges to convey information on ethics since they have a 'grey' meaning. Hedges are essential in discourse analysis since academic authors must convey their results and ideas properly; yet, to be academically and socially acceptable they need to be more cautious about them. Newspaper's features like news articles and editorials have got their own set of linguistic qualities. This study was completed based on the theoretical framework of Hyland (1998) & Machin & Mayr's (2012) classification of hedging, its forms, and functions. The purpose of this study was to measure the frequency and kinds of hedges employed in the prominent English dailies of Bangladesh. This descriptive and qualitative study was grounded on the secondary data from 30 editorials from six news dailies. The results showed that the link between hedges and editorials was impersonating and protecting participants and journalistic ethical rules. It also indicated that the average Bangladeshi English news dailies as a preferred type of media, desire to utilize preferred hedging devices in the editorials over subtle languages.

Keywords: *Types of Hedging Devices, English Dailies, Editorials, Bangladesh*

1. Introduction

Hedging means a linguistic process that protects from fully committing to promising for the authenticity of the facts or news they are given. Hedges make the sentences more reliable and the readers can understand or accept the sentences which helps to avoid any kind of social problems in society and country. Over the years, hedging has been studied in different languages from various points of view in different countries; but the types of hedges that are being used in the English news dailies in Bangladesh have been important to investigate for this study.

News dailies are essential sources of information for people all around the world, and they are the most frequently read media. The way information is presented in these newspapers has the potential to affect public opinion. As a result, language devices such as "Hedges" play a significant function in this context, as they can influence how firmly readers believe the information provided in this medium is true. Hedging has become an important component of scholarly debate.

_____
*Dr. Leonard Shankar Rozario is Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Notre Dame University Bangladesh

Hedges are employed differently depending on the topic Hedges appear more frequently in editorials than in news reports (Nugroho, 2017). This is true with both newspapers, implying that native and non-native English speakers use similar hedging tactics in their writing. However, there are certain distinctions to be made, such as the distribution of particular hedges, such as epistemic verbs and agentless passive. Nugroho (2017) considered that academic writers must be cautious in how they convey their results and arguments, and using hedges in their writing is one of the methods to do so. Hence, News stories, editorials, letters, ads, and other sorts of pieces make up a newspaper. Different language features, such as the usage of hedges, distinguish these various forms of speech. Advertising, for example, may use different hedging methods than a news story piece because they serve distinct purposes. Advertisements may attempt to persuade readers to purchase a certain product, but news pieces often offer information and facts about current events. According to ethics, sensitive cases including "ethnicity," "race," "faith," and "social group" should be reported carefully to minimize potential conflict among those engaged in the story.

One of the pioneers in studying hedges, Lakoff (1972) defines hedges as "words that make things fuzzier or less fuzzy." Hedges are language techniques used by authors to convey a lack of commitment to the truth of a proposition or a wish not to communicate that commitment unequivocally (Richards et al, 2002). Meanwhile, Khanbutayeva (2019) argued the linguistics of hedging, which is a language characteristic that expresses uncertainty and potential. The goal of this study is to look at hedging devices in English and Azerbaijani economic and political newspaper editorials, as well as to show which hedges are commonly employed in these languages. As the newspapers are read more than any other type of written material, identifying the hedging semantically and realistically in newspaper editorials is severe. According to Khanbutayeva (2019), hedging is a communication tactic that softens the impact of a statement and makes it more acceptable to the interlocutor. Hedging allows us to reduce the impact of the utterance's substance. They are employed to make a speech more powerful, more acceptable to the interlocutor, and to decrease negation changes. Hedging is a technique for modifying illocutionary force and achieving politeness.

News dailies serve as an essential source of information and the usage of hedging devices in news dailies is just as crucial as it is in an intellectual context. As a literature hedging is very significant because it communicates techniques to soften the impact of a statement and creates it more suitable to the readers. It allows condensing the impact of the statement's substance. They are used to make a speech more authoritative, more acceptable to the speaker, and to reduce negation changes. Hedging devices are important skills for changing illocutionary force and accomplishing politeness. In this regard, this study is significant to find out

how hedging devices are being used in the news dailies of Bangladesh and to inquire how they are part of the intellectual properties. In terms of the intellectual jargon, students can benefit from this research that would allow them to examine and find the appropriateness of hedging roles, as well as the philosophical, cultural, social, and psychological aspects that support them. Many researchers have published their research on hedging; nonetheless, a few have looked at the usage of hedges in other discourses, such as newspaper discourses. However, no study has been done on the hedging devices used in the English news dailies of Bangladesh. As a pioneer study, this research is very significant and timely research.

The current study is limited to Newspaper Editorials of six leading English dailies of Bangladesh. The purpose of this study is to measure the frequency and kinds of hedges employed in six news dailies editorials, namely - "The Daily Star", "Dhaka Tribune", "The Bangladesh Today", "The Independent", "The Bangladesh Observer" & "The Daily Sun"

2. Review of Related Literature

The word 'hedge' is widely used in finance to refer to a way of anticipating risk that may occur as a result of potential price fluctuations (Winardi, 1989). The basic meaning of hedges applied in economics and linguistics is similar. According to Watson and Hill (1997), hedges are language expressions that indicate the speaker's assurance or hesitation regarding the topic under debate.

In an article, Wibowo and Yusoff (2014) claimed that the term "hedges" refers to language units with ambiguous meaning due to skeptical conviction in the statement. Furthermore, 'hedges' are employed for defense and protection. Hedges indicate a "border, restriction, or guard (Cabanes, 2007). In fact, Lakoff (1972) coined the term "hedges" in linguistics, which refers to phrases whose purpose is to make things more or less ambiguous. According to Swan, Deumert, Lilis, and Mesthrie (2004), a hedge or hedging includes the use of words or phrases that indicate some degree of qualification or ambiguity. In a study, Tahririan and Shahzamani (2009) found that the English editorials were more loaded with hedging than the Persian editorials. According to the research, language and subject disparities can be ascribed to cultural differences between the two populations.

In another study, Villanueva (2014) found that hedging assists authors in expressing their views and assumptions and at the same time regulates any negative reactions of the readers using a variety of language styles and strategies. This idea is supported by other researchers (Coetzer, 2009; Dallyono, Hidayati, &

Muhammad, 2008; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Nivales, 2011; Tahririan & Shahzamani, 2009 as cited in Villanueva, 2014) too. Moreover, Villanueva (2014) also found that over half of the hedges in the editorials were allusions to official reports or authority, with modals and adverbs accounting for little over a third of the hedges. She also claimed that misuse of hedges in journalistic language can lead to "miscommunication, uncertainty, mistranslation, and lack of clarity." Tahririan and Shahzamani (2009, P. 202) suggested that very little attention has been paid to examining hedging in newspaper editorials in the Philippines (as cited in Villanueva, 2014). Wibowo and Yusoff (2014) claim while dealing with moral issues in any company, ethics plays a vital part. According to Frost (2007), ethics is a method of investigating morality when individuals encounter specific situations of moral difficulty (p.9). At their best, the journalist's battles will be between the public's right to know and some other moral precept - may be the violation of an individual's privacy that would influence against publishing (Wibowo and Yusoff, 2014). The ethical impression of Wibowo and Yusoff (2014) in journalism, particularly in newspapers, the use of hedges as linguistic units is inescapable. The media ethics are intimately connected to the different types of 'hedges' manifested as adjectives, adverbs, epistemic modality, if-clauses, and other forms that offer grey meaning. Journalistic ethics, impersonation, and participant protection are three key elements of the use of hedges in the media. To put it another way, linguistics units known as 'hedges' have made significant contributions to the media, notably in the area of media ethics. Furthermore, the employment of 'hedges' in newspapers might be used as a tool to promote social harmony (peace journalism).

