

**“One is Not Born, But Rather Becomes, A Woman”: Becoming Woman in Tahmima**

**Anam’s Works**

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Anam’s Works**

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that this work has been written entirely by me except for the references and quotations which I have acknowledged duly. Additionally, I have maintained all academic ethics and integrity while preparing this research.

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## Approval of Supervisor

I certify that this dissertation satisfies all the requirements as a dissertation for the degree of Masters of Arts in English.

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## Abstract

Tahmima Anam's trilogy, comprising *A Golden Age* (2007), *The Good Muslim* (2011), *The Bones of Grace* (2016), explores the complexities of women's lives. Specifically, it underlines the condition of women before, during and after the Liberation War of Bangladesh. This research explores the unheard and unbearable sufferings of women in Anam's works. Simultaneously, it highlights the heroism and accomplishments of women in different situations and how women are treated as subalterns in society, culture, and national boundaries. Thus, the common issue of women's survival under the domination of patriarchy has been explained in the three chapters. This dissertation illuminates the fact that it is not easy to become a woman in a postcolonial patriarchal system and women, albeit subalterns, are indefatigable.

## Introduction

From the past to present, women have survived not only by the sacrifices but also by fighting back and giving rejoinders to society, religion and culture through their accomplishments. Tahmima Anam has brought out the struggle of women in the plots of her trilogy. As a Bangladeshi diasporic writer, Anam has been criticized by several critics and scholars who question her belongingness and representation of Bangladesh's War of Independence. Most of the critics actually criticize her writing on the basis of her national and postmodernist views regarding war. For example, Michael Gorra asserts that Anam missed several important historical events and details while writing her debut novel, *A Golden Age*. Paradoxically, however, Anam delineates the story of an individual family before, during and after the war of Independence in the form of a metanarrative. Jean Francois Lyotard has introduced the postmodern term "metanarrative" and it works by depicting the truth behind the story and history. To Lyotard:

Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives [...] The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is been dispersed in the clouds of narrative language [...] Where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy reside?" (*The Postmodern Condition* xxiv-xxv)

Metanarratives break the traditional way of telling history and bring out the multiple narratives. Lyotard emphasizes it as "transcendent and universal truth" (xxiv). Additionally, metanarratives intend to open the eyes of the readers chronicling history from a universal perspective, including a feminine perspective, as Anam illuminates in her trilogy. While defining metanarrative, Mark Day notes that it is not restricted to any group but provides the

same story from a different outlook: “A metanarrative, as the name suggests, is not restricted to any one group or nation, but binds us all into the same story” (Day 183). So, metanarratives utter the same story from the other side neither depending on any group nor any nation.

My thesis will focus on Anam’s trilogy, namely *A Golden Age* (2007), *The Good Muslim* (2011), and *The Bones of Grace* (2016). I will analyze these texts in the light of postcolonial and feminist theories to manifest how women are subjugated by society, culture, religion, and nationality. Anam’s trilogy highlights the postcolonial aspects among the masses in different situations. Specifically, Anam underlines the fact of women’s realities in postcolonial era. 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). This research will point out how 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,” hence, women have proved themselves by their heroism. This study will illustrate the struggle of women as well as the accomplishments of women by analyzing Anam’s works and will show no one is born a woman but rather becomes a woman by her sacrifices, heroism, deeds and victory in any situation.

The first chapter of my thesis will elucidate Anam’s portrayal of women in three of her works and illuminate the struggle and survival of women. I will show how women are

presented as “others” in society, religion, culture and prove my point 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). I will prove my point by discussing that although women are treated as subalterns but they have voices. Moreover, they can speak and cannot speak at the same time. Rather women can rise from nothing to everything by their will power. Consequently, the rise of women is related to their untold sacrifices and sufferings that Anam highlights in her works. I will analyze the important female characters including Rehana, Maya, Zubaida to establish my points in the case of women’s endeavour, survival and accomplishments.

In the following chapter, I will try to analyze Anam’s trilogy by indicating the aftermath of war upon a nation especially upon women and children. I will show through my research how “amnesia” among the postcolonial masses plays a vital role to dominate “others” especially, women. In this case, I would rely on Leela Gandhi’s *Postcolonial Theory* (1996) and Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (2006) by indicating how the ideas of religion, culture, nationalism, language, race, and caste are created to dominate others. Nationalism plays an important role in making history. Hence, I will focus on the humanitarian aspect of nationalism that Anam intends to show. Simultaneously, the adverse effects of nationalism create division among the masses. Desire of ruling others, the former colonized become almost like the colonizers and in some cases more violent than the colonizers. I will explore the postcolonial “amnesia” of a decolonized nation and additionally, question about humanity rather than nationalism, religion, and culture in this chapter.

The last chapter of my thesis will scrutinize the issue of identity among the prominent characters in Anam’s trilogy 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 women in the postcolonial era.

Nevertheless, identity is a dynamic factor as it changes and reshapes with time. The identities of Rehana, Maya, and Zubaida are reconstructed by time and situation in the trilogy.

Although identity is connected to one’s root and the place of belongingness but postcolonial era has connected it through nationalism, religion and culture as well. I will also highlight that identity is correlated with exile and belongingness and “hybridity” is a source of colonial power. Hybridity is the key to a new kind of postcolonial domination that is practiced through denial. The issue of “liminal” beings in postcolonial world will also be examined through my research.

## Chapter 1

### Subaltern Can(not) Speak: Women's Endeavour, Survival and Accomplishment

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 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. Anam portrays powerful women characters as Rehana Haque, Maya Haque and Zubaida Haque in *A Golden Age* (2007), *The Good Muslim* (2011) and *The Bones of Grace* (2016). Along with the protagonists, there are other women characters portrayed by Anam who point not only to the frailties but also the strength of being women. In this chapter, I borrow 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.

Anam's debut novel, *A Golden Age*, portrays the struggle of a widowed mother, Rehana Haq, who sacrifices a lot to gain the custody of her children. Though it is the story of Bangladesh's War of Independence, it simultaneously depicts the survival of an individual family during the war and after the war. *A Golden Age* is the first part of Anam's trilogy and it shows how the social and religious stigmas play catastrophic role not only upon the minorities but especially upon the women. The novel also shows the contribution of women in war and nation making. Rehana, Maya, the gin rummy ladies, Sharmeen, Mrs. Sengupta and many other women including the Birangonas contributed in the war through their sacrifices for establishing peace for the country and for the humanity at the same time. Additionally, it is also visible in the novel that women are the ultimate sufferers of a war and most of their sacrifices and achievements are untold in the fold of history.

