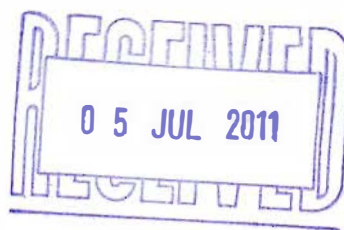


**POSTMODERN FICTION  
AND  
SYED MANZOORUL ISLAM'S *PREM O PRARTHONAR GOLPO***



**JULY 2008**

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Prepared For: Dr. Fakrul Alam  
Prepared By: Farhana Tajrin  
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## INTRODUCTION



This dissertation will study Syed Manzoorul Islam's short fiction in order to find out the elements and aspects of postmodernism in his writings. Also, it hopes to comment in passing the condition of postmodernism in Bangladeshi literature. Syed Manzoorul Islam is a Bangladeshi fiction writer who has written many short fictions. His *Stories of Love and Prayer* is one of his best collections of short fictions that deal with social life, culture and reality. This book was first published in Ekushay Boi Mela in 2005 and won Prothom Alo Borsho Shera Award in 2005 and Kagoj Shahitto Award in 2006. The stories of this book are interesting and amusing but not traditional. The subject matter, style, pattern, prologue, mood and structure of his stories are quiet different from that of the traditional writers of Bangladesh. We see him experiment with new forms and styles. In his writing there are postmodern elements and aspects. His short stories tell us about the hyper-reality of our life which is one of the aspects of postmodernism. He writes about love but his treatment of love is different from traditional outlooks of love. In his writings he shows that self-love is one kind of love which is sometimes frigid and sometimes he tries to wear the mask of love. Islam's short stories focus primarily on urban life. In his stories people are isolated from society and feel inclined to live their lives alone. We notice that Islam's short stories are subversive and playful. Sometimes they are ironic and sometimes they present serious things in a funny way. Syed Manzoorul Islam is a writer who breaks away from traditional forms and styles of writing, and the elements and aspects we find in his writing are essentially postmodern.

## Postmodernism

The term 'Postmodernism' has been applied to architecture, design, communications, music, sociology, film as well as literature. It tells us about serious things in a funny way. It makes use of suspense, parody, twists and turns in thought. Postmodernism has no boundaries or any belief in absolute truth. It never attempts to accentuate what is right or wrong, true or false, good or evil. Postmodernist believes that truth is easily corrupted. It denies innocence and sometimes it appears to us like sick jokes about others.

Ihab Hassan is one the great advocates of postmodernism, who compares it with modernism. He argues that postmodernism originates from modernism and that is why postmodernism cannot be understood without knowing the elements of modernism. So he offers a schematic difference between modernism and postmodernism to the following tables:

<b>Modernism</b>	<b>Postmodernism</b>
<i>Modernism</i>	<i>Postmodernism</i>
romanticism/symbolism	paraphysics/Dadaism
form (conjunctive, closed)	antiform (disjunctive, open)
purpose	play
design	chance
hierarchy	anarchy
mastery, logos	exhaustion, silence
art object, finished work	process, performance, happening
distance	participation

creation, totalization	decreation, deconstruction
synthesis	antithesis
presence	absence
centering	dispersal
genre, boundary	text, intertext
semantics	rhetoric
paradigm	syntagm
hypotaxis	parataxis
metaphor	metonymy
selection	combination
root, depth	rhizome, surface
interpretation	against interpretation
reading	misreading
signified	signifier
lisible (readerly)	scriptible (writerly)
narrative	anti-narrative
grande histoire	petite histoire
master code	idiolect
symptom	desire
type	mutant
genital, phallic	polymorphous, androgynous
paranoia	schizophrenia
origin, cause	difference-difference, trace
God the Father	The Holy Ghost
metaphysics	irony
determinacy	indeterminacy
transcendence	immanence

[Source: Hassan, "The Culture of Postmodernism", *Theory, Culture and Society*, v.2, 1985, 123-4.]



## **Postmodern literature**

The term postmodern literature is used to describe certain tendencies in post-World War II literature. It is a continuation of the experimentation championed by writers of the modernist period. It relies heavily, for example, on fragmentation, paradox, unreliable narrators, etc. and reflects a reaction against enlightenment ideas implicit in modernist literature.

Postmodern literature breaks away from nineteenth century realism, in which a story was told from an “objective” or omniscient point of view. Both modern and postmodern literature explores subjectivism, turning away from external reality to examine inner states of consciousness. In literature particularly, but also in much postmodern theatre, traditional barriers between audience and the narrator the reader and the writer have broken down. Self-awareness of a character's role as a character in a novel is a prime example of this mode. Many postmodernists would argue that the presence of a self-aware irony is a necessary cornerstone of any work claiming to be postmodernist.