Nonetheless, some people attempt to classify hedges for various research objectives. Fraser's (2010, Pp. 23 - 24) classification of hedges is one example. Fraser (2010) divided hedges into the following categories:

a) Adverbs/adjectives: approximately, frequently, occasionally, typically, sort of
b) Impersonal pronouns: one, it,
d) Conjunctive conjunctions: even though, though, while, although, even if
d) Hedged performative verb (using only a modal to hedging a performative verb): must
e) Indirect Speech Acts: Could you talk a little faster?
f) Introductory remarks: I think that, to the best of our knowledge, it is our opinion that
g) Adverbs of possibility: maybe, probably, practically, presumably, evidently
h) Adjectives with modals: feasible, probable, un/likely
I) Modal noun: assumption, claim, possibility, estimate, and proposal

Meanwhile, through contemplating the usage of hedging devices in the news dailies further research on Academic studies and languages can be benefited as well as the use of academic techniques in journalistic integrity can be overviewed. Although the use of "Hedging" in the English dailies editorials is to boost the rhetorical structure. Zarza (2018) talked about the editorials, often known as the voice of the newspaper, which is a kind of public discourse that communicates with a large audience and plays a significant role in defining and influencing public opinion. Despite the breadth of discourses studied, editorials with a large audience have received little attention in terms of employing hedges and boosters in their rhetorical structure. Zarza (2018) believed that an editorial is an explicit example of persuasive writing and establishes rules for written persuasion for a specific goal (also in Ansary and Babai, 2005). Expecting the audience to readily embrace the offered views is not reasonable. The editors of newspapers use rhetorical tactics to persuade their large readership and authorities in charge of the problem to change their minds and take action. This is accomplished by manipulating various lexical and linguistic characteristics in numerous newspapers from various nations. As a result, the composite frameworks in this study demonstrate the relevance of both theory and particular facts and context in constructing a thorough framework with minimal overlaps across categories (Zarza, 2018).

However, Siddique et al. (2018) looked at the metadiscoursal features in Pakistani English Newspaper Editorials (PENE). In comparison to the other corpora: DN, TN, and TFT, the results show that the corpus TF has employed more hedges. These authors believed that the writer's frequent use of hedges reveals his or her skepticism about the truth. Shafqat et al. (2019) suggested the presence of categorized interpersonal meta-discourse; hedges are used in English European, and Pakistani newspaper cultural pieces. Constance Omo & Idegbekwe (2020) investigated hedging in 18 editorials and discovered that among other things, those shield hedges are the most commonly utilized in newspaper editorials, with all of the publications using them. The study, also discovered that no newspaper editorials utilized the term hedge since none were detected in the studied data. Moreover, using hedges can assist the news organization to avoid being sued for libel since they can hide behind the ambiguity that hedges give.

3. Theoretical Framework

Several studies have partially demonstrated the interacting types and classes of hedges over the years (Cf. Hyland, 1998; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Varttala, 1999), In light of these potentially perplexing classifications, the researcher combed through various research publications and reference books on hedging devices to develop the categorization of hedges used in this study.

Hedges are classified as (1) introductory verbs, (2) lexical verbs, (3) modal verbs (4) nouns (5) adverbs (6) modal adverbs (7) That clause (8) other additional hedging techniques in the research stated previously.

The common purpose of the pragmatics of hedging devices in the literature or news dailies is to express hesitation or uncertainty and to demonstrate politeness and indirectness. However, the introductory verbs agree, demand, offer, promise, refuse, threaten, say, tell, reply, ask, etc… present the argument cohesively in the discourse. The modals **must, may, would, can, could, and might** belong to the first group. The usage of these modals might cause assertions to be less definite. The major lexical verbs, also known as epistemic verbs, include words like an **estimate, seem, imply, and indicate**. One of the purposes of this sort of system is to allow authors to modify the tone of their assertions based on the amount of material available to support certain claims. The other kind is made up of nouns that are employed in statements that included terms like **claim, possibility, and assumption**. These are distinct from other nouns in that they reflect a vague or ambiguous meaning. "That clause" is another significant reference to hedging being used in the literature. This device can be interpreted as a form of multiple choices. It also leaves room for inherent openness for improvement and development in the discourse.

The main purpose of this study is to find out the types of hedging devices that are used in the English news dailies in Bangladesh; specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. What type of hedging devices are found in the English dailies editorials in Bangladesh?
2. What are the salient hedging devices used among the English dailies editorials? Why?
3. What are the English news dailies that use hedging devices more than others?

Research Objectives

1. To find out the types of hedging devices that are found in the English dailies editorials in Bangladesh.
2. To investigate the salient hedging devices used among the English news dailies editorials
3. To demonstrate the English news dailies that use hedging devices more than others

4. Research Method

A mixed-method was applied to this study. Mixed-method research incorporates both Qualitative and Quantitative research. It delivers a general approach by combining and analyzing the numerical data with deeper contextualized understandings. Mixed methods also enable the verification of the data from many sources. The research is descriptive in a style that explained the nature of realistic hedging devices that appeared in news dailies editorials of Bangladesh. Qualitative research analyses data from direct fieldwork observations, in-depth, open-ended interviews, and written documents. This method helped the researcher to perceive the classification of hedging devices found in the English news dailies editorials and to investigate the differences and correlations among the English news dailies in Bangladesh. As Wijaya et al. (2019) rightly mentioned through qualitative research, the researcher can represent visualize, describe, classify, interpret, contextualize, categorize and compare which is important to discover and evaluate. In this study, the researcher was able to identify the usage of hedging devices in English news dailies editorials of Bangladesh.

Secondary data was collected from six different prominent English news dailies (namely - "The Daily Star", "Dhaka Tribune", "The Bangladesh Today", "The Independent", "The Bangladesh Observer" & "The Daily Sun") editorials of Bangladesh both manually and electronically. 40 editorials were collected from these six prominent news dailies randomly. The purpose of this study was to observe and measure the frequency and kinds of hedges that were employed in these news dailies editorials. 30 editorials were downloaded from the website and 10 were collected from the printed media. After the secondary data collection, the data was made ready for a content-sensitive analysis to ensure correctness in coding since there were several hedging devices to be classified. Finally, the data was observed, computed, and analyzed with frequency, percentage & categorization indicated in the theoretical foundation for the study of Hyland (1998) & Machin & Mayr (2012).

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 The types of hedging devices found in the English dailies editorials in Bangladesh

Data revealed that the following types of hedging devices were found in the English dailies of Bangladesh.