*The Good Muslim* is the second volume of Anam's trilogy and it depicts the aftermath of the War of Independence. However, it manifests the sufferings and losses of the nation during and after the war especially in the case of women. It also illustrates the heroism of Sohail and Maya and the changes of their lifestyle because of the consequences of war. Maya goes against her brother's extremist beliefs when she comes to know that Sohail is sending his son, Zaid to a madrasa rather than a school for education. The novel delineates the moral choices of the characters during the traumatic situations of their mental state. It has brought out the fact that religion and politics dominate the nation as well as the individual's life. In addition, naming the female war victims as Birangonas does not give them respect rather it creates horrible conditions in their lives in a conservative war affected society. Nonetheless, keeping a rapist's child in her womb and giving birth, a woman never gets any glorification rather inhuman sufferings and humiliation in every step of her life from the society. Maya's

action as a doctor in the village, helping the war affected women and also the minorities, especially women, by supporting abortion and giving treatment may not be justifiable by religion and patriarchal society but it actually helps the women get rid of their lifetime sufferings and embarrassment enforced by the patriarchy.

*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. Anam has brought out the ugly truth of "capitalism" through Anwar, a male voice in the novel and by his uttering, the crucial truth of the laborers' 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 economical 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 trilogy conveys the struggle, survival and accomplishments of women’s life through the voices of the protagonists and other women characters that show the foremost arguments of Spivak and Beauvoir. The dearth of women’s voices in the globalized world is visible in Anam’s *A Golden Age* through Rehana Haque’s life. Rehana is a widowed mother of two children named, Sohail and Maya. After the sudden death of her husband, Iqbal Haque, her world is only for her children. But when her brother-in-law, Faiz Haque wants the custody of her children in the court accusing of Rehana not being a good mother as she has taken her children to watch a movie named *Cleopatra*, which goes against religious morals. Rehana could neither stop him nor the judge to keep her children with her. The patriarchal court goes with Faiz’s point: “The judge said Rehana had not properly coped with the death of her husband. She was too young to take care of the children on her own. She had not taught them the proper lessons about Jannat and afterlife” (AGA 5). Judging a woman on a silly issue is not a rare phenomenon in society and when she is a widow and has no strong financial support, it becomes worse. Rehana cannot speak or establish her point to keep her children with her and remains silent because nobody is going to heed her. In her clarification to her husband in front of his grave Rehana says:

I have given up the only thing you left me. When the judge asked me if I knew for certain whether I would be able to care for them, I could not bring myself to say yes. I

was mute, and in my silence he saw my hesitation. That is why he gave them away. It was me; my fault. Not other's. I don't blame your brother for wanting them. Who would not want them? They are the spitting image of you. (*AGA* 7-8)

So, Rehana was actually not happy for her silence in the court but still she knows she is unable and cannot speak. A similar 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 than Rehana who is her grandmother. 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. (*TBOG* 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 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 laborer. In addition, Anam questions "capitalism" as reader's humanitarian perspectives in the novel. While describing the discrimination and inhuman labor, 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 laborers' 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* and Former West Pakistan Government in *A Golden Age*. Spivak also mentions "elite" as the "dominant indigenous groups on the all-India level" and "dominant indigenous group at the regional and local levels" as is evident in the extremist acts of Sohail in *The Good Muslim*, the in-laws of Zubaida's biological mother in *The Bones of Grace*, and also the court, the in-laws of Rehana in *A Golden Age* and last but not the least the patriarchal society in the three novels (Spivak 79).

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 her trilogy. Rehana, Maya, Zubaida have their own struggles that prove the strengths and also the frailties of being a woman at the same time.

Women are always blamed and cursed in patriarchal system although they are not responsible for what happened. In *A Golden Age*, the monolithic stigma creates more complications in Rehana’s life. Anam sketches it as: “She should have burnt some chillies and circled them over his heads. Or slaughtered a goat, at the very least. But she hadn’t done either, and so he had died”(AGA 6). This is the proof of woman’s reality that even so called superstitions are made to blame her. Here, Rehana is blamed for the death of her husband though she was not responsible for this at all. As a widow of two children, she has no place to go. Being born and brought up as a North Indian and having no one in India as her parents were dead and three of her sisters settled in Karachi, Pakistan, Rehana chooses to stay with her children in Dhaka, the place where she started her nuptial life with Iqbal. Her decision was not liked by Faiz and Parveen as they wanted to take the children with them and the real struggle of her life starts from here. A similar but different incident happened with Mrs Chowdhury too and in the novel she utters: “My bastard husband left me when I couldn’t give him a son”(AGA 9). So, Mr. Chowdhury had left her because she could not give birth to a male child and it shows the silly excuses of man to leave a woman for no reason. Anam has

portrayed the stereotypical society where women are blamed for not delivering male children though they are not responsible. Similarly, in *The Bones of Grace* the in-laws of Fatema, Zubaida's biological mother, teased and taunted her for the death of her husband.

Anam presents Rehana as a social pariah in her debut novel. Rehana's struggle while making the house "Shona" makes it clear to the readers. This house symbolizes Rehana's triumph but she has to sacrifice a lot while building it. Anam brings the ugly truth of patriarchy by showing the struggles of Rehana. As a widow, Rehana could not arrange bank loans for making the house as she has no guarantor. She sold out her husband's favorite Vauxhall for making the house though that is not enough to build the house. On the other hand, she has faced sexual harassment by one of the bank worker who said he can arrange a loan for her. Anam has depicted it as: "Then a round face man with an oily forehead said yes and took her to his office at the back of a building, where he slipped his hand under her elbow like a question mark, to which she almost said yes, until he came close and she smelled his curry breath and saw the cigarette tracks on his teeth" (AGA 36). Rehana escapes herself from the filthy grasp of that man and runs away. This is the ugly picture of so called men who think women are nothing but playthings in their hands and they can take advantage of any woman at any situation for feeding their lust.

Maya's struggle both in *A Golden Age* and *The Good Muslim* is beyond description. As a stubborn child and owner of her free will, Maya breaks the stereotypical notions of society and joins the Liberation War of Bangladesh in the form of a student protester and a volunteer. Like her, many women contributed in the war to help the wounded persons and to establish humanity. According to Beauvoir: "Once she ceases to be a parasite, the system based on her dependence crumbles; between her and the universe there is no longer any need for a masculine mediator" (689). Beauvoir praises the empowerment of women by throwing out the mold and renders that women do not need a "masculine mediator." Maya's best

friend, Sharmeen, goes against patriarchy too. She was an activist since the very beginning of her university life. In the time of War and also before the war she participated in several protests and did many heroic deeds but still she was seen as a weird woman by many of the women. The gin rummy ladies even do not like her. Though Rehana has a motherly feeling for her as she was driven away from her home but even Rehana did not like her because according to Rehana, she is spoiling her daughter. Sharmeen is indeed a hero portrayed by Anam but she had been raped, tortured and killed brutally in the beginning of the war. Sharmeen's death reinforced Maya's contribution in war more drastically. Maya also worked as a volunteer in the refugee camps of Calcutta during the war, which was not easy for a woman to serve the wounded in war affected situation.