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# CHAPTER: 1

## POSTmodern fiction

There is no clear definition of the term “postmodernism” and listings of the characteristics of “postmodernist fiction”. Postmodern fiction is not a sort of regular storytelling. A regular story has a beginning, middle and end—one that has characters, some sort of plot, and conflicts. Postmodernist fiction turns out to be mimetic in the end, but this imitation of reality is accomplished not so much at the level of content, which is often manifestly un- or anti-realistic, but primarily at the level of form. Such fiction imitates the object of its mimesis, the pluralistic and anarchistic ontological landscape of advanced industrial cultures.

According to Professor Ihab Hassan, postmodern fiction proceeds from the premise that it is in some respect an extension of the programmes of modernism and in other respects a reaction against them.

Postmodern fiction often parodies everything that calls itself seriously. Postmodern fictions have some unique characteristics. According to David Lodge, ([www.hku.hk/english/course2000-Liverpool](http://www.hku.hk/english/course2000-Liverpool) John Moors University) postmodern stylistics consists of the following elements:

1. Contradiction
2. Permutations (and Choice)
3. Discontinuity (lack of causation)
4. Randomness (no authorial guidance in role of God/destiny)
5. Excess (example after example etc)
6. Short Circuit (breaking the frame or exposing literary conventions)

Contradiction is a feature of postmodern fiction. The characters of postmodern fiction sometimes exhibit unstable tension; they reveal mental dilemmas. They love to live an isolated life. The characters of postmodern fiction have ambivalent ideas. They think that without life there would be no death and without death there would be no life.

Permutation and choice are important features of postmodern fictions.

Discontinuity (lack of causation) is also an idea of Foucault widely used in postmodernism. Discontinuity theorists picture the course of development as more like a series of stair steps, each of which elevates the individual to a new and presumably more advanced level of functioning. If discontinuity is present in the stories then the stories connect in unorthodox ways. The threads of connection could be defined as rhizomic; as connected less through collective tools, less through hierarchy and, less through narrative closures or the proffering of individual epiphanies that re-foundationalise the world of culture, are diversely plural.

Randomness (no authorial guidance in role of God/destiny) is another important stylistic aspect of fiction. It subverts seriousness in faith and religion. Postmodern fiction seems to

imply a lack of a moral compass, or a lack of objectivity. It does not have a unifying ethic. The postmodern mindset does not generally consider long-term ramifications regard moral or ethical issues. The whole idea is to achieve instant gratification and happiness. Postmodernist rarely make a negative claim. They don't say much about destiny either way. Postmodern fiction despite its posturing about the unverifiable nature of truth and reality, postmodern fiction routinely indulge in theological and cosmological speculation. For some scholars "postmodern" means "to ask". If the values and truths of the modern age have failed, it has become our nature to be skeptical of long-held beliefs and; "to ask" questions about everything. In postmodernism there is no place for destiny. The people of postmodern fiction do not depend on God or destiny. They do not let God and destiny guide them. They walk their whole way themselves without their help.

Excess (example after example etc) is a very common aspect of postmodern fiction. It means an amount which is more than acceptable, expected or reasonable. In postmodern fictions writers give many examples to prove their writing and theories. Postmodern writers use these examples to make these fictions easy to understand to the readers.

The main idea of postmodernism is to break the tradition and create something radically new. Traditional writers follow a frame and a definite style of writing fiction but postmodern writers break all traditions and frame of writings. Postmodern fictions introduce new vocabularies, themes, styles and characters in the story. A simple person of a society can be the main character of postmodern writings although traditional writers will not normally use them in their stories.

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## CHAPTER: 2

### Aspects of POSTmodernISM

#### METANARRATIVE

Metanarrative is an important concept of postmodernism which is described by Lyotard in his essay “The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (1979)”. Postmodernist scholars do not believe in great books like the Bible. They do not believe in big stories, that claim to be able to account for, explain and subordinate all lesser, little, local narratives. Lyotard claims that people have stopped believing in grand narratives because such narratives marginalize minorities and assume that people universally believe in justice. [Lyotard, J. F. (2001). *Postmodernism for Beginners*, India: Orient Longman Limited.pg-29-33.] Lyotard describes the postmodern condition as one characterized by increasing skepticism towards the totalizing nature of ‘metanarratives’ or grand narratives.

#### INTERTEXTUALITY

Intertextuality means a text within a text. This is a very common term in postmodernism. In most postmodern fiction we get this usage. The term Intertextuality, popularized especially by Julia Kristeva, is used to signify the multiple ways in which any one literary

text is made up of other texts, by means of its open or covert citations and allusions. In Kristeva's formulation, any text is in fact an "intertext"--- the site of an intersection of numberless other texts, which exists through its relations to other texts. [Abrams, M.H. (2000). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. India: Harcourt Asia PTE LTD.]

Intertextuality is the shaping of a texts' meaning by other texts. It can refer to an author's borrowing and transformation of a prior text or to a reader's referencing of one text in reading another. The term "intertextuality" has been borrowed and transformed many times since it was coined by the poststructuralist Julia Kristeva in 1966. As critic William Irwin observes, the term "has come to have almost as many meanings as users, from those faithful to Kristeva's original vision to those who simply use it as a stylish way of talking about allusion and influence" (Irwin, 228).

