



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)

IDENTITY IN *THE BONES OF GRACE*: A POSTCOLONIAL AND FEMINIST OUTLOOK

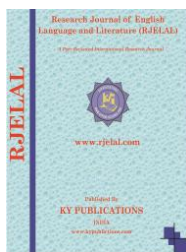
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doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.74.19



ABSTRACT

This paper deals with Tahmima Anam's *The Bones of Grace*, which is the final novel of Anam's Bengal Trilogy and also with the minor description of the other two novels of the trilogy. It explores the complexities of Zubaida's life and her quest for identity and her roots. It is the third novel and final part of her Bengal trilogy, following *A Golden Age* and *The Good Muslim*. The story revolves around Zubaida Haque, an adopted daughter of a native Bengali family who finds herself lost between two worlds. She feels torn by everything which she has to choose. She felt different kind of loyalty towards her motherland Bangladesh and America, from where she completed her study. This paper will show how women are presented as "others" in society and culture, and that they can protest not only verbally but also by their brave steps in light of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay entitled, "Can the Subaltern Speak" (1998) and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949). It shows that although women are treated as subalterns but they have voices, it also scrutinize the issue of identity with special reference to *The Bones of Grace* on the point of "cultural identity". I will rely on Homi K. Bhabha's concept of "hybridity" as discussed in *The Location of Culture* (1994). Simultaneously, I will bring the idea of "cultural identity" focusing on Stuart Hall's essay, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1994) defining the battle of woman in the postcolonial and contemporary era.

Keywords: postcolonial, feminist, culture, identity, diaspora, hybridity.

Introduction

"Diana is the reason I left this town, and Diana is why I have returned. I think of her as a spirit of comings and goings, a beacon that lead me across continents and through time. I live in hope that she will lead me back to you" (Anam, 3).

The bones of grace of the title belong to an "ambulocetus" (Diana) – a distant ancestor of the whale, which walked on land. "It was an intermediate species,"(34) Anam explains. Whales are the only animal that came out of the sea and

went back to the sea. It's symbolic of a lot of things that happen in the novel: Zubaida herself is trying to decide whether to swim or to stay on land. The recurring image of the fossil, Diana, and the metaphor of digging, altogether, function as reminders that Zubaida's odyssey entails a search for her identity, her roots. Here in these lines, Zubaida the protagonist is addressing to her lost lover Elijah about the choices she has made in her life by going against culture and society, that she has finally after discovering her roots and identity comes to the conclusion that identity is never accomplished rather it is a continuous process which transforms by

time. Thus in the end, Zubaida is able to imagine an alternative notion of belonging, assuming her life not as a frozen entity, rather as a continuum of things that are past and at the same time, present.

The Bones of Grace: A Postcolonial and Feminist perspective:

The Bones of Grace can be enjoyed regardless of whether you've read the prequels in what is often referred to as the Bengal trilogy. It explores the complexities of Zubaida's life and her quest for identity and her roots. Unlike the other two novels of the trilogy, which talks about the before and aftermath of Bangladesh Liberation War, *The Bones of Grace* is set in contemporary era. Though it's a postmodernist novel but I have used a postcolonial perspective here since it is connected to the incidents of past and a retelling of the past to discover the present.

According to Gandhi, postcolonialism inflates the questions of power and knowledge universally on the view point of human condition. Gandhi states:

"Postcolonialism approaches such questions of epistemology and agency universally; that is to say, as questions which are relevant to a generalized 'human condition' or a 'global situation'" (168).

Here, Postcolonialism is incarnated in feminism. Nonetheless, women are the ultimate sufferers of war and moreover, women are "double colonized" in the postcolonial age. As colonizers seized all the rights of the colonized, similarly, women are deprived of their rights even in the postcolonial time by patriarchy. They were caged by the colonizers in the age of colonialism and they are still caged in a new way by the men in power in postcolonial era. Thus, they are "double colonized," but, women have proved themselves by their heroism. This study illustrates the struggle of Zubaida as well as her perpetual quest for her roots and identity by analyzing Anam's *The Bones of Grace*, the rise of Zubaida is related to her suffering and her quest for her roots, and how she finally decides to find solace in her adopted land where she

feels more belonged than home as a palaeontologist, that Anam highlights in her work.

"Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text as into the world and into history by her own movement" (Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa", 875).

Helene Cixous emphasizes the importance of history through the voices of the women indicating their sufferings as well as achievements that are avoided by the male writers in their prose. Cixous urges the importance of women's writing from the women's perspective which is visible in Tahmima Anam's *The Bones of Grace* and her Trilogy elaborately. Though Anam has been criticized for not depicting history accurately, she chooses the path of narrating the history from an individual point of view and indeed from the woman's perspective. Consequently, Anam's works can be called as "meta historical" accounts of the untold history of women before, during and after the Liberation War of Bangladesh. Thus, Anam has sketched women, the subalterns in our society and culture who have their own voices and can speak by their deeds and accomplishments.

I have borrowed the ideas from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1998) and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) to show that women have voices which are unheard by the patriarchal society and women can achieve victory by protesting verbally and by their heroic deeds too as done by Zubaida in *The Bones of Grace* by divorcing Rashid and moving back to America to fulfil what she had left in between, way back, "Diana has brought me back" (Anam, 1). Thus it is her profession as a palaeontologist which provides her the courage to go against the society and culture.

The Bones of Grace is far more different than the first two volumes of the trilogy but also inter connected at the same time. This is the story of Zubaida, the third generation of Rehana, the

protagonist of *A Golden Age*. Here, Anam has drawn the crisis of Zubaida finding her inner self and searching her true love and her real root simultaneously. Though this novel has different backgrounds but it actually manifests the crisis of a soul for surviving in the world. It also depicts the condition of women in the cage of society and family even if the woman is educated and free spirited. Zubaida's searching unfolds the reality of her biological mother, Fatema Ansar. It also reveals the struggle and survival of her mother against the pivotal society. Hence, the story of Zubaida's twin sister who was kept by her mother while giving Zubaida to Maya as an adopted child, is also revealed by her later through the curious search process of her root. In spite of that the novel depicts the life story of the protagonist metaphorically with the walking whale's life history:

"And for this to have happened, a transgression had to be committed, an abandonment of limbs, an adventure into water, and the courage to bid farewell to the past, whatever such voyaging may have cost, whatever longings and loves were left behind in the rubble" (Anam, 396)

Anam has also brought out the ugly truth of "capitalism" through Anwar, a male voice in the novel and by his uttering, the crucial truth of the labourers' life in Dubai and its skyscrapers has also been revealed. Nevertheless, the condition of women who left their home country for abroad to earn bread and butter for their families and future drag them into a harsh reality in the form of modern sex slaves in the owner's home and in the brothels.

Gayatri Charavorty Spivak states:

"Can the subaltern speak? What must the elite do to watch out for the continuing construction of the subaltern? The question of 'woman' seems most problematic in this context. Clearly, if you are poor, black and female you get it in three ways" (90).

The condition of woman is penurious than any other being in the Third World. The Third World women are not only dominated and judged by the First World but also violently discriminated by their

own men and society that Spivak describes in a subtle way in the essay. As a postcolonial feminist, Spivak actually delineates the truth behind the so called "elite" who are indeed the ruling class and how they dominate women. Criticizing the West, Spivak discerns agency or freedom of action as a construction of language and also mentions about the "desire for subjectivity" of the west. She brings the modern theorists like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Karl Marx, and Antonio Gramsci in the essay and goes with Jacques Derrida's thought that one's language transmutes and shapes the ideology and identity both. The West is gathering "knowledge" or "research" about the Third World not for the development of Third World but for the political and economic interests of their own to rule in a modern way of colonialism. "Research" is a colonial tool of the West and they are defining the Third World as "others" to show their "superiority". Moreover, "epistemic violence" occurs through the marginalization of certain voices within Western discourse and Spivak utters that she is not out of it too. Bringing Sati in her essay, she presents the subjugation of women in the hand of white men and also in the grasp of brown men at the same time.