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. Rehana, Maya, Zubaida and other women in the trilogy have endured the same predicament. When women go against and start work for the development then she is forbidden by social and religious taboos. In *A Golden Age*, Rehana was blamed as a bad mother as she took her children to watch *Cleopatra*. Even Maya was addressed as a bad Muslim not only by others but also by her own brother, Sohail, as she stays at the village to give treatment to the war affected women and supports abortion in *The Good Muslim*. On the other hand, 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 cruelest 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 favorite 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.

Anam critiques the process of "essentialism" rather focuses on "strategic essentialism" like Spivak. Bringing the example of Birangonas, she utters the pain of these women who are named thus by the country. Actually, the women who are raped and tortured brutally by the Pakistani Army during the time of war, were named as Birangonas after liberation. Spivak asserts: "The ambiguity of the position of the indigenous colonial elite is

disclosed in the nationalistic romanticization of the purity, strength, and love of these self-sacrificing women” (97). It is clear that the West Pakistan Army worked as a “colonial elite” in *A Golden Age* and showed their male power by raping all types of women and once again proved women are the ultimate sufferers during war. Nevertheless, Anam has thrown light on the treatment of society and nation towards women as “essentialist subject” (Spivak 103).

The fact that Anam has portrayed by showing the suffering of those women in *A Golden Age* and *The Good Muslim*, is that naming does not give them respect rather the notion should be changed towards them among the masses. In *The Good Muslim* Maya was judged not only by the society and religious extremists but also by her jealous brother for helping the war affected women in abortion and giving treatment in a village in Rajhshahi. In *The Good Muslim* Anam writes:

Somewhere along the way she had decided to become a lady doctor instead of a surgeon. She had seen how the women’s faces changed when she entered the chamber, relaxing their grip on the examination table. At the time she told herself it was a practical matter. Anyone could become a surgeon, but a doctor foe women, a doctor who could deliver their babies and stitch their wounds afterwards and teach them about birth control that is the way needed. (11)

Through the character of Maya, Anam depicts the negligence of society towards the war affected women. Simultaneously, she tries to prove that by helping them to live normal lives, she can make their life better. Maya is a brave soul who left her urban life for the development of war affected rural women. Beauvoir also delineated the same aspect in *The Second Sex* thus:

Enforced maternity brings into the world wretched infants, whom their parents will be unable to support and who will become the victims of public care or

“child martyrs”. It must be pointed out that our society, so concerned to defend the rights of the embryo, shows no interest in the children once they are born; it prosecutes the abortionists instead of undertaking to reform that scandalous institution known as ‘public assistance.’ (502-503)

Beauvoir explains the problems of the unwanted child after coming to this world as well as society’s wrath to the abortionist. According to her, society is enormously obsessed to keep the child of a rapist and enforced maternity so that the mother can suffer. Additionally, Anam underlines the untold suffering of women who were raped and were forced to keep the rapist’s children in their womb in *The Good Muslim*. Going beyond religious superstitions, Maya helps the wounded women who have no voice. By giving them treatment and making them aware of birth control and abortion, Maya becomes the loud voice of their unheard voices.

On the other hand, the subordination of others voices is also brought out by Anam in the trilogy. 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 Good Muslim* and *A Golden Age*, we find out that Anam has not only given voice to her protagonist, Maya, verbally and physically but also shown the marginalization of other voices through Mrs. Sengupta, Rehana, the Biragonas and the minorities during and after the war. On the contrary, in *The Bones of Grace*, the voice of Zubaida has also marginalized. Hence, the voices of her biological mother, her twin sister and the shipyard laborers along with Anwar are also unheard because of the “epistemic violence” (Spivak 84). Furthermore, the traumatic situations in Rehana, Fatema, Maya, Zubaida’s lives 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.

I do not wish to speak for the sanctioned sexual violence of conquering male armies, 'Moslems' or otherwise, female self-immolation in the face of it is a legitimation of rape as 'natural' and works, in the long run, in the interest of unique genital possession of the female. The group rape perpetrated the conquerors is a metonymic celebration of territorial acquisition. Just as the general law for widows was unquestioned, so this act of female heroism persists among the patriotic tales told to children, thus operating on the crudest level of ideological reproduction. (Spivak 99)

Women are the ultimate victims of war and Spivak mentions in her essay that sexual violence is considered as victory among the male soldiers. The actual picture of this scenario is drawn by Anam in *A Golden Age* by the inhuman brutality of Pakistani army during liberation war. Additionally, Spivak explores the fact that women's contribution and heroism are neglected by men to focus their male superiority. According to 1971 genocide history, overall 3 million

people were killed during the war and among them 2 to 4 million women were raped (Alston 40). Nonetheless, the genocidal rape was common phenomena during that time and Anam has also pleaded the unbearable agonies of women through the voice of Mrs Sengupta, the tenant of Rehana and many other minorities during the war.

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. The love of Rehana for her children gives her a voice in *A Golden Age* and only for this, Rehana recreates her own establishment by building the house "Shona" and achieves victory by getting her children back. Motherly love is a blessing and Anam portrays this glorification of motherhood through Rehana, Fatema, Maya, Mrs Chowdhury, Silvi in her trilogy. 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. Simultaneously, the love for children can make a women rise even she is unable to speak. Anam has revealed the strong aspects of women through the several heroic deeds of her women characters in the trilogy. Women can also sacrifice their sexual desire to spend the whole life with her children as demonstrated by Anam in the case of Rehana. Beauvoir 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. Referring to Maya Angelou's verse from "Still I Rise", I want to conclude the chapter as:

You may shoot me with your words,  
 You may cut me with your eyes,  
 You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
 But still, like air, I'll rise. (21-24)

Though the paths of women's lives are not as smooth as men but still they can rise. Anam's trilogy has beautifully sketched the strengths and accomplishments of women. 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 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.