## **HYPERREALITY**

Hyperreality is another important element of postmodernism and postmodern fiction. It signifies the end of realism. Jean Baudrillard uses this term in his essay "Symbolic Exchange and Death". Hyperreality is the death of the real; the hyperreal takes over—Disneyland, the Tasaday, Watergate, the Lascaux simulacrum---and is more real than the real itself. And with hyperreality all the potentially political, explosive, polar antagonisms that had inhabited and animated the real collapse into one another and implode, especially in the political realm! [Baudrillard, J. (2001). *Postmodernism for Beginners*, India: Orient Longman Limited.pg-60.]



Hyperreality is related to the Baudrillard's concept of simulacrum. According to him a simulacrum is not a copy of the real, but becomes truth in its own right.

Baudrillard uses the concept of god as an example of simulacrum. The changes that have been taken place in postmodern era are simply because of the radical impact of technique and technologies. It is technology that makes possible the copy of the real, a simulacrum, a hyperreality. In *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976) (English 1993), Jean Baudrillard draws our attention to simulacrum and describes the changes in postmodern era which are the ultimate result of capitalism and technologism. In this essay Baudrillard finds out that in postmodern era nothing real exists, and only copied proliferate. Further he argues that in postmodern era nothing is produced but everything is reproduced. Philosopher Frederic Jameson offers photorealism as an example of artistic simulacrum, where a painting is created by copying a photograph that is itself a copy of the real.

## URBANISM

Ihab Hassan talks about urbanism in his essay "POSTmodernISM: A Paracritical Bibliography". Urbanism implies a stage of world history where we can think about the global village. It gestures at the culture or way of life of city dwellers. The city is like a prison and full of crime.

Postmodernist ideas of the city emerged as a reaction against modernism. Hassan explains the turn from "modernism" to "postmodernism" as the result of changes of

economic systems and cultural codes. In the Modern era city was the centre of everything that means everything was based on city and its people. There were many cities in modern era but in postmodern era every area, every little village is under the influences of urbanization. Every village or area becomes a city. That means in postmodern era the whole world has become one single city.

## **DEHUMANIZATION**

Ihab Hassan also talks about dehumanization in his essay "POSTmodernISM: A Paracritical Bibliography" (1971). Dehumanization gestures at the end of humanity. Humans are now born in clinics and die there. Hassan glosses "Dehumanization" as finally meaning "the end of the old Realism". Increasingly, illusionism takes its place, not only in art but also in life. He also shows how dehumanization leads to the use of irony in literature. It ends to radical, self-consuming play, also, comedy of the absurd, black humor, insane parody and slapstick became frequent.

## **EROTICISM**

In his essay "POSTmodernISM: A Paracritical Bibliography" Ihab Hassan lays out the differences between modern eroticism and postmodern eroticism. Modern literature is erotic and so is postmodern. But the difference between modern eroticism and postmodern eroticism is that postmodern is more open about sex and its action than that

of modern eroticism. Erotic literature comprises fictional and factual stories and accounts which sexually arouse the reader, whether written with that intention or not. But postmodern literature is more inclined forwards what Ihab Hasan considers to be “polymorphs perversity”

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## CHAPTER: 3

### SYED MANZOORUL ISLAM AS A WRITER

Syed Manzoorul Islam started his writing carrier in 1978. His first story appeared in a magazine in Bangla literature and after that he did not publish anything for a long time. Almost after a decade a magazine published his story in 1988 and senates he has seen writing stories regularly. Syed Manzoorul Islam is a professor at the Department of English, Dhaka University, Bangladesh. He started his writing career as an art critic. He took a Ph.D. in English Literature from Queen University. Dr. Islam has translated extensively from Bengali literature. Basically he writes novels, short stories and critical essays. His first book, published from Calcutta, was *Shonirbachito Sreshto Galpa - Selected Storie*. By now Syed Manzoorul Islam has published five collections of short stories, two novels and many wroks of criticisms. He has won various awards for his writing such as the Bangla Academy award for Literature, Prothom Alo Best Book Award, Fazlur Rahman Gold Medal etc. In 2006 he got the Kagojj Shahitto Award and Prothom Alo Best Book Award for his collection of short stories, *Prem O Prarthonar Golpo (Stories of Love and Prayer)*. Readers like his short stories because these stories are not like traditional owes.

Islam has said that he takes his stories from real life—from newspaper reports, personal accounts and his own observation of people's lives. He fictionalizes these stories, often mixing and using irony and parody to bring out life's inconsistencies. At times he insert

himself into the narrative frame, using a great deal of self-reflectivity to reduce the differences between real and fictional time, fact and fantasy, and reality and virtuality.