On the other hand, French feminist, Simone de Beauvoir also expresses the same reverence like Spivak regarding women. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir depicts that whether it is First World or Third World, women are blamed by the society though they are the victims because of the same patriarchal society. Additionally, Beauvoir shares the common term "other" like Spivak in the book that is imposed by the male dominated world to women for ruling over them. However, Beauvoir raises her voice against patriarchy long ago when no woman was allowed to say so. In this case, Beauvoir is considered as one of the feminists of early age in the revolution of feminism who brings out the bitter truth in front of world in the voice of a woman. According to her, in the treatment of gender towards woman, man is denying humanity as he is considering himself the "subject" or "self" and defining woman as "object" or "other". Beauvoir questions women's role in the society and indicates how "female humans" occupy the subordinate position in the society by the men in the book. Beauvoir brings women's lives since

childhood to adulthood in various "situations". In the last of the book, Beauvoir has come forward urging women's liberation in the form of their economic establishments. According to Beauvoir, if a woman can support herself, no one can stop her and this support is the indication of economic developments and accomplishments.

Anam's *The Bones of Grace* conveys the struggle, survival and accomplishments of Zubaida's life through the voice of the protagonist that show the foremost arguments of Spivak and Beauvoir. A situation happens in Zubaida's life when she comes to Bangladesh and marries her childhood friend, Rashid, though she loves Elijah Strong, who lives in USA. Here, Zubaida is much more self-sufficient. Moreover, Zubaida belongs to a wealthy Bangladeshi family and in spite of being a modern independent woman and a Harvard graduate still she cannot speak or go against her family in choosing a life partner. The society, in disguise of her family, actually compels her to do so and she cannot speak. In her incapability of saying no in the marriage she writes to Elijah:

"I don't tell you this story to hurt you, Elijah, but to explain that the idea of leaving Rashid was like the idea of leaving behind my childhood, and, because I was a person whose life began with her own life, and not, like you, with a family tree that stretched back generations, I clung to every piece of my past, unable to forget, or let go, of a single thing, ... I would have been able to move through this moment with greater confidence, the confidence to break the old threads and strengthen new ones, but now, in the shadow of this spectacular failure, I became, again, an obedient orphan" (Anam, 79).

As an adopted child, Zubaida remains loyal to her family by agreeing to the foster parents' decision to marry Rashid. And once again it is proved that the subaltern cannot speak because no one hears her. Here, Zubaida is more independent, lives by her own choices, and has a strong love for Elijah but still she cannot speak out her mind but prefers to please her foster parents. Hence, by doing so she

tries to repay the love of her parents which costs her an unhappy conjugal life.

Anam also synthesizes her opinion about the class discrimination among women and minorities in *The Bones of Grace*. She brings out the sufferings of Zubaida's twin sister and Anwar, a labourer. In addition, Anam questions "capitalism" as reader's humanitarian perspectives in the novel. While describing the discrimination and inhuman labour, she asserts: "There is the issue of class, first and foremost" ("The Beauty Parlors of Bangladesh"). According to her, the issues of class are created to discriminate others and also related to "capitalism." Anam deliberately sketches the same condition like the parlour women in *The Bones of the Grace*, through Anwar and other labourers' life in Dubai who left their homeland for a better future and better life and embrace the dreadful realities of life. Referring to class and "elite," Spivak also says: "Certain varieties of the Indian elite are at the best native informants for first world intellectuals interested in the voice of the other. But one must nevertheless insist that the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous" (79). Though the "elite" are nothing but a tool of colonization and at the same time they also act like the colonizers to the subalterns of their society. Spivak explains "elite" as "dominant foreign groups" who can be compared to the skyscrapers' owners in *The Bones of Grace*, it is also shown through the in-laws of Zubaida's biological mother in *The Bones of Grace*.

Independence becomes problematic for women. Hence, the maze of women's life is created by patriarchy. When a woman gets puzzled in the man-made labyrinth, she is judged and cursed by the same patriarchy. Beauvoir asserts: "For when she begins her adult life she does not have behind her the same past as does a boy; she is not viewed by society as the same way; the universe presents itself to her in a different perspective" (691). The situation of a woman's life is different than a man's according to Beauvoir. In her masterpiece, *The Second Sex*, she opines that women's realm of life is more critical and more discordant than men. The struggles of women are always neglected by the society in many ways. But still women are rising by their deeds and achieving victory which is mostly silenced by the

same society. Anam has brought out the facts of women's struggle in *The Bones of Grace*. Zubaida have their own struggles that prove the strengths and also the frailties of being a woman at the same time. Her decision of divorcing Rashid and returning back to Cambridge has taken a lot from her, still she has a faith to continue and keep going to get hold of her newly achieved identity which is a continuous process and which is transforming by time, filled with hope to get the lost love of her life.

