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EXPERIENCE VS EXPERIMENT: THE PORTRAYAL OF THE LIBERATION WAR OF  
BANGLADESH IN *RIFLE ROTI AURAT* AND *A GOLDEN AGE*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines first two novels written in two different languages on the liberation of Bangladesh, 1971. While *Rifle Roti Aurat*, written in Bangla is considered as the first novel on the Liberation war, *A Golden Age* is acclaimed as the first English novel on this theme. The martyred intellectual Anwar Pasha deals with the social, political, religious and cultural contexts of the war which cause a mass destruction of the country in his *Rifle Roti Aurat*, one the other hand a representative of the post-war generation as well as Bangladeshi diaspora, Tahmima Anam projects her research knowledge of war throwing a light on a family drama. While the first novel is considered as a fictionalized account of war, the later one remains as a fiction. The paper attempts to study how the two novelists' different generation, gender, culture, source of the knowledge affects the portrayal of the Liberation war of Bangladesh.

**Key words:** war, massacre, experience, generation, culture, politics, dream.

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1971. Bangladesh. The year '71 (March-December) flashes back some memorable picture in the mind of Bangladeshi— one the one hand, death, destruction, massacre of three million people; huge violation, disgrace and harassment of women folk; and the innumerable loss of property by the Pakistani Army, on the other hand the birth of a secular, socialist and democratic nation on 16 December of this year. The emergence of independent Bangladesh (former East Pakistan) from the 24 years (1947-1971) colonization of Pakistan brought about some fundamental changes in the economic, social, and political area as well as in the fields of art, literature and culture. Initiated the journey from the glorification of the religious

beliefs and lives in the early stage the themes of Bangladeshi novels gradually go through the path of evolution. While the theme of smashing of the millennium-old culture and unity of Bengali nation, the conflict between Bengalee and Pakistani identity and the language movement of 1952 are common in the East Pakistan Era; in Bangladesh era we see the theme of the Liberation War of '71, its consequences, hopeless human existence and analysis of human mind and society dominate the novels. The Liberation War and the independence of Bangladesh marks 'the third phase' (1971–) of the Bangla literature of this region (Banglapedia). The fiction of this phase records the saga of the liberation war, the hellish face of the war, the dream

of free and egalitarian Bangladesh and thereafter the realization of independence (Bangladesh). Some well-known novels of the 1970s which describe the same spirit include *Nandita Narake* (1972), *Honger Nodi Grenade* (1976) etc. the first of this discipline is Anwar Pasha's (1928-71), the martyred intellectual and litterateur, *Rifle Roti Aurat* (though written during the war published in 1973) in Bangla (translated in English (first) as *Rifles Bread and Women* by Professor Kabir Chowdhary in 1976) is considered as 'a legendary work' (Shaikh and Haque, 2003) After the War freedom fight became a unique subject. Is the theme of the Liberation war confined only to 1970s literature? How does the theme affect the post-war generation writers? Do we find any war novel of '71 written in any international language? These questions might come to our mind. After 36 years of the birth of Bangladesh Tahmima Anam (1975-) wrote her debut novel *A Golden Age* (2007) which won "the Commonwealth Writers Best First Book Prize" (2008) in English. The way Seamus Heaney follows his grandfather's Irish tradition (in "The Digging"), Bangladeshi English Writer Anam writes the legacy of the liberation war of Bangladesh following the footstep of her grandfather Abul Monsur, one of the strong writers on the Language movement of 1952. 'The strong sense of nationalism and an unquestionable glory that surrounded the idea of 1971' has always been an emotionally charged theme to Bangladeshi and Bangladeshi novel. The depiction of the Liberation war of Bangladesh is affected by the writers' generations. Picked up and killed by the Al-Badar, the Bengali killing squad of the Pakistani Army only two days (on 14 December 1971) before Bangladesh became free, Pasha writes the novel as a spontaneous expression of his overwhelming feelings, real experience and thoughts about his war-ridden motherland, on the other hand being born 4 years after the war and brought up in Paris, America, (now settled in) London, Anam writes the book through listening to others' experience, studying and experimenting a lot. So, *Rifle Roti Aurat* can be considered as a fictionalized account of war while *A Golden Age* is a fiction.