In his writing Islam is very conscious about his use of language. He believes the language is a key to the construction of a fictionalized world. He chooses word, carefully, often self-consciously, but never allows his narrative to be detached from real life. He uses standard Bangla and colloquialism where necessary but in the course of telling a story, he constantly experiments with language. His language retains an impression of orality. He also mixes voices and often includes the 'I'. The net result is that the language, in the end, because polyglossic. He also generously takes from journalistic, legal, even scientific language to give an impression of authenticity. In his novels he often describes emotions at length, which expands the base of his language.

Although Islam does not consider himself to be a postmodern writer, postmodern elements are very much present in his writing. In 1988 he wrote an English novel named *Dreams of an Afternoon* which is a thoroughly postmodern piece. He teaches postmodernism and has vast knowledge of it. In one of his interviews published in Xtra, a magazine of the daily New Age he talks about the postmodernism and its aspects. He declares that the world is moving towards postmodernism. Our country too is moving in this direction though we do not recognize this; we just ignore it. Islam notes—

“The times are post-Modern, the experiences are very post-Modern. Metanarratives are back, you see. Our state is a metanarrative, our politics is increasingly becoming metanarrative, and our universities are metanarratives. You just cannot choose anything on your own. People try to dictate things that concern your life. There is a dominant trend toward

singularity. You only have one culture, the Bengali culture. We don't talk about cultures. We exclude minorities; the Hill people, the ethnic groups."

(Xtra, March3-9, 2006)

Islam considers our political and universities systems as metanarratives. People of our country cannot do anything they want. People's life depends on other things. We want to dominate each other. Even our culture has become singular. We want to reject the final settlers of the land. We want to ignore them because they are few in number.

About his writing and style he has the following to say—

...what happened was I took these stories from real life. Most of my stories originate from newspaper reports, and conversations with people, like this boy who is the central figure of my novel. I just write about them the way I feel comfortable. Now if it is post-Modern, it's because the times are post-Modern.

(Xtra, March3-9, 2006)

Though he does not say outright that his writing is postmodern, the style he uses is postmodern. He writes about real life and real incidents but he treats them in a manner that is postmodern.

Islam is a great fan of Kurt Vonnegut, the American novelist and short story writer. He had read almost all of his books. Vonnegut, of course, is a famous postmodern writer. In his writing we find the presence of black humor which we also find in Islam's writings. Black humor can provoke laughter. Islam too has a passion for black humor. As he puts of,

...I think humour is something which is there everywhere, but our urban people, the bhadralok are very humorless...

... If people have a sense of humour, they become self-critical, because humour is a cleansing thing. I believe humour can cleanse you. The black humour that I employ in my short stories is there in the sphere of people's lives.

Islam thinks that black humor can help people live a normal live. He thinks that this humor comes from our culture but we are too busy with T.V and media; we ignore our culture. We just concentrate one culture and ignore others. So Islam tries to mock such a monocultural life in his writing and expose it in his writing.

Beside Vonnegut, Islam also admires Thomas Pynchon, Ronald Sukenick, EL Doctorow and a lot of other postmodern writers from USA. He has read the works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Milan Kundera with great interest they are not only postmodern writers but they; of course all use postmodern elements in their writing. In Bangladesh Islam likes the work of Shahidul Jahir who uses the postmodern style in his writing.



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## CHAPTER: 4

### Syed Manzoorul Islam's short fictions in the light of Postmodernism

In Syed Manzoorul Islam's short fiction we find the presence of contradiction in the action of some characters. His fictional character Fozlu in "Tin Takar Note (Note of Three Taka)" shows some mental dilemma at the end of the story. A character like Moizuddin Shaheb in "Choitro Ghor (House of Autumn)", "Master Aziz Songay Ak Sondha (One Evening with Master Aziz)", Professor Wakilur Raham in "Tara Vabay Tara Shap, Asolay Tara Rojju (They Think They Are Snakes, But They Are Ropes)", Nitai in "East India Companer Kroy Bickroy (Business of East Indian Company)", Ahmed Kutub Uddin Ibek in "Ibek Bongser Uthan Poton (Rise-Fall of Ibek Generation)", Harun in "Plabon (Flood)", Sakul Arifin in "Jolopurusher Prarthona (Prayer of a Male-Mermaid)" and Ahmedullah in "Jinda Lass (Life in Death)" reveal some contradictions in their minds. For example in a story we find---

ফজলুর গল্ মোটা, হাসি টাও মোটা. কিন্তু সেই হাসি কি এতো মোটা যে, হাজত পেরিয়ে, থানা পেরিয়ে একদম রাস্তায় তা পৌছে যাবে, আর তিনটি স্কুলগামী মেয়ে সে হাসির শব্দে থমকে থেমে যাবে এবং একজন জিজ্ঞেস করবে অন্যদের, 'কে হাসে রে?' এবং অন্য দু'জন প্রায় একসঙ্গে বলবে 'কোনো পাগল হয়তো?'

