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Remapping Bangladesh: A Palimpsestic Approach to Tehmima Anam's Bengal Trilogy

Hafiza Habiba Ikram*

Amara Khan†

Abstract

I here apply the Palimpsestic approach to the major events and characters in Tehmima Anam's Bengal Trilogy, A Golden Age (2007), The Good Muslim (2011) and The Bones of Grace (2016). I have explored how Anam remaps particular places in her trilogy by adding a unique narrative in the history of Bangladesh. This research identifies the reactions of some of the major characters when they are placed in a particular time period which eventually changes their perception of the particular situation. I have analyzed three major female characters and a couple of minor male characters to find out what makes them distinctive and challenging in the light of the selected theoretical approaches. The major aspects of the Palimpsest approach such as superimposed structures, overwriting and rewriting of certain events, re-inscription of certain ideas, remapping of particular places, and the special role of memory or recalling of an event highlight the trilogy as a palimpsest text.

Key Words: Bengal Trilogy, Palimpsest, Recalling, Remapping, Re-Inscription, Tehmima Anam

Introduction

The aim of my research is to explore the various elements of palimpsest while analyzing the situation of Bangladesh after the conflict of 1971. After the independence, various places were reconstructed or rebuilt by the new government, which signifies the multilayered concept of palimpsest in which each layer is superimposed by another one. Palimpsest enforces the idea of re-inscription in literature where writers rewrite existing history or any other concept in a different form. Anam deliberately rewrites the history of Bangladesh to make the contemporary situation more comprehensible.

Anam explores the history of her country, Bangladesh, by interviewing her relatives and acquaintances who are first-hand witnesses of this crucial time of history. Her Bengal Trilogy comprises *A Golden Age* (2007), which has Rehana Haque (the mother of the family) as the narrator, *The Good*

Muslim (2011) includes Maya Sheherzad Haque's point of view, who is the daughter of Rehana, and *The Bones of Grace* (2016) presents Zubaida Haque's thinking process as being the daughter of the previous narrator, Maya. Anam has drawn many characters by keeping in mind her relatives who actively participated at that time.

Anam highlights the idea that the major event of history affects the lives of different individuals differently, and their ways of interpreting such events also foreground the concept of multiple narratives. Thus, this aspect of history is similar to a palimpsest, where each layer is superimposed by another layer, but the traces of the previous one remains forever. The palimpsest approach highlights the idea that all writing takes place in the presence of other writings; similarly, there are multiple interpretations of a single word or event.

*Lecturer, Department of English, Government College University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

† Assistant Professor, Department of English, Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: khanamara@gmail.com

Methodology

I have used a qualitative research methodology that further utilizes textual analysis and comparative study. In this research, I have tried to put together the stimulation behind the remapping of particular places of Bangladesh through specific characters and its connection with the Palimpsest approach.

Research Questions

The research article attempts to address the following questions:

- How does Anam use a specific history to identify issues that resonate in places and times far beyond post-independence Bangladesh?
- How does Anam treat Bangladesh as a Palimpsest text that highlights the similarities between cities and the human mind?
- Does Anam successfully connect the personal and political through a family narrative?

Literature Review

Hassan Askari Rizvi's outlook on the creation of Bangladesh holds all the leaders of the time (Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Yahya Khan, and Sheikh Mujib) responsible for the devastating consequences and calls it their failure. Bhattacharjee's approach is more sympathetic towards the Awami League of Bangladesh as he justifies the violence generated by Mukti Bahinis to the non-conformist. Anam not only spotlights those turning points of history (Operation searchlight, General Tikka Khan's violent approach to forcible control, Sheikh Mujib's 7 March 1970 speech, and the treaty between army chief commanders of both territories) but also their abnormal effect on the psyche of the normal living family. Anam's artistic approach to history is evident when she touches on the palimpsestic qualities of places (Shaheed Minar, Louis Khan Parliament, Dhaka, and Chittagong port) and characters' memory associated with the events. She, somehow, blames those events not only for the disintegration of Pakistan but also for the disintegration of families. Her rewriting of the past revitalizes Bangladesh palimpsestously.

A Palimpsest dates back to the 17th century and refers to a type of paper, parchment, and vellum from which many writings have been erased for further new writings. During the medieval period, it was a common practice to wash out a piece of paper due to the insufficiency of writing material. During the 19th century, its definition reshaped into a manuscript on which later writing has been superimposed, and the previous writing is erased. Palimpsest also denotes a location that contains diverse layers or aspects apparent beneath the surface. Time, space, and human beings all accumulate different layers of palimpsest. Geographers use this term to highlight the urban landscape that is written over by successive generations, but previous writings are never erased. Similarly, perceiving a city or a country as palimpsest foregrounds the fact that these localities are constantly evolving and expanding, adding more layers to the preexisting history. This particular city or country reveals a brilliant interplay of the past and the present, stating the preservation of the past and its incorporation into the present.

Thomas De Quincey in *The Palimpsest of the Human Brain* relates the human brain to the palimpsest "What else than a natural and mighty palimpsest is the human brain? Such a palimpsest is my brain; such a palimpsest, oh reader! is yours. Everlasting layers of ideas, images, feelings, have fallen upon your brain softly as light" (2016). De Quincey also highlights the major qualities of palimpsest, like the significance of the erased writing, which also leaves an impact on the new superimposed material, similar to the human brain where the memory of past experiences is always in contact with the present condition and calls it as "our own heaven-created palimpsest, the deep memorial palimpsest of the brain" (2016). Sarah Dillon in "Reinscribing De Quincey's Palimpsest: The Significance of the Palimpsest in Contemporary Literary and Cultural Studies" claims that Coleridge is generally associated with the inauguration of palimpsest as a literary metaphor, but it was De Quincey who initiated the concept of palimpsest which led to the endless process of "metaphorization of palimpsests from mid-nineteenth century (the most prolific period of palimpsest discoveries) to present day" (2016).