The first novel of the Liberation war *Rifle Roti Aurat* is based on the nine-month civil war that

took place between Bangladesh, the former East Pakistan and Pakistan, former West Pakistan. In the Introduction of the translated version of the book i.e. *Rifles Bread Women* (2008), the translator Professor Kabir Chowdhary says that the book neither depict 'the physical battles fought in various sectors' (Chowdhary, Introduction RBW) nor 'highlight the courage, determination and heroism displayed by the freedom fighters' (Chowdhary, Introduction RBW) during the bloody nine-month long war to free the Bengalees from 'the ruthless neo-colonial domination' (Chowdhary, Introduction RBW) of the Pakistanees. The book projects 'the essential spirit' (Chowdhary, Introduction RBW) of the '71 liberation war and minutely describes 'the causes and circumstances' (Chowdhary, Introduction, RBW) that made the war inevitable. Farida Shaikh and Tanveer Haque (2009) observe that the book "... is about disintegration and emergence of a nation, and not 'war' itself". Pasha gives a graphic description of the killings, lootings and mass destruction that took place after the holocaust of March 25, 1971. The actual event dealt with in the novel does not cover more than 'three days in the last week of March 1971' (Chowdhary, Introduction RBW). The book can be considered as a collage of stories. The narrator weaves the description of genocide, torture and destruction perpetrated by the Pakistani Army; the sufferings, disgrace and spirit of revenge of the Bangalees in a conversational and story-telling technique. Through the portrayal of real scenes the novelist enables the reader to feel 'the anxiety, anguish, grief as well as the anger, hope, and determination generated in the mind of the then Bangalees. Even after reading the book 43 years after the publication (1973, though was written during the war) one can feel the same nationalistic feeling for the country and the hatred against the Pakistanee injustice. Describing history from objective point of view, Pasha gives 'the authentic history' (Chowdhary, Introduction, RBW). As a keen observer of the society, he successfully describes the context behind the war: political, religious, cultural. On the other hand, set against the political backdrop, Anam's first book is foremost about motherhood; its sacrifice, its dilemmas, and its protection. War seems to be the

background of the novel while motherhood has been foregrounded. Rehana Haq, a young Urdu speaking widow, gets actively involved in the independence movement solely because of her love for her children. In order to ensconce her children, she got involved in the war by chance, not by choice.

"As long as there has been war, there have been writers trying to understand it, turning battlefield horrors into narrative, trying to make something useful out of its debris" (Joe Woodward, "The Literature of war"). In *Rifle Roti Aurat*, Anwar Pasha tries to give an account of the cruelty and destruction on 25 March 1971 as minutely as the way he experiences it. The book was written when then the war was in progress. "Begun in April 1971, he completed it in June of the same year" (Chowdhary, Introduction, RBW). We can identify a considerable part of the writer Pasha in the protagonist of the novel, Sudipta Shaheen. Chowdhary (1994) comments,

Sudipta Shaheen, the protagonist of the novel, is none other than the writer Pasha himself, thinly veiled. Like Sudipta he first served in a provincial college, then moved to the metropolis and joined the University of Dhaka. Like the hero of this novel Anwar Pasha was soft-spoken and utterly non-communal. Like him he cherished liberal ideas, wrote poems and loved flowers. Like him he was a romantic at heart and committed to life and progress. But, unlike Sudipta Shaheen, he was a teacher in the department of Bengali at the University of Dhaka and not a Professor of English ((Introduction, RBW)