(Fazlu's voice is loud; his laughter is also loud like his voice, but is it so loud that it can cross the boundaries of jail, reach the ear of three school going girls, and stop them, scare them and make them ask one another, 'who is laughing?' and get the answer 'may be some mad person!')

"Tin Takar Note (Note of Three Taka)" 50

Islam transgression in his short fictions. For example in his short fictions “East India Companer Kroy Bickroy (Business of East Indian Company)”, “Ibek Bongsher Uttan Paton (Rise-Fall of Ibek Generation)”, “Ibnay Botutar Dinponji (Biography of Ibnay Botuta)” and “Plabon (Flood)” he transgress all the tradition of writings. He subversion traditional concepts. To subvert is to undermine. Recent writers, in the post-modern and post-structuralist traditions (including, particularly, feminist writers) have advocated a very broad form of subversion. It is not, directly, the area which should be subverted in their view, but the cultural formations, such as patriarchy.

Islam’s short fiction “Shalbonay Jossona (Moonlight in the Shalbon)” and “Aziz Masterer Sathy Aksondha (One Evening with Master Aziz)” are good examples of this aspect of his fiction. These fictions start at the end and the whole story flashback to the past. A second aspect of discontinuity reads use towards whether changes are quantitative or qualitative in nature.

For example Islam’s short stories “Kusumbapur Abishkar (Discovery of Kusumbapur)”, “Plabon (Flood)” and “Jinda Lash (Life in Death)” present this postmodern aspect. In “Plabon” (Flood)”we get a glimpse of contemporary life and the present condition of our government. This is one kind of satire of our present governing conditions. The main character of “Jinda Lash (Life in Death)” Ahmodullah becomes a burden of that family because he is in a coma. But once he was the centre of the family when he was its only earning member. Everybody loved him a lot and cared about his feelings. Now all the members of the family have forgotten about him and are waiting for his death.

Sometimes we find an example within an example which can confuse readers. Islam's short fiction "Tara Vabay Tara Shap, Asolay Tara Rojju (They Think They Are Snakes, But They Are Ropes)" offers a good example of such excess (example after example etc). This fiction is full of examples which are related to philosophy. Because of such philosophical examples, readers can become confused about the real meaning of the story. Another story "Vobissot Thakay Fera (Returning from The Future)" has some example which puzzles us and make us lose track of the main narrative.

Islam's style is different from that of traditional writers as we can see this in the story "Akti Goyendar Golpo (Story of A Spy)". Readers of this story may find follows the main track of the story difficult. His fictions sometimes start from the ending and sometimes from the middle of the story. "Shalbonay Jossona (Moonlight in the Shalbon)", "Akti Goyendar Golpo (Story of A Spy)" and "Aziz Masterer Sathy Aksondha (One Evening with Master Aziz)" are some stories by Islam which start from the end or the middle.

The postmodern elements of Islam's short stories are easily visible to us. Beside the elements noted above his stories are related some other aspect of postmodern fiction which helps to prove his stories to be postmodernist. Among these qualities are the following ---



## Playfulness

*Prem O Prarthonar Golpo (Stories of Love and Prayer)* a collection of Syed Manzoorul Islam's short fiction was published in 2004. The stories vary in subject matter, moods and style. His imaginative mind is reflected in his writings. Islam proves to be a great entertainer and is hugely funny in these stories. He merges history and philosophy in there in a very humorous way. His dialogue and characters are presented in a playful manner.

Postmodern writers like to play with themes, characters and language. In fact it can be said that, a motto of postmodernism could be 'Nothing is serious, everything is playful.' Playfulness allows postmodern writers to be as silly as necessary to tell a story. They put imagination at the helm. There are no hard and fast rules when you are playing. You can do no wrong. Islam's playfulness is evident in his stories such as "Rasmi Rumal (Silken Handkerchief)", "Tin Takar Note (Note of Three Taka)", "Ibnay Botutar Dinponji (Biography of Ibnay Botuta)", "Aziz Masterer Sathy Aksondha (One Evening with Master Aziz)" and "Eshor Kripa Express (Eshor Kripa Express)" which reminds one of Vonnegut's writings. His dialogue, too, is very playful. For example, here are some lines from Islam's story-----

আবু সামা আমার কানের কাছে মুখ এনে ফিসফিসিয়ে বলল-যদিও কোন কারন ছিলনা, বাসায় আমি একা-(যেন দেয়াল শুনে ফেললেও আপত্তি) 'ইবনে বতুতার'।

শুনে আমার চুল খাড়া হয়ে গেল।

হ্যাঁ ভাইজান। পাল্লিপটি ইবনে বতুতার, এতে তিনি তার বাংলা ভ্রমনের বৃত্তান্ত লিপিবদ্ধ করে গেছেন, যে বৃত্তান্ত পড়লে আপনার মাথার চুল সব খাড়া হয়ে যাবে।

আমি হাত দিয়ে চুল সমান করে বললাম, এটি পেলে কোথকে, আবু সামা?