Type of hedges	Daily Star Editorials		Daily Sun Editorials		Daily Observer Editorials		The Independent Editorials		Dhaka Tribune Editorials		Bangladesh Today Editorials		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Introductory verbs	03	2.75	00	00	05	5.37	02	3.12	01	6.25	3	3.26	14	3.37
Lexical verbs	03	2.75	01	2.43	01	1.07	01	1.56	0	00	00	00	06	1.44
Modal verbs	37	33.94	13	31.70	45	48.38	34	53.12	4	25	43	46.73	176	42.40
Adverbs of frequency	01	0.91	00	00	11	11.82	02	3.12	00	00	00	00	14	3.37
Modal adverbs	03	2.75	00	00	01	1.07	00	00	00	00	1	1.08	05	1.20
That clause	61	55.96	26	63.41	28	30.10	25	39.06	11	68.75	43	46.73	194	45.74
Others	01	0.91	01	2.43	02	2.15	00	00	00	00	2	2.17	06	1.44
Total	109	100	41	100	93	100	64	100	16	100	92	100	415	100

Table 1: Types of hedging devices found in English dailies editorials

Types of Hedging Devices Used in the Editorials of English Dailies of Bangladesh

As it can be seen from the table above, there were more than 6 (six) types of hedging devices found in the English dailies editorials of Bangladesh. But six types of hedging devices were predominant in the news editorials. After critically and carefully analyzing all the data, it was found that "that clause" was highly used in those editorials. Among the four prominent daily English newspapers in Bangladesh, the researcher found the highest number of hedging devices was found in the "Daily Star" which was 109. On the other hand, the lowest number of hedging devices found in "Daily Sun" was about 41. For other news dailies editorials, the number of hedging devices was found between 60-90.

An introductory verb provides an introduction to the readers and helps readers to emphasize the subject matter. Data revealed that almost 4% of introductory verbs were used in the national English dillies editorials of Bangladesh. For instance - And it **seems**, regardless of whether it is the Taliban or IS, the victims are always ordinary Afghans……. (Daily Star, Oct 9, 2021); then, **Doubts** have been raised as to whether it is commercial production will be possible… (The Observer, 31 October 2021) and "To **say** that the latest fire at the Patuakhali new market -- a fire that has destroyed around 70 shops…(Dhaka Tribune, Sat, Oct 9, 2021). All of these are emphasizing the subject matter in the editorials.

The purposes of lexical verbs allow authors to modify the tone of their assertions based on the amount of material available to support certain claims. The data showed that nearly 2% of lexical verbs were used in the news dailies of Bangladesh. For example ... the water-logging problem has **assumed** a formidable challenge……. (The Independent, 11 April 2018) and … we **believe** that having three armed battalions of police maintain law and order in the refugee camps … (Daily Star, Oct 8, 2021). The usage of the modals might cause proclamations to be less certain. It was discovered from the data that more than 42% of modal verbs were used in the English editorials of Bangladesh. For instance … The international community **must** not abandon the … (Daily Star, Oct 9, 2021); … which **may** have a huge destabilizing effect on local law and order situation…… (Daily Star, Oct 8, 2021); … as any significant decline in RMG export **could** lead to huge …….. (Daily Star, Oct 20, 2021); …. it **may be** sometime before the return of the Rohingyas begin … (The Independent, 12 July 2019); ... this number **must be** combined with the fact that China is a populous country undergoing … (The Daily Sun, 28th October 2021); ... Bangabandhu declared that farmers **would** not require paying tax for owning 25 bigha lands, but none **would** be allowed … (The Daily Sun, 14 January 2020) and ... together with government authorities and Bangladesh Army **must** execute similar canal…. (The Observer, 5 July 2019). All these showed a significant number of modal verbs used in the English newspaper. Data also showed that nearly 5% of adverbs and

modal adverbs were found in the English news dailies. For example, the strange animals that we **often** encounter in the wild. (The Observer, 10 January 2014); … They are **often** the ones who have done the least to cause it. (The Independent, 31 October 2021); … Bringing the killers of Mohib Ullah to justice will **certainly** boost their confidence. (The Daily Star, Oct 8, 2021) and ... can the two ministries possibly have for the inordinate **delay** in executing the prime minister's … (The Daily Star, Monday, Oct 25, 2021). These are distinct from other nouns in that they reflect a vague or ambiguous meaning.

"That clause" is another important hedging device that was used in the news dailies editorials. This device is interpreted as a form of numerous choices. For example, a correspondent of this newspaper **that** under a scheme titled Social Safety Programme the government … (The Observer, 1 March 2015); ….which shows **that** the challenge a constable faces is not just on the streets. (Daily Star, Oct 27, 2021) and …. As the results of the influence **that** transport associations………. (Daily Star, Oct 20, 2021). In all of these, it also leaves room for inherent openness for improvement and development in the discourse. The other types of hedging devise like **-** **Although** the online classes have tried to make up for the shortfall … (Daily Star, Oct 20, 2021) & ... **even though** many families have been in Myanmar for generations… (The Daily Sun, 12 September 2017) were used rarely (less than 2%) in the English news dailies editorials of Bangladesh.
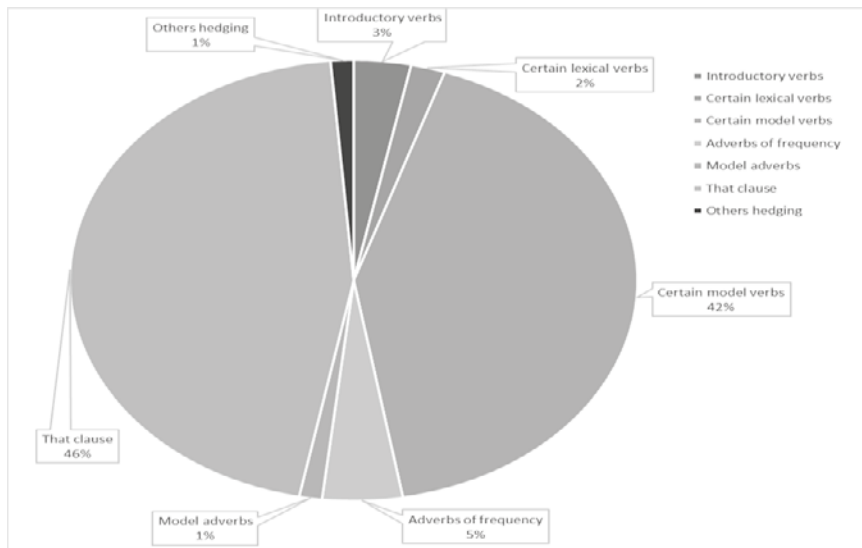

Figure 1: Salient hedging devices used in the news dailies editorials

5.2 The Salient Hedging Devices used among the English Dailies Editorials

Data revealed that the salient hedging devices were used in all the editorials from the six different newspapers to possibly avoid direct responsibility in forceful and dangerous commentaries. However, the following Pie chart reveals the numerical strength of hedging devices used in different English newspaper editorials. The pie chart shows that 46% "of that clause", 42 % "Modal verbs", 5% "Adverbs" and lexical verbs, adverbs, and others were used insignificantly.

However, the pie chart showed that 'that clause' and 'modal verbs' were enormously found mostly in the English editorials, and on the other hand, "Modal adverbs" and "Other hedging" were found insignificantly. The percentage shows that the possible similarities or differences in the use of hedging devices in the English newspaper Editorials of Bangladesh are shown in Figure 1. From Figure 1, it can be seen that The Daily Star uses more hedges in the newspaper editorials than other newspapers. To temper tone in addressing or mentioning prominent officials and provide possibilities for other courses of action, "that clause" was commonly utilized in the "Daily Star " and the "Daily Observer". The other news dailies also employ certain adverbs to provide more autonomy in citing figures and describing actions.