Khan (1997) agrees with Chowdhary in this comment: "Protagonist of the novel, Sudipta Shaheen is actually the self- manifestation of Anwar Pasha" (p. 312). He describes especially the genocide of unimaginable proportion in the University of Dhaka— teachers' residential area, students' dormitories, 'the destruction of the Shahid Minar' ( RBW, p.41) , Nilkhet areas, nearby slums, railway etc. Sudipta Shaheen, Professor of English dept. lives at building no. 23 in Dhaka University area which is very close to former Iqbal Hall (present Zohurul Haq Hall), a residential hall for

the male students of DU. He describes the horror picture of death, corpses in Iqbal Hall (&&&&&QUOTATION). He also shows the torture, killings and barbarity of the Pakistani Army to the students of Dhaka University, center of revolution and democracy. He describes how the students of different hall are tortured are killed. Jagannath Hall(76)#####. The Pak jawans were not only brutal to the students to the students but also hostile towards the well-known teachers and intellectuals of Dhaka University. He specifically mentions the historical name of the martyred intellectuals authentically and their brutal killing: Dr. G. C. Dev, Professor and Head of Philosophy dept. (RBW, p.40), Mr. Manniruzzam, Head of the Statistics dept. (RBW, p.40), Dr. Joptirmoy Guha Thakurta, Professor of English dept. and the Provost of the Jahannath Hall (RBW, p.40), Mr. Mosaddek, one of the house tutors of S.M. Hall (RBW, p.100-103), Madhu-da of Madhur Canteen (p.20 ) etc. He informs us about the resistance at Rajarbag of ordinary police All these accounts are informed either by the protagonist Sudipta (whom we can identify as Pasha), eg. when he saw the dead bodies, and bloodshed of the teachers, students, and man-woman-babies at University residential areas, building no. 24, 34, the Shahid Minar, Iqbal Hall, Jagannath Hall, nearby slums[...the Pakistani Army had shown their prowess bey setting fire to these slums and razing them to the ground"( p.61), railway gate on 27<sup>th</sup> March Of 1971; or from the eye-witnessed, eg. from his friend Firoz, from his student-journalist Nazim about Poly and other women (RBW, p.100 ) and Dr. Mridha, assistant Provost of S.M. Hall (RBW, p. 76); or from the police soldier Hasim Sheikh who participated in the resistance against The Pak Army, (RBW, p. 76) in Rajarbag. Moreover, Pasha did not miss to describe the captive situation of Dhaka where the inhabitants were imprisoned by the curfew ((RBW, p.88-9) to be slaughtered, raped and burned by the Pak Army from the 25<sup>th</sup> March to the following two days. All these are historical truth. That's why Chowdhary (1994) calls the book as 'docu-novel' (Introduction, RBW). Professor Abul Fazal (1973) writes in the introduction to the original edition of the book 'It is at once a historical document and a successful literary creation' (qtd. in Chowdhury). Contrary to

Pasha, Tahmima Anam was born 4 years after the birth of Bangladesh (1975) and started writing her debut novel when she (Dr.Anam!) was doing her PhD at Harvard University. Like a research project she started writing her first novel. As she belongs to post-war generation, Anam has to depend on others' stories, research documents, diary, and film on the War to prepare her manuscript. In an interview with *Star Weekend Magazine* she says: "When I was very young I used to listen to many stories from my grandmother, my mother, and my uncle" (p.20). She gathered information spending lot of time not only with the 'Muktujoddas'(freedom Fighters) but also with other people, nurses who used to work in camps, people who were stuck in Pakistan, people crossing the border"(p.20-21). In another interview with Terry Hong (July 2011) she further says,

I did lots of research for my first book which carried over to the second. I prefer to ask people who were there about their experiences; I don't like to use books, unless they're memoirs or testimonials. I ask people the little details, about what they wore, what brand of cigarettes they smoked, what music they listened to, maybe the car they drove....