## Chapter 2

### Postcolonial Amnesia, Neocolonialism and the Realities of “Imagined Communities”

Consequently, stupor turns to despair: if patriotism must thrust us into debasement, if there is no safeguard anywhere, at any time, to stop nations or the whole humanity from falling into inhumanity; then why indeed should we take so much trouble to become or to remain human beings: it is the inhuman in us which is our truth. But if nothing else is true, if we must either terrorize or die of terror, why should we take the trouble to live and remain patriotic? (Sartre, *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* 67)

Jean-Paul Sartre questions the authenticity of nationalism comparing it to humanism in his masterpiece, *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (1964). If humanity does not exist among humans then what is the point for being so patriotic? The ultimate motto of any human being should be served in the reign of humanism but in most of the scenarios of the modern world, people forget about humanity by holding grudges. Moreover, masses, especially the postcolonial masses, who were once the “colonial object” become the “postcolonial subject” because of their “amnesia” that Leela Gandhi explains in her *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (1998). The aftermath of a free nation from colonialism indicates several difficulties among the psychology of the masses that render the real images of unmasking their oppressed suppression during the time of colonialism. On the other hand, according to Benedict Anderson, “the idea of a nation is imagined” and moreover, he unfolds the truth behind the extreme level of patriotism. Tahmima Anam too has elucidated the hollowness of nationalism and the strength of nationalism for the sake of humanity in her trilogy. The idea of nationalism is a tool to rule others that Anam shows

through the barbarism of Pakistani Military during Liberation War of 1971 in her novel, *A Golden Age*. Hence, the aftermath of the war has given birth to severe crisis among the war affected nation that is also illustrated by Anam in *The Good Muslim*. Additionally, the aspects of neocolonialism rules the life of Rehana, Maya, Zubaida, Zaid, Sohail, Silvi, Anwar and other characters in the three of Anam's novels. This chapter assimilates the notions of Gandhi and Anderson and intends to scrutinize that the concept of nationalism, religion, race, caste, and culture are created to dominate others.

Defining the aftermath of colonialism including anxieties and fears of failure, Gandhi asserts: "the colonial aftermath is also fraught by the anxieties and fears of failure which attend the need to satisfy the historical burden of expectation" (5). According to her, the anxieties and the fears of failure are incarnated with "historical burden of expectation." She adds:

The celebratory cyborg of postcoloniality is also plagued by "something like an imperative to grow new organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, yet unimaginable, perhaps impossible, dimensions" (Jameson 1991, p. 39). In pursuing this imperative, however, postcoloniality is painfully complain to negotiate the contradictions arising from its indisputable historical belatedness, its post-coloniality or political and chronological derivation from colonialism, on one the one hand, and its cultural obligation to be meaningfully inaugural and inventive on the other. (6)

The celebration of postcolonialism sounds like a new growing organ in a body which leads to several unimaginable, impossible dimensions. Similarly, according to Gandhi it is impelled to negotiate the historical contradictions wretchedly. After the partition in 1947, Pakistan was divided into two parts as East Pakistan, now Bangladesh and West Pakistan, now Pakistan.

The liberation war in 1971 was held because of the tyrannical former West Pakistan government who tried to oppress the East Pakistan nation as a “postcolonial object.” Anam in her debut novel, *A Golden Age* examines the brutality of Pakistani Army through different incidents, however, she has also shown the dark side of history and additionally, proved the “historical amnesia” of the free nation at the same time in *The Good Muslim*.

The imitation of the master subconsciously creates the path of “amnesia.” “Historical amnesia” can establish complexities in the war affected people that Anam shows in *A Golden Age* and *The Good Muslim*. Like Hegel’s idea of the “master-slave relationship,” Gandhi utters the misuse of power among postcolonial nation especially the people who are in power. Once the subordinates, now the masters, the colonized subconsciously imitate their former masters that Gandhi addresses as “historical amnesia” in her book. To her: “Almost, invariably, this sort of triumphant utopianism shapes its vision of the future out of the silences and ellipses of historical amnesia. It is informed by a mistaken belief in the immateriality and dispensability of the past” (7). By forgetting the past, the newly free people actually suppress the past and thus, it comes out violently in several forms of their act and they become like their former masters and to some extent they become more violent than previous masters. Anam in *A Golden Age* underlines the amnesia of former West Pakistan upon the East Pakistanis and simultaneously, examines the same atrocities in *The Good Muslim*. The partition of 1947 after the British colonization, actually divided the Indian subcontinent into three countries. Though Pakistan was the same country for the West and East Pakistanis but still they were far away from each other because of location. The partition divided not only the countries but also split the bindings of family and friends who lived between these two lands. For example, Indian born and brought up Rehana remained in Bangladesh and her siblings settled in Pakistan. She decided to live in Bangladesh, the place where she passed a great time with her husband. In the novel, when Rehana’s sister Marzia

comes to visit her after many years from Pakistan, she kept praising Pakistan in her every speech to show Rehana that they are happy there and Rehana is wasting her life living here. She says to Rehana: “Your Urdu is not as good as it used to be; must be all that Bengali you are speaking ... Yes, we’re very lucky, we have two Bungalis; Rokeya only has one and it’s not enough, you know, the houses out there are so big” (AGA 18). Here, Marzia says Bungalis instead of Bengalis and praises even the houses of West Pakistan over East Pakistan. Anderson defines this as the “principle of naturalization” (145) in the context of nationalism in his book, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and the Spread of Nationalism*. Moreover, the naturalized citizens become too loyal for their converted country that they forget that they are from other places.

On the other hand, the root of amnesia depends on colonial suppression and repression. Suppression and repression are spread out in the form of mass violence and individual destruction. While mentioning Edward Said’s term, “dreadful secondariness” (7), Gandhi says that colonization is a long lasting fate and it comes back in unfair results. The suppression by British colonialism had planted the seed of violence in the colonized people and after the partition when the colonized have achieved freedom, they started to act like the colonizer. This causes serious difficulties among the subordinates. Gandhi opines: “Postcolonial theory inevitably commits itself to a complex project of historical and psychological ‘recovery’” (8). In *The Good Muslim*, Sohail, who was a freedom fighter in liberation war, suddenly involves himself in religious activities. His attitude in *A Golden Age* and *The Good Muslim* is quite opposite. In *A Golden Age*, Sohail is a conscious protester but as a young citizen, he is always in a mood to do something for the country against the injustice upon the nation. Rehana, consoling her own self as she wants to protect her child from any harm, says: “He was so persuasive. If the students want to do riot, he would tell them they shouldn’t tear down their own classrooms just to prove a point” (AGA 46). Later

on, the excitement of the revolution is clear in Sohail's voice as: "'Ammoo,' Sohail said, raising his voice over the throng, 'Mujib has called a meeting on the 7th. You should come'" (46). Though Rehana was not interested to go but the forceful voice of her son made her say yes later. Sohail was always an introvert than her sister Maya since childhood but simultaneously was a man of joy and a bibliophile too. But the sudden change in his attitude in *The Good Muslim* begs a question that what is wrong with him? The aftermath of the war brings changes among the masses and through Sohail, Anam sheds light on these issues. Actually, the guilt of killing an innocent man in the time of war, has made him too religious. And the drastic change of his behavior was not accepted by his sister, Maya. Because of denying his past by amnesia, Sohail actually suppresses his guilt in the name of religion that is clear in *The Good Muslim*. Even Rehana could not hear from Sohail because he becomes busy with religion rather than taking care of his old mother. After the death of Silvi, Sohail's wife, when Maya returns to Dhaka, she asks about Sohail and Rehana says:

They called themselves Tabligi Jamaat. The Congregation of Islam. Silvi had held meetings upstairs, preaching to the women about everything there was to know about being a Muslim...And Sohail had his own groups of followers at the mosque, ...Sohail told them what to believe and how to live. He was considered a holy man. (*TGM* 21-22)

Sohail completely transforms after the war of liberation that Anam portrays in her second novel and it is the proof of amnesia or denying his past. Becoming busy in religion, he actually hides his guilt from others.