[Abu Sama whispered bringing his face near to my ears- while it is not inconsequential, because I am alone in my house-(like he will mind if wall hear whatever he will say) 'Ibnay Botuta'.

My hair will stand up after hearing this.

Yes brother. Ibnay Botuta's biography, here he describe his travel of Bengal, your hair must stand up after reading his.

Where did you get it, Abu Sama? I asked crudely my hair.]

Ibnay Botutar Dinponji (Biography of Ibnay Botuta) 72

Here Islam's technique is farcical and playful. The narrator himself becomes a part of the story. Islam's language is also playful, as we can see from the use of words and phrase such as "Jinjiga product", "Marakkeser nachnaywali pori", "ssarer bari", "proxy daya", "lites", "flirt korchy", "khamos", "doibo", "andha kam", "technically speaking" and use of so many other words. His diction gives his texts a playful quality. His words also evokes everyday picture. For his writings he chooses the most common words from the surrounding environment.

Some situations in Islam's short fictions are also very playful. In "Tin Takar Note (Note of Three Taka)"; Islam talks about the colourful three taka note, something not to be found in our country. The writer here criticizes our administrative system humorously "Ibnay Botutar Dinponji (Biography of Ibnay Botuta)" is full of playful situations like Abu Sama's attitude and the expression of his face and also the writers' attitude and conversational styles. "Vobissot Thakay Fera (Returning from Future)" is a full of playful incidents. Here Islam depicts characters who can fast forward to the future and act there.

Every incident of this story delights its readers because of the playful mood in which it is written.

## Intertextuality

Manzoorul Islam's short stories are full of Intertextuality. He takes some events and incidents from other stories and uses them in his writings. In his fiction "Daedalus and Icarus (Kite of Daedalus)" he mentions the story of Dedalus. Here he mingles his character of this story Imon with Dedalus, Imon's father for example is Icarus because of page 21 (*Prem O Prarthonar Golpo -Stories of Love and Prayer*) he mentions about this Greek myth *Dedalus and Ikarus* to make understand the position of this character of this story. Imon's father Satu Mia loves to play with kites and intends one day to make a big kite which would be able to make his son fly in the sky. But he falls from the roof and dies. In the mythological story *Dedalus and Icarus*, Icarus dies but in Islam's story it is Dedalus who dies. The story "Tara Vabay Tara Shap, Asolay Tara Rojju (They Think They Are Snakes, But They Are Ropes)" of this book (*Prem O Prarthonar Golpo - Stories of Love and Prayer*) is full of intertextual element. Here he mentions the Greek philosophical book "Medusa: Plator Songlap, Bisoi O Prokoron" and present Plato's stories in his own way. Islam presents Greek philosophy in a very humorous way. For example---

প্রেটোর উত্তর শুনে ওয়াকিলুর রহমান প্রায় ভিভান থেকে পড়ে গেলেন । প্রেটো বলেছেন: 'বর্ণনাটা এভাবে দেওয়া যায়- রজ্জু সর্পবৎ ।' অতঃপর ওয়াকিলুরহমানের প্রশ্নের উত্তরে তিনি জানালেন, 'তখন এবং এখনো সাপরা সব রজ্জু হয়ে গেছে । সাপ নেই । বুঝলে?'

[Wakilur Rahman fell from the divan after hearing Plato's answer. Plato says: 'we can describe the situation in the following manner- rope like

snake. 'Then as the answer to Anakismanas' questing he notes 'snakes become rope from past to present.' Understand? There is no snake.]

“Tara Vabay Tara Shap, Asolay Tara Rojju (They Think They Are Snake, But They Are Rope)” pages no 150

the fiction “Tara Vabay Tara Shap, Asolay Tara Rojju (They Think They Are Snake, But They Are Rope)” Islam is alluding to other texts; this story is full of intertextuality.

There are some other fictions where we get some touches of intertextuality too, for instance Rasmi Rumal (Silken Handkerchief), “East India Companer Kroy Bickroy (Business of East Indian Company)” and “Jibba Kata Manus (A Human without Tongue)”

## **Urbanism**

Manzoorul Islam's short fictions are based on urban life. He presents citizens and their lives. His short fictions “Tin Takar Note (Note of Three Taka)”, “Akti Goyendar Golpo (Story of A Spy)”, “Vobissot Thakay Fera (Returning from Past)” and some other stories tell us that life in the city is hard. In the fiction “Tin Takar Note (Note of Three Taka)” he depicts a simple character named Fazlu who a victim of a cruel society. Fazlu tries to run away from his problems but they follow him. At last he surrenders himself to them and laughs at his own life. “Akti Goyendar Golpo (Story of A Spy)” and “Vobissot Thakay Fera (Returning from Past)” also deal with our social and urban problems. In “Akti Goyendar Golpo (Story of A Spy)” the narrator himself in “Vobissot Thakay Fera (Returning from Past)” presents the human problems of this city. In the fiction “Akti Goyendar Golpo (Story of A Spy)” Islam presents a tale of cruel city where the powerful dominate. By using power a man can do whatever he wants to in



People become slaves of power. The story “Vobissot Thakay Fera (Returning from t)” is about the young generation who visualize their future and act as if they are es. This is one kind of mental disorder which the administration of the city has to de. The young find themselves to be responsible citizens following some social rules just change the social structure of the city. “Plabon (Flood)” and “Jolopurusher rthonar (Prayer of a Male- Mermaid)” show misuse of political power in the city. Due uch abuses many lives are ruined or lost. Islam shows how people misuse political ver and captures other lives by using power. In every story of Islam, he depicts urban He demonstrates a variety of city characters in negative as well as positive situations.