Perhaps this is one of the reasons we don't find the description of intense ferocity or dense fear, horror and anxiety of war in the novel like Pasha's one. Structured like a diary, *A Golden Age* was written on the model of Jahanara Imam's dairy about *Ekattorer Dinguli* ('Days of '71',1986), translated as *Of Blood and Fire* (1990). Zaman (2016) observes,

Among the younger generation who were inspired by her book [*Ekattorer Dinguli*] – specifically the English translation – was Tahmima Anam, who, born in 1975, had not experienced 1971. Though the debt has not been acknowledged in the book, it is clear that the debt is there. *A Golden Age* (2007) begins, as does Jahanara Imam's book, on March 1, 1971, when the cricket match between Pakistan and MCC head to be postponed. Anam also quotes the same poem from Khalil Gibran– "Your Children

Are Not Your Children"– quoted by Jahanara Imam. (p.19)

It is a story about Rehana, who is considered as "an unintentional hero" (Hong, 2011).When the war is going on, she is just in it to protect her children. According to Anam, "That's just what women do, all over the world: they do what it takes to protect their children. That's the kind of heroism I'm interested in" (Hong, 2011). Her "...grandmother, Musleha Islam, was the inspiration for Rehana" (Hong, 2011). Perhaps being "truly a global citizen, having been raised in both the east and west, educated in the US, and now living in London" (Hong, 2011), Anam is unfamiliar with many of the facts of her native country, Bangladesh. And this leads to the rise of a number of inconsistencies in her writing regarding geographic, social, political and horticultural details. For example, she writes about 'Quaid-E-Azam Avenue' (AGA, p.55) near Elephant Road which never existed in Bangladesh. In *Rifle Roti Aurat*, Anwar Pasha mentions about 'Quaid-E-Azam' (RBW, p.121), the father of 'Two Nation Theory' which is the basis of the separation of India and Pakistan from the British colonial rule in Indian subcontinent. She describes the direction of Iqbal Hall between Hall and Rokeya Hall (AGA p. 229) which is wrong. She refers to Major Ziaur Rahman (who declared the independence of Bangladesh on behalf of Bangabundhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) as 'General' (AGA p. 129) in one page and another as major (AGA p. 160) which is confusing. She describes the long, wooden Bokul tree, a tree of flower, as a tree of two to four inches high [ ... she planted a few seeds around the edge of the pot, and a few weeks later the white tiny bokul flowers appeared, casting themselves resolutely upwards, as though pointing the way" ((AGA p. 19). As Anam spends most of the time of her life in Europe and America she is not very much aware of the many things which may seem to minor issue to the western reader but these mistakes and wrong information are major issues to a Bangladeshi who do not have " a long-distance relationship" like her (Hong, 2011).

Anwar Pasha is not only a good writer of Bangla literature (teacher- poet, novelist) but also a very good critic of the contemporary politics: social,

religious, cultural. Before writing *Rifle Roti Aurat*, Pasha wrote *Neer Sandhani* (‘Home Seeker, 1968), *Nishuti Rater Gantha* (Dead of Night Epics, 1968) etc. These books “...reflect the political consciousness of the writer” (Banglapedia). The development of the characters of Anwar Pasha’s novel takes place amidst the narrative of contemporary political events. He talks about political, religious, cultural conflict Pakistan: East and West. The novels, e.g. *Nishuti Rater Gantha*, written between 1947 and 1971 reflect West Pakistan’s exploitation of East Pakistan. Suidipta, the protagonist of the novel reminds “the two nights that followed 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>” (RBW, p. 13). According to him:

Were they two nights only? More than two decades. The quintessence of two decades of Pakistan. Firm concrete revelation of Pakistan’s attitude towards Bangladesh during the last two decades. Domination and exploitation” (RBW, p. 13-4).