5.3 The English news dailies using hedging devices more than other English news dailies

Data revealed that among the English news dailies editorials of Bangladesh the Daily Star, Bangladesh Today and Daily Observer have used the hedging devices more frequently than the Daily Sun, Independent, and Dhaka Tribune. The frequencies & percentages of hedging devices (Table 1) were Daily Star 109 (26.26%), Daily Observer 93 (22.40%), Bangladesh Today 92 (22.16%), The Independent 64 (15.42%), Daily Sun 41 (9.87%) and Dhaka Tribune 16 (3.85%) only. This showed that half of the English dailies used hedging devices and the rest were not much interested in using them. Maybe journalists or newsmakers use a kind of directness rather than indirectness in their expressions. However, the Daily Star, Bangladesh Today, and Daily Observer mostly deal with political, economic, and social issues and such topics may oblige the use of hedging devices to capture peoples' attention, regular references to official reports, authorities, etc. The highest number of hedges (26.26%) were used in the Daily Star newspaper editorials. But other two news dailies (Daily Sun & Dhaka Tribune) editorials used fewer hedging devices. Compared to other countries, surprisingly, writers barely use hedging devices in the news dailies editorials in Bangladesh.

6. Conclusion & Recommendation

Hedging devices are vital in editorial writing since it requires tempering one's tone when expressing strong convictions, using shields by referring to other sources for seeming statements and using approximations instead of definite quantifiers. Bangladeshi editorial writers, via the use of hedging, show some respect for those in positions of power.

It can be seen that newspaper editorials use these salient hedges just to make the situation comfortable and to avoid direct claims; even if they do not share the source of news. However, the hedging devices in the English news dailies editorials in Bangladesh are references to official reports, authorities, etc., Modal Verbs, and That Clauses. These salient hedges are being used in the English newspaper editorials to avoid direct claims or to minimize the possibility of another academic opposing the claims that are being made, to conform to the currently accepted style of academic writing, and to enable the author to devise a politeness strategy where they can acknowledge that there may be flaws in their claims.

Following the aforementioned analysis the following conclusion can be made:
First of all, the study has discovered that the usage of hedges can assist the news organization to avoid being sued for defamation since hedges allow them to hide behind the incomprehensibility provided by hedges. Secondly, more than six types of hedging devices namely, introductory verbs, lexical verbs, modal verbs, adverbs of frequency, modal adverbs, that clause, and others were found in English editorials of news dailies of Bangladesh. Thirdly, "That Clause" & "Modal Verbs" hedges are the most commonly used hedges in English dailies editorials, as utilized by all publications. The study, on the other hand, discovered that introductory verbs, lexical verbs, and modal adverbs were used for several newspaper editorials. Finally, the study also discovered that Daily Star, Bangladesh Today, and Daily Observer used hedging significantly; perhaps they mostly deal with socio-economic and political issues and such topics may oblige the use of hedging devices to capture peoples' attention.

The use of hedging methods in their editorial while discussing sensitive matters suggests that some Bengali communication is cautious and oblique. In editorials and different academic and scientific research papers, the proper use of hedging mechanisms can aid writers in softening their personal opinions or statements. However, the necessity of concealing personal responsibilities in assertions devoid of or lacking in substantive evidence, as well as the need to temper convictions in claims for the sake of showing respect or humility. This should not overshadow the importance of establishing credibility, conciseness, and

correctness of information and assertions. One must remember that an effective discourse calls for a balance of expression. While serious thought may be devoted to explaining ideas and convictions via research and study, the employment of hedging devices allows for cautioning the effect of claims or statements in the lack of significant backing references or facts. Meanwhile, through contemplating the usage of Hedging devices in the newspapers further research on Academic studies and languages can be benefited as well as the use of academic techniques in journalistic integrity can be overviewed. Other academics interested in hedging devices can look into comparing hedging devices across cultures and genders. Research comparing the usage of hedges in two distinct cultures can provide important details about how different races interact, while a study of hedging by gender can reveal how similar or different males and females are when it comes to employing cautious language. Hedging devices may be investigated across disciplines such as health and sciences, law, business, and psychology to highlight the different types of hedging devices utilized in different professions.

7. References

Ansary, H., & Babaii, E. (2005). The generic integrity of newspaper editorials: A systemic functional perspective. RELC Journal, 36(3), 271-295.

Cabanes, P. A. (2007). A contrastive analysis of hedging in English and Spanish architecture project description. RESLA, 20, 139-158.

Coetzer, A. (2009). Hedges in occupational therapy research texts. South African Journal of Occupational Therapy, 39(3), 16-26. Retrieved from http://www.netd.ac.za/?action.

Constance Omo, I., & Idegbekwe, D. (2020). Pragmatic Hedges in Editorials: A Focus on Vanguard, Guardian and Sun Newspaper Editorials in 2017. Journal of Translation and Language Studies, 1(1), 26–36. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.48185/jtls.v1i1.11.

Dallyono, R,, Hidayati, F. & Muhammad, A. (2008). The use of hedging in academic discourse. Educationist, 2(1), 27-37. Retrieved from http//file.upi.edu/Direktrori.

Fraser, B. (2010). Pragmatic Competence: The Case of Hedging. In Kaltenbock, G. et al (Eds.). New Approaches to Hedging, 15-34. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Frost, C. (2007). Journalism ethics and regulation. Essex: Longman.

Hyland, K. (1998). Boosting, hedging, and the negotiation of academic knowledge. Text, 18(3), 349-382. Retrieved from http://www.degruyter.dg.viewarticle.

Khanbutayeva, L. M. (2019). Hedging in Newspaper Editorials in the English and Azerbaijan Languages. International Journal of English Linguistics, 10(1), 91. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v10n1p91.

Lakoff, G. (1972). Hedges: A study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts. Chicago Linguistic Society Papers, 8, 183-228.

Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). How to do critical discourse analysis. London: Sage Publications.

Nivales, M.L.M. (2011). Hedging in college research papers: Implications for language instruction. Asian English as Foreign Language Journal, 52, Cebu Issue, 35-45. Retrieved from http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/PTA/May-2011-Nivales.pdf.

Nugroho, A. (2017). Hedging in News Stories and Editorials in the Jakarta Post and the Washington Times. Journal of English Language and Culture, 4(1). Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.30813/jelc.v4i1.289.

Shafqat, A., Memon, R. A., & Akhtar, H. (2019). Cross-Cultural Analysis of the Use of Hedges in European and Pakistani English Newspaper: A Corpus-Based Study. International Journal of English Linguistics, 9(5), 126. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v9n5p126.

Siddique, A. R., Mahmood, Dr. M. A., Akhter, N., & Arslan, F. (2018). Hedges as metadiscourse in Pakistani English newspaper editorials: a corpus-based study | International Journal of Development Research (IJDR). Www.journalijdr.com. https://www.journalijdr.com/hedges-metadiscourse-pakistani-english-newspaper-editorials-corpus-based-study.

Swann, J., Deumert, A., Lilis, T., & Mesthrie, R. (2004). A dictionary of sociolinguistics. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Tahririan, M. H., & Shahzamani, M. (2009). Hedging in English and Persian Editorials: A Contrastive Study. Ijal.khu.ac.ir, 12(1), 199–221.

Varttala, T. (2001). Hedging in scientifically oriented discourse exploring variation according to discipline and intended audience. (Doctoral dissertation). University of Tampere, Finland.

Villanueva, V. S. (2014). Hedging devices in Philippine newspaper editorials Volume 2 Archives. UST - AJELS; Asian Journal of English Language Studies. https://ajels.ust.edu.ph/volume-category/volume-2/.

Watson, J., & Hill, A. (2000). A Dictionary of communication and media studies. (4th ed.) London: Arnold.

Wibowo, A. H., & Yusoff, N. (2014). "Hedges" and Media Ethics: A Case in Indonesian Newspaper. Retrieved from https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042814057619/pdf?md5=9b8fcb89c70e2a866e6b192a4a8dcb29&pid=1-s2.0-S1877042814057619-main.pdf.