Even the death of Silvi questions their extreme religious beliefs. Silvi died because of jaundice though they belong to a well established family and had no crisis of money but still Silvi could not go to doctor for being too busy in religious activities. Anam has brought out

the fact between the conversation of Rehana and Maya as: ““She had jaundice. They didn’t notice until it was too late’. She thought of Silvi’s skin turning yellow, her eyes color of yolks. ‘And Bhaiya?’ ‘For him, it is the afterlife that matters’” (*TGM* 22). The change is visible in the lines and it shows the effect of war among the characters in *The Good Muslim*. Hence, the moral choices of Maya and Sohail are different but it indicates the traumatic situations what they had gone through during war.

The conditions of the Third World women are different than the First World. The third world women are “double colonized” according to Mohanty and Gandhi agrees with her. The “ethnocentric myopia” and historical differences create the real distinction. Gandhi notes:

The analytic category ‘third-world woman’ is, thus, colonialist for two reasons – first, because its ethnocentric myopia disregards the enormous material and historical differences between ‘real’ third-world women; and second, because the composite ‘Othering’ of the ‘third-world woman’ becomes a self-consolidating project for western feminism. Talpade Mohanty shows how feminists working within the social sciences invoke the narrative of ‘double colonisation’ principally to contrast the political immaturity of the third-world women with the progressive ethos of Western feminism. (85-86)

The Third World women are “double colonized” in this sense because they are judged not only by the First World but also by their own world. For example, in *The Good Muslim*, Nazia, a friend of Maya in the village of Rajshahi, was judged, cursed and punished with hundred and one lashes by her own locality because of giving birth to a Down’s syndrome child for no fault of her own. The religious and social taboos play catastrophic role in the case of Third World women. Nazia was even judged by her community because she was sitting

beside a pond to cool her feet for the unbearable heat. As she was pregnant, she is judged by the village men saying to her husband, Masud: “A pregnant woman in the pond? It was too much” (*TGM* 18). Though her husband supported her during that time but later, he did not even come forward to save her from the lashes rather blamed her for the child and questioned about her fidelity addressing her as “whore” (23) in front of everyone. Anam examines the truth behind women’s realities in the country saying:

The conflict between women’s formal rights in the public sphere and their deprivation of rights in the private one is not just an issue of assets, property and child custody; it also has a strong bearing on women’s security within the home. When there is an accepted principle that family life is exempt from the standards of public life, women suffer behind closed doors. (“Bangladesh’s Home Truth”)

Women suffer not only in public but also in private. Anam urges about the safety of women in her own home. Similarly, she underlines the importance of women’s security in public. The incident of Nazia’s life is an example that women’s lives are exploited both publicly and privately. Anam criticizes the Shariah law which was established by Ayub Khan, former Pakistan President in 1937. Even after the freedom, the Shariah laws are still dominating the life of rural and urban women of free Bangladesh.

Anderson foregrounds the truth in his thesis that nationalism is a concept, basically, constructed in the 18th century and has no existence before this time. It is like the scientific medium of modern history, build innately with the dilemmas of helplessness and incurable as fatal disease. He asserts:

“Nationalism” is the pathology of modern developmental history, as inescapable as “neurosis” in the individual, with much the same essential

ambiguity attaching to it, a similar built-in capacity for descent into dementia, rooted in the dilemmas of helplessness thrust upon most of the world (the equivalent infantilism for societies) and largely incurable. Part of the difficulty is that one tends unconsciously to hypothesize the existence of Nationalism with a big N (rather as one might Age with a capital A) and then to classify 'it' as an ideology. (5)

Apparently, "nationalism" is a concept or ideology and it is deeply rooted in colonialism. Anderson denotes "the nation" as "an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). "Nationalism" is related to political involvement that indicates "power relation" among the ruler and the masses.

However, the notion of nation basically comes from colonialism and it results in neocolonialism. Like Anderson, Sartre shares this perception as:

The traditional social structures have been pulverized, the natives "atomized" and colonial society cannot assimilate them without destroying itself; they will therefore have to rediscover their unity against it. These people excluded from system will proclaim their exclusion in the name of national identity: it is colonialism that creates the patriotism of the colonized. (53)

The root of nationalism or patriotism is colonialism that Sartre highlights in the upper lines. The love for the country or patriotism is actually the love for the power. Being suppressed by the colonial power for two hundreds of years, the colonized become hungry about their own power. On the other hand, after colonialism and partition, the former rulers, West Pakistan became the master and suppressed East Pakistan in business, education, power, and language. Hence, they were over confident that the natives of the small land, East Pakistan, would not

raise their voices because West Pakistan held the ultimate supreme power by its armed forces and political forces at the same time.

Moreover, when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was elected as the President of the East Pakistan in 1971, former West Pakistan's ideology was shaken. Then they were not ready to hand over the power to him and the conflict between these two lands converted into a devastating war. This situation can be described in two ways: the colonized West Pakistan wanted the power to rule the whole two lands and the subordinate East Pakistan wanted freedom and refused to tolerate the injustices upon them. So it can be said that colonialism creates the patriotism among the colonized. In *A Golden Age*, Anam illustrates the pre war situation as: "It's been two months since Mujib won the election. They should have convened the national assembly by now and made him Prime Minister, but they keep delaying. Some of the students are urging Mujib to take more drastic action...He should declare independence" (28). By the uttering of Sohail, it becomes more vivid: "If you knew anything about the country you would know that West Pakistan is bleeding us out. We earn most of the foreign exchange. We grow rice, we make the jute, and yet we get nothing – no schools, no hospitals, no army. We can't speak even our own bloody language" (29)! The atrocities of former West Pakistan government were intolerable for the East Pakistanis. Though they produced more crops, earned more foreign currency but they had no rights. In addition, West Pakistan government forced the language, 'Urdu' upon the seventy million Bengali speaking community.