He criticizes the theory of the emergence of ‘Two nations’. “If one economy grew up between two parts separated by a distance of a thousand miles then the inevitable possibility existed of one part being exploited by another; one part would then surely dominate over another in the field of economy” (RBW, p. 15). He describes the political atmosphere very delineately. ‘The anti-Ayub movement ‘of 1969 (RBW, p. 94); ‘The Agartala Conspiracy Case’ (RBW, p. 106); the killing of ‘student leader Asad’ (RBW, p. 94) in Dhaka and Professor Shamsuzzoha, ‘one of the most popular teachers of Rajshahi University’ (RBW, p. 94) in Rajshahi. These killings act as a catalyst for the resignation of the west Pakistani dictator, Ayub Khan which paves the way for the Army person, General Yahya Khan “who entered ...on the scene donning a mask” (RBW, p. 94). His acting was quite good enough in the beginning to ‘dupe’ (RBW, p. 94) the Bangalees successfully. Yahya simplified the issue of the governance of a country and based it on an ancient formula: “Rule with an iron hand. Crush all opposition by force. Peace will prevail” (RBW, p. 95). But Yahya perhaps forgot the famous political philosophy of Edmund Burke, which is very relevantly added by the translator Kabir Chowdhury

in the very beginning of the opening chapter “The use of force alone is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment; ... and a nation is not governed which is perpetually to be conquered” (qtd. in Chowdhury). This exactly happens to the Bangalees. Pasha exactly projects the spirit of the Bangalees who prefers ‘death’ (RBW, p. 95) to be ‘a nation of slaves and concubines’ (RBW, p. 95). Pasha exactly describes the situation “...the more they killed, the more determined grew the Bangalees and the harder they pledged it take their vengeance” (RBW, p. 95) because the Bangalees agreed with Shakespeare, “How can they charitably dispose anything when blood is their argument” (qtd. in Chowdhury). Just like Translator Kabir Chowdhury (in *Rifles Bread Women*, 2008), Professor of English dept. of Dhaka University, takes example from two famous British iconic figure, Shakespeare in literature, Burke in politics; the writer, Anwar Pasha, teacher (1966-71) of Bengali dept. of Dhaka University uses Bangla myth (or Hindu Myth) “During the battle of Kurukshetra Lord Krishna had, as the driver of Arjuna’s Chariot, inspired Arjuna to fight for the cause of justice” (RBW, p. 93) in *Rifle Roti Aurat* to reinforce that blood and exploitation act as the driving force for the determination of the Bangalees for the independence. Pasha delineates the political issues so vividly that one can easily know the political atmosphere of the birth of East Pakistan to Bangladesh.

The independence (1947) of India and Pakistan from British imperial rule leads to the partition of Bengal– East and West; and the partition of age-old culture, unity and identity. While the East Bengal was included to Pakistan, West Bengal was considered as a part of India, similar to the situation of Kashmir. Though the two Pakistan were integrated for the reason of religion– Islam but the unity mostly ‘fall apart’ due to language – Bangla in East Pakistan and Urdu in West Pakistan [Urdu is the native language of North Indian Muslim community and the respectable Muslim Family in East Bengal who came from Afghanistan, Iran, eg. Begum Rokeya]. This leads to the cultural clash and identity crisis. Pasha is one of them who came over to East (Pakistan) Bengal from West Bengal effectively projects this tension in his *Rifle Roti Aurat*. He raises