Women are always blamed and cursed in patriarchal system although they are not responsible for what happened. In *The Bones of Grace* the in-laws of Fatema, Zubaida's biological mother, teased and taunted her for the death of her husband. Women are forcefully kept inside to do household chores and even the least freedom enjoyed by her is not tolerated by the male in society. Keeping them busy in home, men want to enjoy everything outside. According to Beauvoir:

"The curse that is upon woman as vassal consists, as we have seen, in the fact that she is not permitted to do anything; so she persists in the vain pursuit of her true being through narcissism, love or religion" (689).

So, women are compelled to be at home through religion, love and narcissism. Zubaida in *The Bones of Grace*, have endured the same predicament at her in-laws home. When women go against and start work for the development then she is forbidden by social and religious taboos. In *The Bones of Grace*, Zubaida's real mother, Fatema, was also taunted by her in-laws as an omen for them and her twin sister faces the cruellest reality by going to Dubai. All of them tried to go against the norms and experienced dreadful sufferings by patriarchy.

In South Asia, it is believed by patriarchal system that girls should be married early for their better future. This notion has changed a lot than before but still it is considered that marriage is the only solution for happy life especially for women whether they belong to lower class or even the upper class. The situation of Zubaida's mother while she got married is different than Zubaida's but both of them suffered the curse of marriage. Actually, Anam critiques the stereotypical supposition of

society upon women. Anam opines that though the numbers of early marriage have decreased than before but in the rural area it is still alive nowadays. However, Anam also underlines the mental torture of in-laws of her close friend, a U.S. college graduate, and married in her twenties. According to Bangladeshi marriage law, Anam's friend's marriage does not fall in the criteria of child marriage but it was an early marriage. Anam writes: "She said she had gone to her in-laws' house for lunch and that her mother-in-law had cooked shrimp curry, a favourite of the newlywed couple. As the dishes were served, her husband's mother announced: "Make sure you give the biggest shrimp to my son" ("The Curse of Early Marriage"). Although Anam's friend and her husband both belong to an upper class family but her friend suffers from the same curse what lower class, indigenous and subaltern women face in the name of marriage. In *The Bones of Grace*, Zubaida is like Anam's friend but the only difference is that Zubaida has married Rashid by obeying her foster parents and Anam's friend married her beloved. But the situation of every woman's life seems same in the case of suffering. The ways of suffering may differ but the actual pictures are same.

On the other hand, the subordination of others voices is also brought out by Anam in *The Bones of Grace*. She has dug out the truth that "epistemic violence" is created by patriarchy (Spivak 84). To Spivak, "epistemic violence" is created by society to rule the subaltern by marginalizing their voices. In *The Bones of Grace*, the voice of Zubaida is also marginalized. Hence, the voices of her biological mother, her twin sister and the shipyard labourers along with Anwar are also unheard because of the "epistemic violence" (Spivak 84).

Furthermore, the traumatic situations in Zubaida's life are similar to "mythic sati" (Spivak 103), who suffers from "epistemic violence" even she is the wife of god according to Hindu mythology. Spivak remarks: "Figures like the goddess Athena-father's daughters, self-professedly uncontaminated by the womb'-are useful for establishing for women's ideological self-debasement, which is to be distinguished from a deconstructive attitude toward the essentialist subject" (103). Spivak even mentions the Greek

goddess, Athena, who was even not out of the “epistemic violence.” Hence, the amnesia among colonial subordinate is a common phenomenon and the colonial “object” becomes the postcolonial “subject” to be ruled over the subordinate by their amnesia. In this issue, criticizing Freud, Spivak states:

“I am fascinated, rather, by how Freud predicates a history of repression that produces the final sentence. It is a history with double origin, one hidden in the amnesia of the infant, the other lodged in our archaic past, assuming by implication a preoriginary space where human and animal were not yet differentiate (92).

Here, Spivak states human as woman and the animalistic treatment toward her from “subject” as man who controls her. Apparently, men are ruling over women as masters because they have learnt from the past and by practicing so they become superior, in this case it is Zubaida’s in-laws and husband, though not cruel, in fact mild but superior.