According to Anderson, the members of a small nation do not know each other but they share the same communion, and thus, it is imagined. He utters: "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear, of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). This study attributes Anderson's concept in the excitement of Sohail, Maya, and many

others in the racecourse on 7th March 1971. Though the people of East Pakistan do not know each other but they came to participate in the rally to hear their father of the nation speak, and thus, the imagined communities share the communion in their minds. Anam denotes: “It was as though the whole country had turned up: people flooded the grounds and all Rehana could see for miles was a vast sea of shining black heads, glowing in the sunshine like a restless horizon of darkness” (AGA 49). The incident of a cricket match in *A Golden Age* is also similar to Anderson’s idea of “imagined communities.” Anam adds: “When Azmat Rana scored his first half-century, dashing past the stumps with his knees raised high and the dust swirling around his feet, the stadium pitched and roared. People stood up and howled, thumped their feet and...chanting ‘Joy Bangla’” (AGA 38)! Azmat Rana was a West Pakistani cricketer. Being East Pakistani, all the people in the stadium were cheering for Pakistan against England, the former master of the subcontinent and the inventor of the game, cricket. Anderson says: “Nothing connects us all but imagined sound” (145). Hence, the people in the stadium, hardly knew each other and did not even interact with each other but they were chanting saying “Joy Bangla.” This victorious situation changed suddenly within a few moments and someone threw a brick on the pitch and everyone was leaving the stadium furiously. So, in this context, people were following each other even not knowing and understanding what is actually going on. On the other hand, their love for the Pakistan Cricket team suddenly turned into hatred.

Nationalism is solely connected with religion and politics. Anderson opines “nationalism” is an 18th century European notion. The notion marks “not only the dawn of the age of nationalism but the dusk of religious modes of thought” (11). Anderson adds: “If nation-states are widely conceded to be ‘new’ and ‘historical,’ the nation to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and still more important, glide into limitless future. It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny”(12).

Nationalism opens the path of political power and it creates new scopes and future. By utilizing this concept, one can achieve the victory over other and rule the subordinate in a new way. Anderson underlines the “imaginable medium of sacred language and written script” (13). For example, Sohail becomes religious because of his guilt for the killing of an innocent old man but he kept it as secret for being good Muslim in the eyes of others. The reason behind his extreme religious belief was reinforced by his wife, Silvi, who became suddenly religious in *A Golden Age* when her first husband died in war. She urges: “I want to believe in something greater than myself” (AGA 249). Having no interest in political movement or any other issues, Silvi, seeks refuge in the religious activities. She reinforced Sohail’s thought to get involved in religious activities in the second novel, *The Good Muslim*. And, simultaneously, the role of “sacred language and written scripts” played a catastrophic role in the changing attitude of Sohail. In *A Golden Age*, Sohail was secular and concerned about the atrocities of Pakistan government. But later, he became a fundamentalist in *The Good Muslim*. Sohail did not like the excuses behind realities before but later, he becomes an escapist in *The Good Muslim* and tries to relate everything with religion. He says: “Starvation is not caused by God. It is caused by irresponsible governments” (AGA 29). Later, in *The Good Muslim*, he tries to suppress his wrong doing in the name of religion. Anam asserts: “He had killed an innocent man. The man was not an enemy, not a soldier. Just someone who had let the wrong word come out of his mouth. There is only one way to be good now. The book has told him, he is good that it is in his nature to be good” (TGM 123-124). Camouflaging his wrong doing in the name of religion, Sohail wants to deny his past and he holds the mainstream concept of becoming good in the eyes of others and God at the same time.

People cannot deny their own darker side; whoever tries to deny, has to first admit it to his own self. In *The Good Muslim*, Sohail utters to himself: “I have committed murder. If

he were to tell his sister about the war, this is what he would have to tell her. She wants stories of heroism...But he has no story of this kind” (124). Everyone belongs to a community, wants to hear the heroic deeds of their gaining but no one is ready to see the other side of the coin at the same time. Anderson emphasizes this fact too when he states: “Notice not only the nationality of the ‘tyrants’ goes unmentioned, but that Rizal’s passionate patriotism is expressed superbly in their language” (143). However, everyone has different perception and no one loves to reveal their defeat in front of others. In some cases, in the shadow of nationalism, the “nationality of the tyrants” remains unmentioned. For example, the supporters of West Pakistan were named by Rajakar, Al-Bodor, and lately, some of them formed a group in free Bangladesh named, Jamat-e-Islam.

The former President of Jamat, Golam Azam expressed West Pakistan’s thoughts after the defeat as: “The politicians of West Pakistan were not satisfied with the freedom that has been given by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. They did not believe in the independence of Bangladesh” (Adhikari 137). Being a Bangladeshi, Azam held the ideology of Pakistan. Though his group was living in Bangladesh but they wanted to establish the non secular power of Pakistan government even after the freedom. So, it shows how the cravings for power, involves people in politics and religion. Anam states: “She told the story of Ghulam Azam, whose thugs has collaborated with the Pakistan army, led them to guerrilla hideouts, helped them burnt villages. Not only was he acquitted of any wrongdoing, but he was being considered for Bangladeshi citizenship” (*TGM* 96). Jahanara Imam told about her disgust about the issue in a meeting in 1984 that Anam manifests in *The Good Muslim*. Even Azam opined in one pamphlet, *Mediar Mukhomukhi Golam Azam*: “The freedom won with the help of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, was not covetable. Secular and democratic politics was not getting the upper hand” (Adhikari 137). By his opinion, it is expressed that

nationalism is rooted into colonialism. People want to use their national, political, religious power to rule others.

Nationalism makes people heroes and villains too. The people who had sacrificed themselves for a nation are called martyrs and on the other hand, who go against their thoughts, they become traitors. According to Anderson: “Dying for one’s country, which usually one does not choose...Dying for the revolution also draws its grandeur from the degree to which it is felt to be something fundamentally pure” (144). Nobody wants to die but who sacrificed their life in revolution were forced to do so by others to some extents. In the Liberation War of Bangladesh, 3 million were killed by the brutality of Pakistani army. On the contrary, many Pak soldiers were killed by Mukti Bahini in the time of war and they are called martyrs too in their land. Anderson tries to focus on the point that no one wants to be sacrificed but who gave their life in revolution, are addressed as “pure.”

The influence of language among the communities is huge. It connects the unknown people who belong to an “imagined community” (Anderson 145). In *A Golden Age*, the people in the cricket match connect to each other by their language and the people in the racecourse were also connected by language. On the other hand, it is the language that is responsible for the death of an innocent that is revealed in *The Good Muslim* by Sohail. The old man addressed him as “Beta,” the word he is used to hear from her Urdu speaking mother since childhood but as he was so influenced by the movement and war that he killed the man instantly (*TGM* 284). The impact of language can be so paramount by the situation that Sohail, a tolerant person since childhood, becomes so heinous that he killed the innocent old man. In addition, the language movement in 1952 actually sparks the revolution among the Bengali speaking community that Anam portrays through the characters of her first two novels. Thus, it is clear that language plays a great role to reinforce something serious in the name of nationalism, religion, culture and so on that Anderson also said in his book.