the questions "Where was the place of Bengal in Pakistan? P represented Panjab-Pathan, K Kashmir, S Sind, and Stan Baluchistan. There was nothing which represent Bangladesh" (RBW, p. 69) [He mentions this issue in page 68 also]. The absence of Bangladesh in the abbreviation of the word, Pakistan, really reflects the absence in the united nationalism. They denied the Bengali identity; they despised Bangla language. Bangla language was considered as Hindu's language. In a job interview, Sudipta was asked the meaning of his name i.e. "One that is radiant". The reaction of the board members was worth quotable: "It is a Bengali word then? ...If you use Bengali in this field everything automatically is Hinduized. You have all come to Pakistan as Hindustani spies" (RBW, p. 16). The partition of 1947 (India – Pakistan) leads to 'the second partition' (Sheikh and Haque, 2003) in 1971 evidencing the failure of Two Nation Theory that inculcated religious hatred among the divided people: Hindu-Muslim; Punjab Muslim-Bengal Muslim. While Religion is considered as the single most cementing element in the society (according to the Renaissance political philosopher, Machiavelli), in Pakistan cultural Islamisation has been evident. West Pakistan wanted to exploit East Pakistan by putting the 'the opium of religion' (RBW, p.57). According to them "Pakistan meant Islam, and Islam meant Pakistan" (RBW, p.36) and "the true Muslims lived in West Pakistan" (RBW, p.78). Pasha humorously shows the justification of West Pakistan's claim of 'the true Muslim' :

The Muslim League tried its utmost to establish the centre of the economic superiority in the western part of the country .... The western part of the country was the holier part. You couldn't deny that it was nearer to the holy Ka'aba. In order to detect the heretical Muslims of Bengal towards the west the Muslim League established the center of the country's economic life in West Pakistan. And it put up sign boards in every railway station and market –place of Bengal with an arrow mark facing the west and thereon the letters 'kebla' were etched clearly in Urdu and Bengali. Turn to the west. No merely in

the field of economy, but in the field of culture too. (RBW, p.15)

The Bengalees in their own country were being butchered by the Pak Army in the name of 'Holy War' (RBW, p.109). Moreover, the Hindus in East Pakistan were considered 'enemy of Pakistan' (RBW, p.70) and according to the rules of the Army "... it was clearly permissible to kill an enemy" (RBW, p.70). Pasha satirically comments: " Bengalees had forgotten that they were Muslims and that was why the Pakistani army had to march into the homes of Bengalees at dead of night armed with cannons, machineguns and rifles, and remind them that they were Muslims" (RBW, p.69). Therefore all those savage deeds of the Pakistani soldiers on that black night were in perfectly in "order and legitimate" (RBW, p.70). Through telling the story of the Pakistani soldiers' division of the bus passengers in 'three rows– The Bengalees in one row, the Biharis on one row, and the Hindus in another row" (RBW, p.78), Pasha shows cultural division among the people of East Pakistan. Here the three rows acts as the microcosm of East Pakistan.

On the contrary, Anam's *A Golden Age* is refracted through the story of Rehana Haque, housewife, young widow, and mother of two children. "War intrudes on the normal rhythms of her domestic life" (Eagleton and Parker). Rehana is drawn into the fight for Bangladesh's independence largely through her poet-turned- fighter son Soheil, and activist daughter Maya. Though the background of the novel is 1971's Liberation War, " Anam's approach to history is subjective"[ online]. *A Golden Age*, Rehana's motherhood overshadows her patriotism. Her center holds on her children rather than on the country or on the war as she says to Maya: "I just want to protect you. Everything I've done, I've done for you and your brother" (AGA,88). It is Rehana's love for her children which leads her to get involved in the war rather than her love for the country. When Soheil comes to meet her during the war, the narration focuses on Rehana: "She was so relieved to be in his presence. Everything, the war, the major, Silvi, all seemed so distant so much smaller than this moment" (165). She thinks that above all she is a mother and prefers to have a world with her children at the centre of it. When

Soheil and Maya discussed about political turmoil, to her those were hard, precise words and they did not capture Rehana's ambiguous feelings about the country she had adopted. So Anam shows Rehana's fight for protecting her children rather than the country. In her double-layered struggle for motherhood and motherland, she had been in the war only for the sake of her children. She looked at everything through the lenses of motherhood. Woolf Along with the description of the socio-political-cultural-religious contexts of the war, Pasha very closely shows the one of the effects of the war—rape, violation of Bengalee *Aurat*, the women of Bangladesh. From Nazim, student-journalist, Sudipta comes to know the unmeasurable suffering of the women:

The military had taken into the Cantonment, by force, a number of respectable young women and had set up there a brothel for the army officers. Many housewives and daughters of a number of respectable families of city were forced to work in the Cantonment as maid—servants during the day and as the army officers' bed-fellows during the night. There they were not allowed to put on their saris: they had to move about only in their petticoats, lest they committed suicide by hanging themselves with the help off their saris" (RBW, p. 97)

But Pasha gives the example of Poly (RBW, p. 97-100), Roshena (RBW, p. 100), who were not only 'just a name' (RBW, p. 100) but "become legendary name in all Bengali homes" (RBW, p. 100) who were not only the victim but also took revenge by killing the enemy. Poly, Roshena are the examples of the 'Birangona' of Bangladesh who had sacrificed themselves by jumping under military trucks with a mine fastened to their body in order to avenge the massacre of the Bengalees" (RBW, p. 100). Pasha optimistically notes: "The future generation of Bengali children will cherish and love the episode of Roshenare as a glorious and wonderful folktale, as a national myth, and along with hers the episode of Poly too" (RBW, p. 100).

The sufferings of the women who sacrifice their most valuable honor during the war are

technically avoided in *A Golden Age* except a few mention about the female students in Rokeya Hall, the female residential dormitory of Dhaka University where books based on 1971 written by female writers such as Nilima Ibrahim's *Birangana Bolchi* (Birangona Speaking), Selina Hossain's *Hanger Nodi Grenade* (Shrak River Grenade) focus on women's suffering, rape, torture, disgrace. It seems that Anam was careless about this issue. She reaches how easily her daughter Maya reaches to West Bengal to serve the refugees and following her footsteps Rehana reached Salt-Lake also. Moreover, Anam talks about a civilian's restoration by Rehana; she takes some bold steps to free a civilian called Sabir (husband of Silvi, beloved of her son, Soheil) from the custody of west Pakistani. She could be killed, could be raped but remained in safe finally. Most crucially, Anam shows Rehana's illicit relationship with an unknown major who takes shelter in Rehana's house. "The major's breath was in her hair. She felt the warmth of his belly against her back. She saw his hind, its tense vein, snaking across her waist and holding her down, as if she might float away without its weight" (AGA, 202). Though Rehana is widow but she harbours a faithful wife to her dead husband which is very much real to the Bangladeshi woman (especially in the 1970s Bangladesh). Here, Anam's protagonist Rehana's committing adultery reminds us another 'British-Asian' writer Monica Ali's protagonist Nazneen's adultery. Born in Dhaka in 1967 in a mixed-race family (father Bangladeshi and mother British). Ali along with her family left Dhaka for England for good in 1971 (at the age of 4) when the civil war broke out in Pakistan. To both Ali and Anam their 'born-in-Dhaka image' and British-Asian—writer logo have been obsessively highlighted in media. The identity of a 'representative from a minority' and the badge of 'native informant' on Ali and Anam hypothetically gave their literary narrative a colouring of "authenticity". By uniting the 'God-conscious' Karim and the religious Nazneen in the house of the Muslim Chanu in *Brick Lane* and showing Rehana's sharing of memories and physical affection with the unknown wounded major in her house in *A Golden Age*, both Ali and Anam present "a microcosm of Muslim social space" (Hasan, 670),

and portray it full of “insidious sexual indulgences” (Hasan, 670). Such titillating depiction of Muslim society is rampant in the orientalist literature like *A Tale of the Harem* (1828) by Thomas Hood and *The Romance of Harem* (1839) by Julia Purdue. Following the same orientalist trend, Ali and Anam represent “Muslim faith as shaky, which can be forgotten about for momentary sexual pleasure” (Hasan, 670). In both Ali and Anam *Brick Lane* and *A Golden Age* we find “cultural caricaturing” (Hasan, 669).