Wijaya, A. F., Kartika, R., Zauhar, S., & Mardiyono, M. (2019). Perspective merit system on placement regulation of high-level official civil servants (a Case Study of placement civil servants in Local Government on Palembang). HOLISTICA – Journal of Business and Public Administration, 10(2), 187–206. https://doi.org/10.2478/hjbpa-2019-0025.

Winardi. (1989). Kamus ekonomi. Bandung: CV Mandar Maju.

Zarza, S. (2018). Hedging and Boosting the Rhetorical Structure of English Newspaper Editorials. UKH Journal of Social Sciences, 2(1), 41–51. https://doi.org/10.25079/ukhjss.v2n1y2018 pp41-51

Affective Factors and the Role of Teachers in Developing Learner Autonomy

Anowara Rayhan Arusha*

Abstract

Learners' affective factors play a crucial role in their learning of a foreign language. In Bangladesh, adequate attention is often not given to the learners' affective factors, which results in poor performance of students. This paper aims to examine the role of teachers and learners in understanding the affective factors in language learning and how these will encourage learner autonomy in tertiary level students. An online survey was conducted with a sample of 100 undergraduate and master's students of the English Department from 4 different universities in Dhaka. Data were collected through questionnaires on foreign language classroom anxiety, motivation, background information, and students' perceptions of their English teachers' role in learning a foreign language. Results show that there is a negative correlation between anxiety and language learning and a positive relationship between motivation and language learning. Moreover, the roles and responsibilities of teachers in developing learner autonomy are crucial. The discussion on the complex impact of affective factors on English learning in EFL contexts can be an avenue for future intervention studies.

Keywords: affect, anxiety, motivation, learner autonomy

Introduction

The term 'affect' is referred to the emotional state of individuals and is considered generally as aspects of mood, feeling, emotion, or attitude that influences behavior. The cognitive aspect of students is an important characteristic of learning a foreign language, hence more attention should be given to the affective factors required in the process of learning. According to Jensen (1998), learning in respect to affect, focuses on how we feel, act and think. The workings of the mind and emotions are inseparable, and emotions, thinking, and learning are all linked together. In the field of neuroscience, research that deals with learning suggests that an environment with positive affective factors creates an optimum state of learning in the brain and contributes more to language learning than to cognitive skills. Hence, it is important to understand the role of affect in language learning broadly in two aspects. First of all, attention to affective factors can lead to more effective language learning by dealing with how problems created by negative emotions can be overcome. Secondly, it states how we can facilitate language learning by creating more positive emotions; and how focusing on affect in language classroom can reach beyond language teaching.

_____

*Anowara Rayhan Arusha is a Lecturer in English at East West University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Positive affect and the role of teachers can aid learners to be autonomous. Learner autonomy can be generally defined as the ability to take responsibility of one's own learning. Van Lier (2004) suggests that if learners are provided with an authentic environment to express their feelings and become consciously aware of their affective states, they can develop autonomy in learning. Teachers can help students become autonomous learners by lowering their affective filter. They can take up the roles of a counsellor or facilitator where they can make the learning process easier and more flexible by providing psycho-social support by being supportive and helping learners to overcome obstacles.

In Bangladesh, adequate attention is not given to the role of affect in language learning. Affective factors such as emotions, attitude, behavior, anxiety, stress, nervousness, and motivation are not addressed adequately while teaching language, and this results in poor performance of students. Learning the English language becomes a daunting task for learners, especially in the tertiary level contexts where students experience anxiety and nervousness which lead to high affective filter and increased difficulty in the second language production. There is very limited research in this area in the Bangladeshi context and this paper aims to examine the role of teachers and learners in understanding the affective factors in language learning and how these will encourage learner autonomy in tertiary level students.

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. To what extent is the relationship between affect and language learning bidirectional?
2. Can teachers help learners become autonomous by encouraging positive affective factors?
3. How can the affective factors aid in developing autonomy in learners?

Literature Review

One of the most important factors considered in language learning is "affect". It is also crucial in conditioning one's behavior (Dornyei, 2001). Previous research studies have shown that positive affect can provide critical support for learning whereas, negative affective factors can create problems in processing language and prevent learning from taking place. For instance, emotions such as fear or anxiety can hinder the cognitive processing required to complete a task by consuming working memory resources, hence, affecting learners' cognition, learning, and performance (Arnold, 1999). In the field of neuroscience, affect and cognition share an interdependent relationship. Damasio (2000) states that cognition and emotions work together and that both cognition and affective factors are a prerequisite for the functioning of the human brain.

Little (1991) defined learner autonomy as one's ability to become detached, make decisions, initiate independent actions, and reflect critically. Learners have the capacity to manage their affective states as autonomous learners. They also have the ability to monitor and evaluate their learning, set goal,s and find resources. According to van Lier (2004), learner autonomy takes place when learners have the right environment to express their feelings and "become consciously aware of their affective states in relation to their learning experiences". Hence, learners themselves should actively make use of their affective states in order to develop autonomy. For learner autonomy to occur, students need to take greater control over the content and methods of learning (Holec, 1981). It develops from the individual's acceptance of his or her own responsibility for learning. The learner takes the role of a decision-maker who will have the ability to choose tools and resources available to create what is needed for the task (Dickinson, 1995; Holec, 1985; Little, 1991).

Literature on learner autonomy suggests that autonomy may be a Western educational concept and trend that may not suit the Eastern educational contexts (Ellis, 1996). It has been much argued whether autonomy which was supposedly first established in Western educational contexts is valid for language learners in different educational contexts. Autonomy is also believed to be valid for all language learners and no matter what their culture, they tend to have their own, unique learning styles and needs as individuals. In contrast, others (e.g. Pennycook, 1997) argue that autonomy and the autonomous individuals are purely a creation of Western cultures and that the notion does not have sufficient applicability to other cultural contexts. However, there are several studies on learner autonomy in the context of Asia. An example could be research conducted with Japanese, Thai , and Hong Kong students (Balla *et al*., 1991), which showed that Asian students had a positive attitude towards learner autonomy. Other studies suggested that Asian students could "work productively autonomously". Another study on English language students in Cambodia showed that students were ready to work without having dependence on their teachers despite their "strong orientation towards acceptance of power, authority, collectivism and interdependence" (Jones 1995). Littlewood's (1996) study also suggested that Asian learners could work in an autonomous manner if the teacher once initiates a direction or course of the study.

According to Ushioda (2014), the capacity for learners to achieve motivation is achieved by supportive interpersonal processes which develop autonomy, the growth and regulation of motivation internally. Hence, dialogic interactions between learner and teacher are suitable for such development. The socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) suggests that joint problem solving, a part of the social-interactive process, leads one to incorporate the "strategic process and metacognitive control for problem solving". The one-to-one dialogic

interaction between the student and teacher helps in constructing thoughts in managing motivation and learning.

A mixed-method case study was conducted on the implementation of autonomy in upper-elementary Montessori classrooms in Indiana, USA (Ling Koh & Frick, 2010) which explored teachers' strategies and support for developing learner autonomy. The findings showed that teachers helped students by developing cognitive autonomy so that they can engage in activities and improve problem-solving skills. Teachers ensured student-student and teacher-student cooperation and whenever they set limits for students, they provided rationales and avoided criticisms. In addition, another study on learner autonomy on 103 Turkish students studying English at Anadolu University, Turkey was conducted by Yildirim (2008). Data were collected through a forty-three-item questionnaire with questions on students' and teachers' roles, students' confidence levels, and students' actual learning practice outside class. Findings showed that students shared responsibility with teachers and they held teachers responsible more for some actions.