“Colonial racism was a major element in that conception of ‘Empire’ which attempted to weld dynastic legitimacy and national community” (Anderson 150). To Anderson, racism is created by the “Empire” and it was established to wield power upon the minorities. Women and children are the ultimate sufferers of war. Simultaneously, the minorities are the victims of war and nationalism. The torture upon the minorities knew no bounds during the time of revolution that is traced by Anam in her trilogy. The torture and injustices were created by the government through its armed forces to terrorize and subjugate the East Pakistanis. The subjugation was related not only to the power but also to the capitalism.

According to Anderson, the power of colonial militaries works as “feudal-aristocratic drug” through capitalism. The atrocities of the armies are notorious and these are disguised in the form of formal institutional terms. Anderson delineates: “Nothing better illustrates capitalism in feudal-aristocratic drug than colonial militaries, which were notoriously distinct from those of the metropolises, often even in formal institutional terms” (151). Though Anderson renders his ideas on different issues but the idea is also applicable on the acts of Pakistan Army during the war of 1971. In the name of nationalism and with the power of uniform that Anderson addresses as “utilitarian khaki,”(151) the Pakistani army destroyed the life of the people of East Pakistan and also tortured, raped, massacred especially the women, children and last but not the least the minorities during the war. In *A Golden Age* the torture upon the minorities is shown in the refugee camps in Calcutta where Maya worked as a volunteer during the war. This scenario is also presented in *The Good Muslim* by Anam in the post war rehabilitation center where Rehana and Maya both worked to help the wounded women.

Many women were raped in front of their husbands and fathers, many were killed brutally by the army during the war, and many were kept in the barracks who had been raped till their death and freedom. Anam illuminates: “Some had been raped in their villages, in

front of their husbands and fathers, others kidnapped and held in the army barracks for the duration of the war” (*TGM* 69). Anam brings out the torture upon the minorities and women in her works through vivid description and thus, it shows the reality behind a free nation and the barbarism of a dictator government at the same time. She adds: “The soldiers told they were saving the world” (*AGA* 53). Before the heinous attack of Pak army upon the East Pakistanis, they all landed in the airport saying they were saving the world. For them, they were doing their national duty by obeying the government’s command. On the other hand, they landed actually, to do genocide in the name of nationalism. Thus, the power of uniform and capitalism works in the disguise of nationalism.

Killing humans in the name of religion, nationalism, language is nothing but the end of humanity. Maya who has been working as a volunteer to the wounded women in war, even justifies her brother’s deed when he told her about the murder of an innocent. Hearing the murder story from Sohail, Maya consoles him saying: “Bhaiya, it was the right thing to do. It was just a war, a right war. For us, for our freedom ... None of them were innocent” (*TGM* 248-249). Maya consoling her brother, says that he did right while he killed an innocent. People become blind in the name of revolution and because of that they become selfish too. In *The Bones of Grace*, when Zubaida went to Dera Bugti, Baluchistan for her search of the walking whale with her paleontologist group from Cambridge, she faced a cruel situation. Anam highlights the fact that in the name of terrorism, innocent people like Zamzam, were caught by the army and tortured. On the other hand, it is also drawn by Anam that how the religion is the tool to oppress the other. The Principal of the madrasa was a paedophile in disguise of a religious teacher in *The Good Muslim*, who molested Zaid, the son of Sohail. Zaid was sent to madrasa by his father to gain “real” education rather than school and when he told about this his father did not believe. The extreme religious belief of Sohail, made him so blind that he did not even notice his son’s sufferings. Thus, the paedophilic teacher got the

chance to molest the child and even did not get any punishment for this because he is considered as a holy man in the society.

To conclude this chapter, I want to urge that the impact of nationalism can be good and bad at the same time but it is better to work for the humanity rather than hold grudges. Moreover, Anam has tried to draw the consequences of revolution from a humanitarian perspective in her works. Thus, “historical amnesia” can cause great destruction in a postcolonial free nation and blind nationalism and religious values can harm the innocents. There is always another side of history that depicts the ugly truth or realities of the “imagined communities” which was underlined by Anam in her works. Nevertheless, women and children are the worst victims of war, religious and social taboos and seemingly, it can be said that the ideas of nationalism, culture, religion, race, caste are created to dominate others to practice the power of capitalism and neocolonialism.

### Chapter 3

#### Hybrid Identity, Exile and Belongingness

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. In this chapter, I will show how identity is shaped by nationalism, religion and culture and also demonstrate the fact that “hybridity” is a colonial element and related to identity in postcolonial era by elaborating Stuart Hall’s idea of identity and Homi K. Bhabha’s notion of “hybridity.” Anam’s trilogy 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 Rehana to Zubaida, Anam scrutinizes the struggle of women in patriarchal society with the invisible suppression of nationalism, culture and religion. 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 of Rehana in *A Golden Age*. In addition, the character of Maya, in both *A Golden Age* and *The Good Muslim*, gives the picture of a strong female identity who goes against religious taboos to establish humanity. On the contrary, nationalism plays a great role in Maya’s character during the time of war. Thus, the effect of nationalism

reinforced Maya's thought process in a sense. Zubaida's belongingness to her root, works differently in *The Bones of Grace* from Rehana and Maya. 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 problematises 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.

Rehana's identity can be delineated as a continuous process both in *A Golden Age* and in *The Good Muslim*. The issue of authority and authenticity of culture create dilemma in her life but she has coped with it and her individual identity has been initialized by her own movements even there are influence of "cultural identity." Indian born Rehana adapts the culture of Bangladesh because of her husband, Iqbal. But Rehana faces crisis in coping up with the culture and, finally, she has become successful as she considered it as her own. In *A Golden Age*, when everyone in racecourse were cheering for the freedom of formerly East Pakistan, Rehana did not feel anything for the country but she also chanted "Joy Bangla" (AGA 49), influenced by the voices of the masses there. Anam states it as: "By the end she

found herself shouting Joy Bangla, Joy Bangla with the crowd, the rhythm of her words chiming with the hard thump of her chest, she recognized, at once, the incendiary thrill of shouting” (AGA 49). Though she belongs from another land but she shouted out of excitement and, thus she becomes a native of the land of East Pakistan. She was not even ready to go to the racecourse at first but she went there only because of the insistence of her son and daughter. Finally, she feels the thrill of the movement and chanted “Joy Bangla.” Here, the issue of authority and authenticity create dilemma in her mind but she overcomes it and the influence of culture and nation plays a vital role to change her mind. According to Hall, “‘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. In Rehana’s case, it becomes more vivid in the racecourse and cricket match in *A Golden Age*.