Pasha was deeply influenced by the ideals of “secular, socialist Bangladesh” (the translator Kabir Chowdhary’s Dedication, *Rifles Bread Women*) which was later reflected in the “1972 Constitution of the country” (Preface, RBW). Pasha shows the spirit of secular idea of Dr. Dev’s philosophy. “To him truth did not lie in one’s being a Hindu or a Muslim. He saw the truth in man. He took a human child as his adopted son, not a Muslim or a Hindu” (RBW, p. 39). When the father and son were killed at a same time, Pasha noticed “It was only after death that their blood mingled and became inseparable” (RBW, p. 40). He further comments on “The blood of two others” (RBW, p. 40), two well-known teacher—Mr. Maniruzzaman, and Dr. Joptirmoy Guha Thakurta who had also been united in this fashion. They lived in “two different flats of building number 34. They were both devoted to their own religion” (RBW, p. 40). When they were made to take their stand on one row and then shot at, “... their blood had flowed only to mingle and form one stream” (RBW, p. 40-1). Seeing this question immediately comes to the mind of Sudipta, “... could he point out which part of the blood was a Muslim’s and which part a Hindu’s?” (RBW, p. 40-1) The ideal of socialism is reflected in Sudipta’s mind: “We must not be engrossed in our own personal selves at this hour through any fear or hesitation. There must be only one goal, one thought, and one ideal for all of us now: we shall not think of our own selves, we shall think only of our country. We shall fight for our country (RBW, p. 59). The people of Bangladesh in 1971 were inspired by this motto and the freedom fighters without any hesitation sacrificed their lives for fulfilling this ‘dream’, which was later reflected in the 1972 Constitution of Bangladesh.

But the representation of post war generation writer Tahmima Anam who is considered as “part of new globalized generation” (Eagleton and Parker) perhaps is influenced by the capitalism of the countries she was brought up (Britain, America, France). Her protagonist Rehana thinks about her family, her children rather than the country. She says to Maya: “I just want to protect you and your brother” (AGA, p. 88). The common spirit of ‘71 was the concern for the country, welfare of the country men. Instead of the individual happiness, majority’s betterment was thought. In *Hanger Nodi Grenede*, by Selina Hossain (war time writer) we see the protagonist Buri, sacrificed her youngest son (older two took part in battle) to save the freedom fighters who took shelter in her house.

Perhaps it will be difficult to find any Bangalee family in 1971 which is not affected by the war. Though the novel *Rifle Roti Aurat* ends with an optimistic note – the vision of an independent Bangladesh, the novelist Anwar Pasha himself could not see “a new dawn” (RBW, p.216). He was brutally tortured and killed on 14 December, 1971 (just 2 days before the Victory Day!). But in Anam’s novel we do see an absence of a sense of loss. Rehana says: “This war has taken so many sons has spared mine. This age has burnt so many daughter has not burnt mine. I have not let it” (AGA, p. 274) which sounds a big surprise! Perhaps her main focus was to prepare the reader for the sequel *The Good Muslim*.

Freedom is something which costs unbounded loss from almost each and every nation; ours is not a different one. We also had massive sacrifice for our independence. Both Anwar Pasha and Tahmima Anam have tried to show the fact in their books in their respective distinct ways. Pasha has shown how the Pakistan Army used ‘Rifle’ means the arms bought with our money to kill us during the war. How they took away our ‘Roti’ means our food for them depriving us. And how they abused the ‘Aurat’ means the women of our country to revive them while they were performing their “holy duties”. There is no well-constructed plot like a common novel, the ferocity and various aspects novel seem to be the sole plot. On the other hand, Anam details how one family’s, one person’s



private struggles are inextricably linked with those of a country trying to find her footing in the world. How those golden days of struggle and achievement led us to the golden dawn of today's Bangladesh. *Rifle Roti Aurat* and *A Golden Age* are the literary pieces which carry out our history of sorrowful pride in them and attach us more passionately with our past than mere factual records.

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