Moreover, the power of women’s love is vaster than anything in this world. Though they are cursed, criticized, yelled by the patriarchy but still they are capable of loving not only others but also their own selves. Beauvoir underlines the power of women’s love in *The Second Sex* as:

“On the day when it will be possible for woman to love not in her weakness but in her strength, not escape herself but to find herself, not to abase herself – on that day love will become for her, as for man, a source of life and not mortal danger” (679).

To Spivak, the real strength of a woman lies in her own self. Whenever she starts to love herself no one can stop her. Beauvoir also expresses:

If the difficulties are more evident in the case of independent woman, it is because she has chosen battle rather than resignation. All the problems of life find a silent solution in death; a woman who is busy with living is therefore more at variance with herself than is she who buries her will and her desires, but the former will not take the later as standard (695-696).

Beauvoir remarks about the sacrifices of women and also the strength of women at the same time. Even Zubaida remains single after divorcing Rashid in *The Bones of Grace* and her love for Elijah never changed.

The journeys of women’s lives are not easy and women are controlled by both patriarchy and imperialism. Spivak utters:

“Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-construction and object-formation, the figure of the women disappears not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the ‘third-world woman’ caught between tradition and modernization” (102).

In the process of “subject-construction” and “object-formation” women get disappeared into nothingness. In spite of that women can rise as Zubaida in the end of the novel by choosing to pursue her dreams to the land where she feels more belonged (America) as a palaeontologist and to unite with her lost lover than her own homeland (Bangladesh) as an obedient orphan.

Though the paths of women’s lives are not as smooth as men but still they can rise. Anam’s *The Bones of Grace*, has beautifully sketched the strengths and accomplishments of a woman. Going on the same directions of Spivak and Beauvoir, Anam has proved that women cannot and can speak at the same time. Hence, despite all odds, complexities and struggle in life, women are unheard by the patriarchal system and society but they have voices. Nevertheless, it is also manifested by Anam that women can achieve victory not only by protesting verbally but also by their heroism as portrayed in the character of Zubaida.

Identity issue in *The Bones of Grace*:

Identity is dynamic and always in a mode of changing. The issue of identity actually comes from exile and belongingness of the soul at the same time. Similarly, the depth of identity is rooted in culture, nationalism, religion, and most importantly, in individual self. However, nationalism, culture and religion enforce the aspects of identity on a person

where the true fact of the self gets suppressed by all these. Anam's *The Bones of Grace* despite of being a postmodern text still focuses on the issue of identity in the context of postcolonial time and not only the protagonists but also other characters suffer from different complications to fit in the world by establishing their identities. From Zubaida, Anam scrutinizes the struggle of women in patriarchal society with the invisible suppression of culture and society. Though identity originates in a place of belongingness but the postcolonial world has connected it with nation, society and religion. Thus, Anam brings out the sufferings of women through their struggle in establishing their identities in a postcolonial world.

Identity is nothing but a factor that is always in flux. It shapes the thought processes of individuals and it changes the minds simultaneously. Anam reveals the issue of identity in a postcolonial world by the character Zubaida, though her belongingness to her root, works differently in *The Bones of Grace*. Zubaida's cravings for her root, makes her a new person and, thus, her identity is also reshaped in a continuous process. Hall states:

"Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a "production," which is never complete, always in a process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematizes the very authority and authenticity to which the term "cultural identity," lays claim (110).

According to Hall, identity is not an accomplished fact rather it can be thought as a "production" that is never complete and always in a process. The view of identity process creates the issues of authority and authenticity that is related to "cultural identity." So, "cultural identity" causes the problems among the authority and authenticity. In other words, it can be said that "cultural identity" creates the hierarchy and superiority among the masses. Also "'cultural identity,' in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self,' hiding inside the many other, more superficial or

artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (110-111). Hall asserts that in the name of "cultural identity," one true self, remains hidden behind many feigned 'selves' and it is connected to the common shared history and ancestry. Through the character of Zubaida, Anam portrays the journeys of the identities in different places and reveals how the process creates a beacon of hope among the searching souls. In *The Bones of Grace*, the search process of the walking whale, metaphorically indicates palaeontologist, Zubaida's searching process of her root as well as her own self. Anam utters:

I don't believe you can ever go home. I don't believe you can make [global] movements and remain unchanged. I don't think it's just the condition of the immigrant. It's the condition of modern life. So few of us are born, grow up and die in one place. Those movements fundamentally alter us. (Kidd)

Thus, Anam shares her view on identity and apparently, it goes with all of her protagonists in the trilogy. After the unpleasant incident with her colleagues in Baluchistan, Zubaida comes back to Bangladesh and marries Rashid. Although she is in love with Elijah, who is a Native American, but she was compelled to marry Rashid on the request of her foster parents. Her marriage with Rashid does not work out and she goes beyond the mainstream social belief by divorcing Rashid. Though this situation has made her wrong in the eyes of her foster parents and society, but she takes the decision willingly. Thus, her identity turns into a different direction and she goes to Chittagong for making a documentary in the unfamiliar beaches on the lives of ship breaking labourers and finds out the most important truth of her life through Anwar. She faces the reality of her life by knowing about her biological mother, Fatema Ansar and her twin sister surprisingly what she was searching for since she gained her sense. Thus, Zubaida's identity moves in a continuous process to find out her root.

Identity bears the testimony of the past and Anam's *The Bones of Grace*, underlines the

combination of past with it from a new perspective. Zubaida, bear the truth behind her past and it is correlated with her identity. According to Hall: "Not an identity grounded in the archaeology, but in the re-telling of the past?" (111). Hall questions identity's process of re-telling the past. In this point of view, it can be said that as identity is related to one's own self so that it speaks about the past in several ways. In *The Bones of Grace*, Zubaida says:

"If Anwar hadn't worked on that building site, he might never have gone looking for Megna, and if he hadn't done that, I might still be in the dark about my past" (Anam, 75).

Zubaida comes to know about her past from Anwar and it happens because of her face. She bears the same face like her twin sister and Anwar gets shocked seeing her. After wards, the story of her biological mother and twin sister is revealed by Anwar. Thus, identity retells the past.

Anam, through the character Zubaida, brings out the conflict and crises of her identity. On the issue of identity crisis, Bhabha underlines that hybridity belongs in between third space and it is real and psychological. It intends to analyze the cultural eccentricities within the postcolonial condition. Bhabha asserts:

My contention, elaborated in my writing on postcolonial discourse in terms of mimicry, hybridity, sly civility, is that this liminal moment of identification – eluding resemblance – produces a subversive strategy of subaltern agency that negotiates its own authority through a process of iterative 'unpicking' and incommensurable, insurgent relinking (The Location of Culture, 265).

Bhabha's notion works in Zubaida's making place in her conjugal life as well as her lonely life. To him, "the liminal moment of identification" is related to authority that dominates "subaltern agency." Here, Zubaida, display "subaltern agency" who face crises to fit in the world, made by patriarchal "authority." Additionally, the identity of

Zubaida and many others can be shown as "liminal" beings in Anam's trilogy.

Colonial power influences the development of identity. Therefore, hybridity is a tool of colonial power. In *The Bones of Grace*, Zubaida's sufferings can also be demonstrated by relating to the colonial power that is in disguise of society and patriarchy. According to Bhabha:

"Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of the colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name of the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal" (The Location of Culture, 159).

Moreover, Bhabha has explored the truth of identity that is related to hybridity in postcolonial era. Hybridity is a source of colonial power by which new kind of domination is practiced through denial. It acts to create the discriminatory identities for conceptualizing the superiority of "pure" and "original identity of authority" (Bhabha, 159). The stereotypical judgment of patriarchal society upon women is a common phenomenon in postcolonial world. Women are judged and expected to act according to society's assumptions. Thus, society's expectation of women is a tool to rule them. The motto of colonial rule was to build their perceptions among the objects that Bhabha emphasizes in his book. Similarly, postcolonial patriarchy tries to impose their monolithic assumptions on women. Bhabha illuminates:

"For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory – or, in my mixed metaphor, a negative transparency" (160).

Bhabha addresses the intention of colonial rule as a "negative transparency" that exists even after the colonialism as a postcolonial notion of ruling others. The "authority" wants that the "objects" or "subaltern agency" will act according to their so called discipline and dissemination. Anam illustrates this view by the incidents that happened in *The Bones of Grace*, Zubaida was even judged by

her foster parents when she decided to divorce Rashid rather than being in an unwanted relationship. Thus, Anam's reveals how the "authority" foregrounds its domination over the "subaltern agency."