## humanization

Islam’s short fiction we get met people who have been defeated by life. “Shalbonay sona (Moonlight in the Shalbon)” is a story where the main character Aowlad prepares omb. His friends are smile because the bomb is too strong and can destroy everything. y know that a bomb can take a human life but they still enjoy making it. In albonay Jossona (Moonlight in the Shalbon)” page no 64----

.....খুটিতে অসংখ্য তারকাটা বেঁধা। অনেকক্ষন সময় নিয়ে সেগুলো খুলল আওলাদ। এক পোয়া থেকে বেশিই হল। বোমার কারিগর আজিজ আর ইদু খুব খুশি হল। এই বোমাগুলো, তারা আওলাদ কে বলল, যেখানে ফাটবে, আশেপাশে মানুষের জন্য খবর আছে-এই বলে তারা মাঠ কাঁপিয়ে হাসতে লাগল।

[.....there were lots of spikes in the bamboo pillar. Aowlad took lot of time. It was more than 250 gm. Aziz and Idu created the bomb and was very pleased to get the spikes. They told Aowlad that people of the place where the bomb blast took place; couldn’t imagine its power-they start laughing loudly after telling it.]

re Islam shows how we forget that we are human beings. He shows the present condition of human life, where people got pleasure from killing each others. Another story “Aziz Masterer Sathy Aksondha (One Evening with Master Aziz)” depicts a dehumanizing situation. Aziz Master forced his sister-in-law, Parul who used to live in his house to have an affair with him. Once Parul wanted to escape with her teacher Sajib from this situation but he sent over of his men to burn her with acid. Another cruel scene in this fiction is when Parul cut Aziz’s penis to save herself. Parul manages to save herself through this action. Islam presentations of such action of dehumanizing acts touch our heart but they represent the naked reality of our life.

### **Hyperreality**

Hyperreality is another important element of Syed Manzoorul Islam’s short fictions. Hyperreality is the death of realism and humanization which we get in Islam’s fictions like “Jinda Lash (Life in Death)”, “Jibba Kata Manus (A Human without Tongue)”, “Plabon (No Food)” and some others fictions. In the fiction “Jinda Lash (Life in Death)” Ahmedullah is the main earning member of his family. Everyone loves him and take care of him. But after an accident when he is in coma, he becomes a burden on the family. Even his wife who loved leaves him and has a relationship with other person. This is the naked reality of our life which is wonderfully

depicted in “Jibba Kata Manus (A Man without a Tongue)” where Romjan loses his tongue only because he is talking in favors of poor laborer. Ramjan who is the right hand of the owner of a factory, becomes an enemy when he talks about workers right. This fiction uncovers the face of some high level people who control society through their wealth. They can buy people

th their wealth. “Vobissot Thakay Fera (Returning from Future)” is another story of am where a group of young people try to change the present social system. This is one nd of mental disorder and for a certain period they act like their unconscious image in eir mind. “Aziz Masterer Sathy Aksondha (One Evening with Master Aziz)” also esents the presence of some hyperreality in our life. The sick mentality of a person and e meager condition of a girl represent the darker part of our life.

## Fun and Irony

one of the most important aspects of postmodernism is fun and irony. Postmodern short ories too are full of fun and irony plays a vital role in them. In such writing humor is esented even at serious moments. The laughter sets off the serious things of life. In am’s short story “Ibnay Botutar Dinponji (Biography of Ibnay Botuta)” Abu Sama ses the valve of his heart which can bring him near death but the writer presents the isode in a funny way. This is has the narrator presents the situation---

মানুষের হাটে কটা ভাল থাকে জানিনা, আবু সামার ভাল ভাল কি আর থাকল ? কোনো কোনো গাড়ির ৮ টা ভাল থাকে বলে শুনেছি । তবে মানুষে গাড়িতে তো অনেক তফাৎ ।

[I don’t know a human has how many valves a man can have, but did Abu Sama have any good valve left in his heart? As far as I know some cars have near 8 valves. But there is a huge difference between a human being and a car.]

“Ibnay Botutar Dinponji (Biography of Ibnay Botuta)” pages no 71

ere the writer is mocking Abu Sama’s condition and presenting it from a postmodern spectitive. Another story in “Aziz Masterer Sathy Aksondha (One Evening with Master iz)” has Master Aziz run for a doctor with his penis bleeding because his sister-in-law

d damaged it. This is really a hazardous situation but the writer presents it morously.