As the above studies suggest, learner readiness and positive affective factors from both teachers and students were found to be associated with learner autonomy and its development. The readiness of students will define and organize all the other areas of learning. Hence, before designing and planning any task or activity and syllabus, teachers should take into account the students' level of autonomy and emotional wellbeing and aid in making them autonomous learners.

Method

Participants

A survey was conducted on 100 undergraduate students from year 2, 3 and Master's from the English Department of four public and private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Second-year students were selected for being more representative of the target population. This is because first-year students mostly try to make transitions between their college life and university life. Moreover, English taught in the third year can be related more to the participants' own field of study. Master's students are also more specialized in their area of study, such as Applied Linguistics and ELT, hence, more suitable for the study. Male and female participants composed about 34% and 64% of the sample respectively. Their age ranged from 20 to 24 years, and the years of learning English ranged from 6 to 12.

Instruments

Four instruments were used in this study; an anxiety questionnaire, a motivation questionnaire, a background information questionnaire, and a questionnaire on the students' perceptions of their English teachers' role and responsibilities in language learning. The background/sociodemographic questionnaire contained information about the participants' age, gender, level of study, name of the university, etc. The 33-item Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) designed by Horwitz et al. (1986) was used to assess second/foreign language learning anxiety, which included questions on self-consciousness, nervousness, confusion, tension, and stress about learning or communicating in English in the classroom. The motivation questionnaire was developed by Clément and Kruidenier (1983) contained 13 items to identify motivational factors in students while learning English. The original set contained 16 items which has been modified for the suitability of Bangladeshi context. The questionnaire on the students' reliance on their English teachers' roles and responsibilities in language learning contained 10 items and 2 items consisted of students' learner autonomy. The questionnaire was adapted and modified from Cotterall (1995) which originally contained 50 items divided into 3 themes.

Data Collection Procedure

An online survey was conducted to collect data from English department undergraduate and Master's students. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh, the researcher was limited to online options and could only collect quantitative data. Participants participated in the survey using google online survey platform. The instrument required about 15 minutes to complete. There were written instructions provided and participants were asked to be as frank as possible while answering the questionnaire.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data has been coded for statistical analysis to answer the research questions indicated above. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 26) has been used to analyze the data. Descriptive statistical analysis will be used to obtain data about the socio-demographic information of the participants (for instance, percentages, frequencies, means, standard deviations, etc.) as well as for the overall levels of anxiety, motivation, and teachers' role in language learning.

Results and Discussion

Anxiety

The anxiety level of the participants in this study is high. General negative attitudes towards English classes are shown by the top-rated anxiety statements: "I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class"; "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class"; "I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions I haven't prepared in advance". These results are demonstrated in the following bar charts:
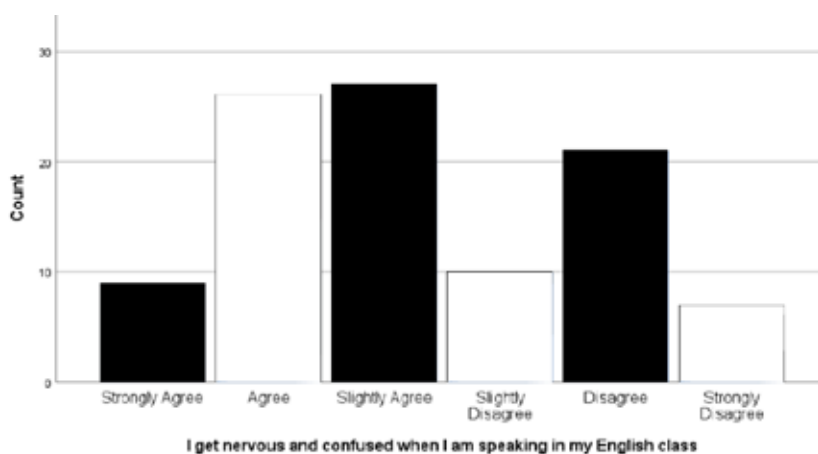

Figure 1: Participants' nervousness and confusion while speaking in English

Learning a foreign language is a difficult process which affects the students' progress at the tertiary level. Learning a second language creates stress for the learners which in turn transforms into anxiety and hampers their learning process. This language anxiety is mostly seen in the English language learners, especially at the tertiary level of education. Possible reasons for English speaking anxiety may derive from the lack of exposure to a society and culture where English is spoken regularly. Moreover, most of the students complete their primary, secondary and higher secondary level education in Bengali medium schools as opposed to English medium schools where they receive an adequate amount of training and practice in English.
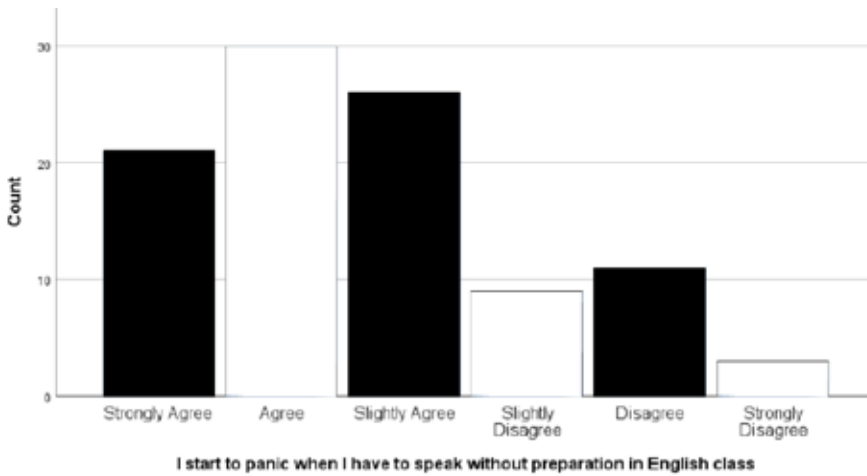
Figure 2: Students' feeling of anxiety (panic) while speaking English without preparation

In this figure, majority of the participants panic when they speak English unprepared. One possible reason for such fear could be following the 'Communicative Language Learning/Teaching Approach' at school which emphasises only on two specific skills of language- reading and writing. The other two essential skills- speaking and listening are completely ignored in their syllabus. Moreover, lack of skilled teachers and proper teaching materials leave the instructions to practice the skills untouched, even if the books ask the students to practice these skills. Hence, students start to panic when they are suddenly called in class to speak or share any information with other students.
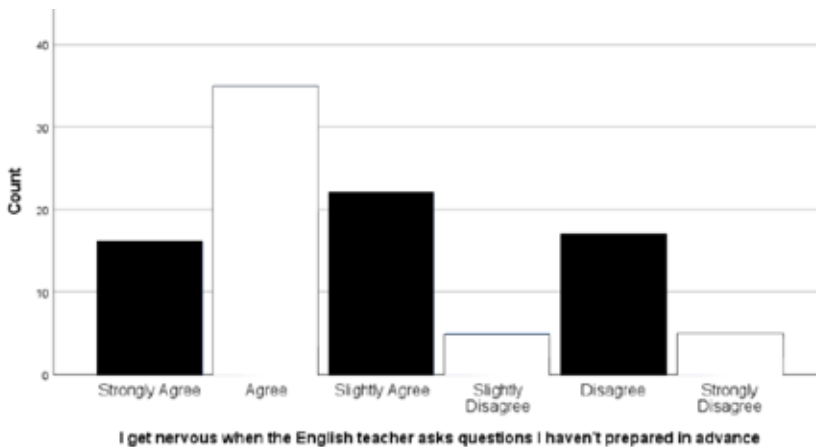

Figure 3: Participants' nervousness when they are unprepared about questions asked by teachers

In this figure, almost 70% of participants (combined) agree that they get nervous when their English teacher asks questions which they haven't prepared in advance. An important thing which often gets unnoticed is the practice of memorizing lessons in order to achieve good grades in the examination even if no actual learning takes place. This particular habit of receiving 'good grades' and has been practiced among most of Bengali medium students even after they transition from college to university. As a result, they often use the same technique in speaking activities in classrooms at the tertiary level. Because of this practice, Bengali medium students often tend to memorize presentations, speeches, and in some cases, even conversations. This tendency to get higher grades demotivate students from engaging in effective verbal communication. Thus, the objectives of these spoken courses are not met.