The impact of history upon identity plays a catastrophic role to transform one's self to another. Moreover, it initializes the characteristics of a person changing from one being to another. Hall states: "There are also critical points of deep significant difference which constitute 'what we really are,' or rather – since history has intervened – 'what we have become'" (112). According to Hall, history influences and reshapes the identity that Anam sketches by the changes of Zubaida's life. Moreover, Anam has brought out autobiographical elements in *The Bones of Grace*. Zubaida's story is quite similar to her life. Anam utters:

It's more about migration and belonging. Though I loved writing the first two books and they were important to me, I felt I was doing them out of a duty to tell a particular story that hadn't been told before. This one is what I wanted to say: it isn't bound so much by a specific history (Armitstead)

Anam shares her thought about writing the third novel and depicts how it is related to her. Zubaida's exile is connected to her exile from Bangladesh in a sense. Anam was born on 8 October 1975 in Dhaka to Mahfuz Anam and Shaheen Anam. At the age of two, she moved to Paris when both of her parents joined UNESCO as employees. She grew up in Paris, New York, and Bangkok, learning the story of the Bangladesh Liberation War from her family since her father fought in the war. At the age of 17, she received a scholarship for Mount Holyoke College, from which she graduated in 1997. She earned a PhD in anthropology from Harvard University in 2005 for her thesis. Later, she completed her master of arts in creative writing at Royal Holloway, University of London. Through Zubaida, Anam has said about her soul, trying to fit in the world, as Zubaida born in Bangladesh educated at Harvard as a marine paleontologist try to fit in the world by her longing for her identity. Said

highlights the fact of exile that Anam also focuses in her trilogy. Said notes:

"Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home" (173).

Exile is a terrible situation for the soul and it is connected with belongingness. The crisis for the belongingness of place is unhealable. Anam underlines this pathos through Zubaida in her work vividly. Though Zubaida ironically feels more belonged to her adopted land than her own homeland.

Zubaida was named after Zaid because Maya (Zubaida's mother) loved Zaid, Sohail's (Zubaida's uncle) son, as her own child. But she failed to save Zaid from the paedophilic grasp of the madrasa Huzoor in *The Good Muslim* and Zaid had to lose his life while trying to save by Maya. The agony and loss of the child have shocked Maya a lot but she wants to keep Zaid alive in her life so that she named her daughter Zubaida after his name. Belongingness for Zaid, makes Maya a sufferer but in her exile, she loves her daughter, Zubaida, to recover the loss. Said asserts: "The pathos of exile is in the loss of contact with the solidity and then satisfaction of earth: home coming is out of the question" (179). He adds: "Exile is sometimes better than staying behind or not getting but only sometimes" (178). Exile, to some extents, is better to create new identity. Although it is not applicable in every situation but it works as a beginning only sometime. Here, for Zubaida, exile is a boon and hope to establish her identity and getting back what she has been longing throughout her life.

Conclusion: identity is a continuous process and it transforms by time:

I have tried to bring out the realities of women's life by analyzing their struggles, survival and accomplishments in the light of Anam's *The Bones of Grace*. I have borrowed the ideas from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay entitled, "Can the Subaltern Speak" (1998) and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949). I have proven my point by discussing that although women are treated as

subalterns but they have voices, then I have relied on Homi K. Bhabha's concept of "hybridity" as discussed in *The Location of Culture* (1994). Simultaneously, I have brought the idea of "cultural identity" focusing on Stuart Hall's essay, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (1994) defining the battle of woman in the postcolonial and contemporary era.

Thus, Anam shares her view on identity and apparently, it goes with all of her protagonists in the trilogy. Anam has brought out autobiographical elements in the novel, through Zubaida, Anam has said about her soul, trying to fit in the world. Anam shares her thought about writing the third novel and depicts how it is related to her. Zubaida's exile is connected to her exile from Bangladesh in a sense. Therefore, to conclude this paper finally, I want to say that women can speak and accomplish her dreams by breaking age old norms, and identity is a continuous process and it transforms by time Zubaida's identity shows her cravings for her root and changes by time and makes her a strong woman in the postcolonial world.

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