However, identity revolves from place to place and continues its changing process by adjusting it in different places. 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 Good Muslim*, the search process of the walking whale, metaphorically indicates paleontologist, 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 trilogy underlines the combination of past with it from a new perspective. Rehana, Maya, and Zubaida, three of them, bear the truth behind their past and it is correlated with their 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" (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 and it also happens in Rehana and Maya's case. Rehana's identity depicts her past from India to Bangladesh in *A Golden Age*. On the other hand, Maya's identity also

shows her past through the revolution and after the revolution simultaneously in both *A Golden Age* and *The Good Muslim*.

Anam, through the characters of Rehana, Maya and Zubaida, brings out the conflict and crises of their identities. Rehana explores the crisis and conflict in her identity that is personal as well as national and related to language and culture. On the other hand, Maya feels the crisis and conflict by becoming a rebel for going against religious taboos. The conflict and crisis of Zubaida are same and different at the same time like Rehana and Maya. 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, Rehana and Maya display “subaltern agency” who face crises to fit in the world, made by patriarchal “authority.” Additionally, the identity of Rehana, Maya, 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 Good Muslim*, Sohail’s activities can easily relate to the influence of colonial power. Additionally, in *The Bones of Grace*, Zubaida’s sufferings can also be

demonstrated by relating to the colonial power that is in disguise of 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). For example, in *The Good Muslim*, Sohail thinks himself so “pure” and superior that he judges Maya’s activities as a female doctor by saying: “You were too busy killing those children” (*TGM* 249). Maya helped the war affected women to get rid of the unwanted pregnancy by their rapists after liberation war. This is not justifiable in the eyes of patriarchal Sohail. Although, he has killed an innocent old man but he camouflages the crime by transforming himself religious and questions Maya’s works to make him “pure.”

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 with Nazia and

Maya in *The Good Muslim*. Nazia was judged by the patriarchal rural society and power. She faces the wrath of some village men because she was seen chilling her feet in the pond water during her pregnancy. On the other hand, Maya was judged by her own brother for helping the rural women and the Birangonas in abortion. Nonetheless, 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 trilogy 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. Though Rehana belongs to an Indian family and loves to speak Urdu, rather, she changes herself for the sake of her children by deciding to live alone in Bangladesh rather than to settle down in Pakistan where her sisters are living. 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 Rehana's identity in *A Golden Age*. Rehana while questioned by Maya as: "Why did you bother to bring us back? You have no feelings for this place" (AGA 88). As Rehana sacrifices her whole life for the sake of her children and even changes herself, she replies: "This is my home. Your father's home ... I just want to protect you. Everything I've done, I've done for you and your brother" (AGA 88). It is the history and past that lead Rehana to change herself. Additionally, it is the power of Rehana's motherly identity that changes her into a new person for the sake of her children.

Anam has brought out autobiographical elements in her trilogy. Rehana's story is connected with her grandmother's story and simultaneously, 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. Through Zubaida, Anam has said about her soul, trying to fit in the world. 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 Rehana and Zubaida in her works vividly.

Zubaida was named after Zaid because Maya loved Zaid, Sohail's son, as her own child. But she failed to save Zaid from the paedophilic grasp of the madrasa Huzoor 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 after his name. Anam says: "Zaid. Zubaida. A name locked in a name. She misses him. Every day she misses him" (*TGM* 293). 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. For example, some of the Birangonas or the war heroines leave Bangladesh with the Pakistani soldiers because they wanted to start a new beginning. Anam asserts: "Another

woman spoke up. ‘We don’t want to be heroines. We are ashamed. We want to leave our shame behind, start again’” (*TGM* 70). They were mostly aware of the fact that war affected conservative society will not going to support them in their treatment as women. Thus, some of them left Bangladesh with their rapists for finding a new world where no one knows them.

To conclude this chapter, I want to say that identity as a continuous process and it transforms by time. Rehana’s identity changes and reshapes from a daughter to wife, wife to mother, and especially an individual self from dependent to independent. Similarly, Maya’s identity also changes and reshapes from a protester to volunteer, volunteer to a village doctor, and a doctor to a loving mother. Hence, Zubaida’s identity shows her cravings for her root and changes by time and makes her a strong woman in the postcolonial world. Apparently, this study explores the shortcomings of cultural hybridity and proves that it is a colonial tool to rule other as “liminal” beings. Thus, Anam’s female characters show their strength even being in exile and being in the sufferings of belongingness in the trilogy.

## Conclusion

Becoming a woman in the patriarchal system is difficult in every aspect. 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 trilogy. Anam's novels are solely related to her life as well as with the life of every woman in the Third world. From *Rehana* to *Maya* and *Maya* to *Zubaida*, Anam has portrayed the stories of third generation of a family and similarly, brought out the truth behind the victory of women that is unheard by the patriarchy. Nonetheless, women's survival in the Third World is more complicated than First World with the surroundings of society, culture, religion, nationalism and caste. In the first chapter, we come to know the issues and complexities for being women in postcolonial era. Additionally, going with the notion of Spivak, I have shown that women have voices that are unheard by the postcolonial patriarchal society. Moreover, I have questioned that although women have voices but do we heed? According to Spivak, women disappear into absolute nothingness by the suppression of imperialism and patriarchy and the condition of the Third world women are more complex because of the tradition and modernization. In the first chapter, I have revealed the issues through the struggle of the protagonists as well as the other female characters in the trilogy.

In the second chapter, we have found that how nationalism, religion, culture, language and caste are created to oppress "others." *Rehana*, born in a different country, loves Bangladesh not because of nationalism but for the memories of a beautiful nuptial life she had with her husband here. On the contrary, *Maya* is influenced by revolution and this chapter shows how the impact of nationalism reinforced her to take part in war. In addition, *Maya's* contribution in war is related to humanism more than nationalism that Anam

illustrates later in *The Good Muslim*. Foregrounding the notions of Anderson and Gandhi, I have explored the condition of women in the context of nationalism and religion in this chapter. In the final chapter, I have intended to manifest that how the issues of identity are related to exile and belongingness. Moreover, “hybridity” is a colonial tool to point out the “liminal” beings for suppression.

I have tried to show how women are marginalized in every sphere of life by this research. Although they have voices but those are unheard. Nevertheless, women can achieve victory and can speak by their heroism, deeds as well as their strength in any situation. Thus, women are undefeatable though they are considered as subalterns in society and in national boundaries. It is not easy to be a woman in patriarchal system. I have shown how one is not born woman but becomes a woman with the sacrifices, survival and heroism. Women can rise from nothing to everything to prove themselves and to give rejoinders to the society, religion and culture by fighting back against all odds and obstacles.

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