The boredom and anxiety students feel is alarming and worth noticing since students who do not get involved in the learning processes in classrooms do not become effective learners in foreign language settings. The endorsement of the FLCAS items by the participants of this study indicates that anxious students are common in tertiary level English classrooms.

Motivation

The motivation level is moderate to high, probably due to a combination of the following factors: the growing importance given to English learning from the government; exposing learners more to the cultures of English-speaking countries; and making students more aware of the importance of good English that can make a difference to their life.
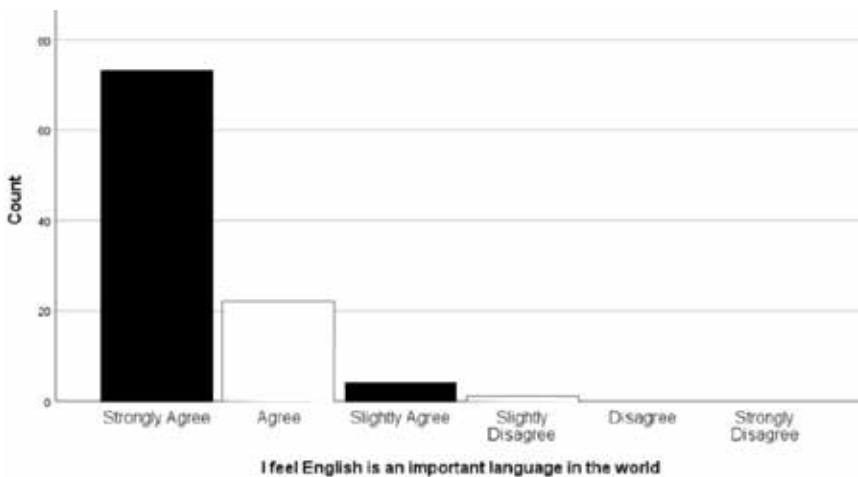

Figure 4: Level of importance given to English language in the world by participants

In this figure, most of the students strongly agree that English is an important language in the world. Afterall, English is a language through which knowledge is traded among countries across the globe. Moreover, good English will directly link students to the world of knowledge, enabling youngsters to serve for and contribute to the society. Furthermore, every respected job nowadays requires candidates to have a good command on English language, making English language learning and speaking a prerequisite.

Learner Autonomy

Another major finding of this study is that students have a well-defined view of the teacher's role and responsibilities. The teacher is seen as a dominant figure and although students generally tend to make their own language-related decisions, they are more dependent on the teacher for most areas of their learning. In other words, they prefer the teacher to take responsibilities for these activities. This suggests a strong preference for a dominant teacher role and thus a less autonomous student role. In this light, the present study will show a similar student profile to those studies which suggest that "Asian students are strongly oriented towards acceptance of power and authority" (Evans, 1996).
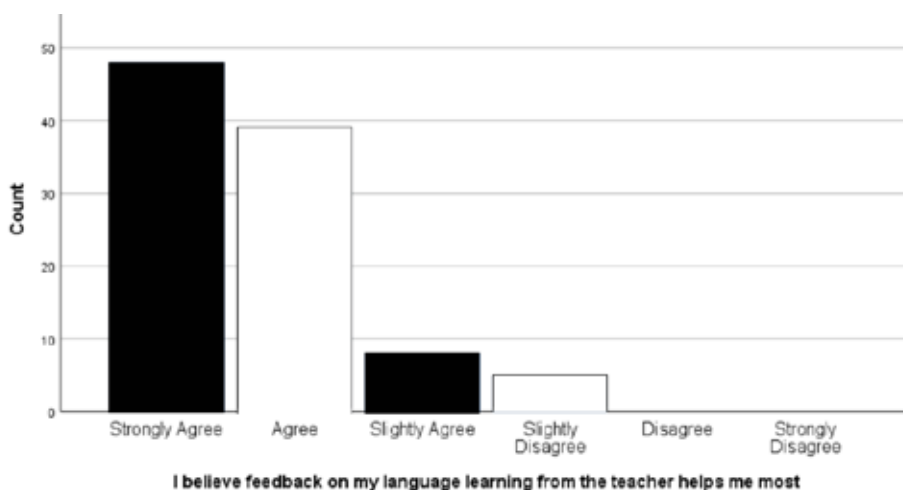

Figure 5: Participants' reliance on teacher feedback in improving learning

In this figure, participants believed that if they receive feedback from teachers on language learning, it helps them the most to become autonomous learners. After careful analysis of dynamic cognitive activities, Butler and Winne (1995) confirmed that feedback acts as a catalyst in every self-regulated activity, triggering a student's engagement in self-regulated learning (Chung & Yuen, 2011).
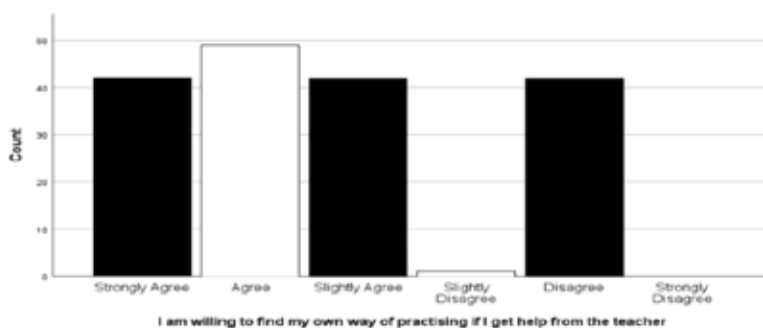
Figure 6: Participants' reliance on teacher support to become autonomous learners

In this figure, about 90% of the students believe that they can become autonomous learners if they get support from the teachers. Teachers can help students have ownership and become self-aware of their learning styles. Teachers can also encourage peer to peer learning. Moreover, teachers can be seen as a facilitator of knowledge, so that students develop critical thinking skills and take responsibility of their own learning.

Hence, the findings show a negative correlation between anxiety and language learning and a positive relationship between motivation and language learning, leading to learner autonomy in tertiary level students. Also, the roles and responsibilities of teachers in developing learner autonomy is crucial and they need to use effective methods to create autonomous learners.

Conclusion

The study aimed at understanding the extent to which the affective factors such as anxiety and motivation and the role of teachers aid in developing learner autonomy in undergraduate and graduate EFL learners in the context of Bangladesh. However, there were some limitations of the study. The research is a context-specific study as the sample was be drawn from a single field of study (undergraduate and few postgraduate English department students). A larger sample with more diverse background would produce more accurate findings. Moreover, further studies should be conducted, considering a wide range of factors such as curriculum design, policy making, language planning and other sociocultural-socio institutional issues, in order to further explore the connection between affective factors and teachers' roles in promoting learner autonomy. Furthermore, qualitative information from qualitative studies such as interviews, focus group discussions etc. were not collected. However, the discussion on the complex impact of affective factors on English learning in EFL contexts can provide some useful insights for more extensive and thorough investigations in the field.