## **ewrite the History**

Another aspect of postmodern writing is the way it glances at hidden parts of history. The postmodern way of narrating a historical situation is to rewrite it. It presents history in a new way. Some historical events which are totally fictitious can be present in postmodern writing. Syed Manzoorul Islam's "East India Companyer Kroy Bickroy (Business of East Indian Company)" and "Kusumbapur Abishkar (Discover the place Kusumbapur)" are examples of such postmodern historical fictions. Here he writes history in his own way and presents something we have never heard before or had never mentioned anywhere previously. In both stories he mixes reality and fiction. "East India Companyer Kroy Bickroy (Business of East Indian Company)" presents the cruel system of trade of the East India Company. The whole story is a satire on our present condition. Islam here talks about the discovery of gas which was not found in the subcontinent then. He mocks our present government and criticizes it through his writing. He rewrites history imaginatively and mingles it with present events. "Ibek Bongsher Uttan Paton (Rise-Fall of Ibek Generation)" is another story where Islam writes about the history of a family and its central character. He writes about his family's rise and fall. Here we find three generations, Mr. Ibek, his father and his children. All the members of this family were separated from each other but Mr. Ibek brings them together and starts a new family.

## Explicit Sexuality

Islam makes use of eroticism in some of his stories such as story like “East India Company (Business of East Indian Company)”, “Akti Goyendar Golpo (Story of A Spy)”, “CoitroGhor (House of Autumn)”, “Aziz Masterer Sathy Aksondha (One Evening with Master Aziz)” and “Ibek Bongsher Uttan Paton (Rise-Fall of Ibek Bongsher Uttan Paton)”. Eroticism is one common element in postmodern fiction; sexual desire is a major theme in this type of fiction. In “Akti Goyendar Golpo (Story of A Spy)”, “CoitroGhor (House of Autumn)” and “Aziz Masterer Sathy Aksondha (One Evening with Master Aziz)” Islam portrays frank but realistic pictures of society where sex plays an important role. It may present a negative aspect of our mind, or it sometimes presents a distorted mentality. In “Akti Goyendar Golpo (Story of A Spy)” the conversation between Kolpona and Haidar Ali is simple but Kolpona’s dialogues are frank and explicit (page 102-103) ---

হায়দার আলি নিজের চোখকে বিশ্বাস করতে পারলেন না । কাল্পনার পরনে সেই শাড়ি । তিনি ভনীতা না করে বললেন, ‘আহ্, আপনার শাড়িতে একসময় কিছু রক্ত লেগেছিল, ধুয়ে পরিষ্কার করেছেন ।’ কল্পনা ভেজা চোখের পাতা একবার না ফেলে বলল, ‘জি, আমার একটা পিরিয়ডের সময় কেয়ারফুল ছিলাম না ।’

[Haidar Ali couldn’t believe his own eyes. Kolpona was wearing that shari. Without any preambles he told her, ‘ah, did you wash your shair because there was some blood on it. ‘Yes, “without moving an eyelid Kolpona answered”, that was the time of my period and I was not careful enough.]

Haidar Ali who is investigating a murder case tries to find the truth from Kolpona but she lies up to him. Islam’s another fiction “Aziz Masterer Sathy Aksondha (One Evening with Master Aziz)” illustrates a sexual relationship between a man and his sister-in-law.

ziz Master forces her to have sex with him and in pretest his sister-in-law cuts off his  
nis. This scene is funny as well as sexually explicit.

rm the above discussion we find so many postmodern aspects in his short stories,  
which help us to prove his writing as postmodern. He did not write his story from a  
stmodern perspective. But after reading his book I find that the clear idea of  
stmodern which similar with western critics' like Lyotard, Baudrillard and Ihab  
assan.



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## CHAPTER: 5

### CONCLUSION

*em O Prarthonar Golpo (Stories of Love and Prayer)* is one of the best known books by Syed Manzoorul Islam. It introduced a new writing style in our country. It should be noted that Islam to be a master of short fiction. In Islam's short fictions we come across many postmodern features. He follows the postmodern writing style in many respects. He exploits its mood, sounds and contractions. The playfulness of his fictions breaks established boundaries of writings. His stories are funny and ironical. Islam's short fictions present human life realistically but and also mocks real life situation. The characters of his fiction seem to live their own life. All the characters are based on the problem of the people of Bangladesh but he presents their problems playfully.

In Islam's fiction we get postmodern features such as playfulness, intertextuality, symbolism, dehumanization, hyperreality, fun and irony. He also rewrites history and treats sexual matter explicitly. In his fictions people often suffer immensely and become the victims of a cruel society. Islam's short fiction thus relates directly to contemporary life. Like Vonnegut, he likes to use black humor and has a keen sense of the absurd. In short, Islam is a major postmodern writer of Bangladesh.



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