References

Arnold, J., & Brown, H.D. (1999). *Affect in foreign language learning*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Balla, J., Stokes, M. and Stafford, K. (1991). Changes in students approaches to study at CPHK: A three year longitudinal study. *Melbourne: AAIR. 7* (31).

Chung, Y.B. & Yuen, M. (2011). The Role of Feedback in Enhancing Students' Self-regulation in Inviting Schools. *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice. 17,* 22-27.

Damasio, A. R. (2000). *The feeling of what happens.* London, UK: Vintage.

Dornyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and researching motivation.* Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.

Ellis, G. (1996). How culturally appropriate is the communicative approach? *ELT Journal. 50 (3),* 213–218.

Evans, S. (1996). The context of English language education: The case of Hong Kong. *RELC* 27 (2), 30–55.

Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy in foreign language learning.* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B. and Cope, J. (1986). Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal, 70*(2), 125–132.

Jensen, E. (1998). *Teaching with the Brain in Mind.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Jones, J. (1995). Self-access and culture. *ELT Journal. 49* (3), 228–234.

Ling Koh, J. H., & Frick, T. W. (2010). Implementing Autonomy Support: Insights from a Montessori Classroom. *International Journal of Education, 2*(2).

Little, D. (1991). *Learner Autonomy 1: Definitions, issues and problems*. Dublin, Ireland: Authentik.

Pennycook, A. (1997). *Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning.* London: Longman. (p. 35–53).

Ushioda, E. (2014). Motivation, autonomy and metacognition: Exploring their interactions. *Motivation and foreign language learning: From theory to practice* (pp. 31-49). Amsterdam, NE: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

van Lier, L. (2004). *The ecology and semiotics of language learning: A sociocultural perspective.* Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Yildirim. O. (2008). Turkish EFL learners' readiness for learner autonomy. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 4*(1), 65-80.

The Second Wife & Other Stories

Abhay Chawla*

Our race is alive on a staple diet of stories. Stories are what make us understand things, circulate our culture and allow us to make sense of our environment. People imagine themselves and others based on the stories which circulate as a part of our culture. Ignoring these stories makes us uncomfortable about our existence and our place in it.

Nandini C Sen's first compendium of short stories has a very intriguing title, *Second Wife and Other Stories.* There is an interesting conversation I overheard with regards to the title in a group conversation at one of the book readings by the author in a public bookstore. A man who had come for the book reading didn't want to carry this book home and wanted to read it in the bookstore only. When he was pestered on the reasons for this strange behaviour, he said he was apprehensive that the book title might give wrong ideas to his wife and she might question him and his motives for reading a book with such a title, basically questioning his devotion towards his first and only wife. This story might sound surreal and worth a laugh but as I wrote earlier we are defined by the stories around us and more often than not, governed by stories running in our minds, stories based on our life experiences or circulating through media we engage with.

Nandini C Sen, a professor of English at the prestigious Delhi University tells these stories, which have a marked women's point of view, in the easiest way to read and comprehend. Her stories bring out the strength women possess and describe the extraordinary lives they lead. The stories narrated are simple but the mastery of stories lies in the plots the wizardry lies in the way these stories end. I have again, in the multiple book readings by the author, hear the readers commenting about the endings of these stories, "they deviate from the stories we recreated in our minds as we read them and their endings are not what one would expect or what we recreated".

The written word is always so powerful and for an author who is able to get the reader to recreate the story while reading them, would undoubtedly have a way with words and ideas. In fact, while reading the stories of Nabonita, Geeta, Nira, and Malati one is able to empathize with the characters and "believe it or not" be able to see such characters in our world, all around us. Characters we may have interacted with in our lives or would have heard stories of. This simplicity of storytelling with characters that abound in our worlds is what makes this storybook so powerful and moving.

_____
*Professor Abhay Chawla is a Visiting Professor at IIMC, Delhi. He is the author of bestselling books on Mass Media published by Pearson Education.

Another interesting aspect of the book is that more often than not while reading the stories one is able to recreate the Bengali ethos as the author takes us to Kolkata and the surrounding areas. The cities and the villages are realistically painted reminding us of realist storytellers like R K Narayan and Dostoevsky. She uses Bengali words liberally and provides a glossary. However, her writing evokes a certain familiarity in her readers as they are transported to the Kolkata of their past and are quite often reminded of Amitav Ghosh's 'Thami'.

Sen, in all her stories, manages to jostle the readers out of their comfort zones by putting the focus back on the seemingly uninteresting and dispossessed women who gain stature as the story moves. The endings remain open-ended forcing the reader to think beyond the scope of the text. It is through this unique participation of the reader, that the book gains stature. Sen has the unique capacity for detailing her stories and drawing her reader into her world in a mere span of a few pages so when Nira, Bela, Aisha and other protagonists act, the reader feels a sense of validation. This is accompanied by a sense of trepidation since the end remains elusive. So long after the last page has been read, *The Second Wife and Other Stories* continue to haunt the readers. The eleven stories are definitely eleven novels in the making. "Queen Kaikeyi" has a cinematic feel and one hopes that it will eventually be made into a film. It's a story that retells the epic lending virtue to the much-maligned queen.

Critics tend to typecast books as belonging to genres such as feminist literature, LGBTQ literature, and others but essentially Sen's book is a reading in humanism - detailing the various aspects of a woman's life in various ages and settings. The most powerful stories are amongst us, it just requires an empathetic storyteller to tell these stories in a way which appeals to human sensibilities and make us connect to our humanness. Life holds no lessons or morals- life is a continuity to be experienced and savoured exactly the way Sen's stories are.

Some of Sen's other works include *The Black Woman Speaks: A Study of Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta*, *Through the Diasporic Lens* (Volumes 1&2), and *Mahasweta Devi: Critical Perspectives*. Her short fiction has appeared in leading literary journals and she has also been featured in the Asian Collective of Short Stories and the Australia-India collaboration titled *The Glass Walls.*

Guidelines for Contributors

Critical Insights: A Journal of the Department of English Language and Literature, Notre Dame University Bangladesh

Volume 1. Number 1. Fall 2022. ISSN 2790—7872

Critical Insights is a Journal of the Department of English Language and Literature, Notre Dame University Bangladesh. It is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal published in English in the Fall of every year. We accept submissions in Studies in Literature, Cultural Studies, ELT, and Applied Linguistics. All submissions should be written in English for publication in *Critical Insights*, and not published earlier in any other journal. Submissions are welcome from the academic community in Bangladesh and abroad.

Our Editorial Policy:

● Manuscripts have to be written following the MLA 9 for Literature, and Cultural Studies and APA 7 for Applied Linguistics, ELT, and Language.

● Please use 12-point Times New Roman font, and the writing should be double-spaced.

● Manuscripts should be sent along with abstracts, texts, figure captions, and references in a docx file

● Abstracts should be between 150 and 200 words. There should be five keywords in the abstract.

● Please use American spelling and grammar.

● All notes have to be written under a subheading before the Works Cited and Reference Pages.

● Length of paper: 3000 to 6000 words. Length of Book Reviews: 1500 to 2000 words.

● All submissions have to be emailed to **critical.insights@ndub.edu.bd** mentioning the author's full name, institution, academic position, email address, phone number, the title of the article, and a brief author's bio.

Critical Insights

A Journal of the Department of English Language and Literature

NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY BANGLADESH