Discussion

According to George Orwell's 1984, "All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and re-inscribed exactly as often as necessary" (1949). This is what Anam does in her Bengal trilogy. Gaining her knowledge by exploring Bangladesh, interviewing ex freedom fighters and first-hand witnesses of the 1971 war, she actually adds her own narrative about the separation of East Pakistan and its after-effects in the books of history. She starts from the time when Pakistan was considered a country divided into two halves where each part, known as East and West Pakistan, had different lifestyles and they spoke different languages. Each part wanted economic, cultural, linguistic, and political supremacy over the other and considered language as the apple of discord for separation. Anam's *A Golden Age* (2007) is a story of a family who lives in the pre-partition time of East and West Pakistan. At the start of *A Golden Age*, Rehana is a young widow who has lost her husband due to a heart attack and now is on the verge of losing her children to her brother-in-law because she has no means to support them. She tries her best to get them back, and eventually, she does. Her two children Maya and Sohail, support the political movement of pro-Bangla stance. Anam fabricates this family narrative around the significant issue of separation of East Pakistan. While giving an interview to Lynn Heary on 11 January, 2008 Anam says as follows:

I thought I would write a sort of epic, a very muscular narrative that had battle scenes and political rallies and all the sorts of big moments that you see in war novels. But actually, when I sat down to write, I ended up really thinking about what it was like for ordinary people to survive that war. (n. pag.)

Anam has relatives who were first-hand witnesses of what happened in 1971, her mother Shaheen, who can be considered to be in her mind while creating the character of Maya Sheherezade Haque. Her mother's older brother, who provided food and other facilities to his fellow young fighters, is a suggested model for Maya's older brother, Sohail. Anam says that she wanted to show the world what happened to the affected people when war interfered unexpectedly in their lives.

Anam adds another layer of history for keeping memories of the independence of Bangladesh alive.

In a way, she is preserving it; in the words of Jeffery A. Kroessler, in *The City as Palimpsest*, preservation is necessary for the development of a country. Preservation is essential for the health of the city, and the nation, for it preserves ideas, experience, and values no less than buildings and places. Maintaining a dialogue between past and present is essential for a citizen's sense of identity". Similarly, Alexander C. Diener states that people usually attach memories and identities to a particular place to make it more tangible and lasting. Anam in *The Good Muslim* (2011) pinpoints the fact that most of the places in Bangladesh, after its separation from Pakistan, got destroyed. The destroyed places were rebuilt in order to keep them alive. One of them was Shaheed Minar which is a symbol of Bengali Nationalism and usually associated with the martyrs of the language movement of 1952. Shaheed Minar is closely linked with the language movement when the Government of Pakistan declared Urdu as an official language, and the Bengali majority objected to that decision. Students of the University of Dhaka gathered at that place as a protest, police opened fire on them, and many were killed. In memory of those killed students, their fellows erected a monument at that place which was demolished during Operation Searchlight and was rebuilt after Bangladesh got independence. Anam says, "Shaheed Minar was the first thing the Pakistan Army destroyed in the war. It was also the first thing to be rebuilt, taller and wider, but Maya wished they had left it broken, because now, shiny and freshly painted, it bore no sign of the struggle" (2011). Amidst the language movement, there is Rehana Haque who lives in Dhaka, and while her children openly fight for independent Bangladesh, Haque cannot forget her love for Urdu "she spoke with fluency, the Urdu of the enemy... she could not give up her love of Urdu, its lyrical lilt, its double meaning, its furrowed beat" (Anam, 2007). In the novel, when General Tikka Khan is appointed in East Pakistan, and he starts to control different areas of Bengal, Rehana goes to the New Market and realizes that the place which is so close to her heart, where she used to shop for her children, bought her wedding sari, calculated the Weeks's ration is now "an alien place, the air heavy with menace" (Anam, 2007). Hassan Askari Rizvi in *The Military and Politics in Pakistan* claims that the Awami League workers

abused and tortured many non-conformists after Mujib's Speech on 7 March 1971, and he further points out:

The Awami League workers were on a rampage. There was widespread arson and looting in East Pakistan from the first week of March 1971. The Awami League workers attached and killed non-conformist and members of the Urdu-speaking community ... they were forced to surrender their cars, ... those who refused were murdered in cold blood, and their houses were burnt. (1976)

Anam has tried to show how war creates conflicts within a family where each person's heart beats for a different cause, where a mother is torn between her love for Bengal and her love for a country where she was born and raised and where all her family resides.

Remembering Monuments

Shaheed Minar is of utmost importance for all Bengalis due to its relation with language movement. Anam insists upon retaining their monuments. On another occasion, when Rehana persuades Maya to come out of the house and enjoy the monsoon season, Maya expresses her disappointment over the new setup of the country by saying, "I hate it", "It's hideous" (Anam, 2007). Furthermore, she even feels disgusted when Rehana shows her the new parliament "That very nice American chap (Louis I. Khan) built it", and Maya replies, "Well, I don't like it" (Anam, 2007). The parliament, however, has been beautifully built on a pool of water "like a shapla flower in the river" (Anam, 2007). Maya does not like these newly built places because she has lived in the brutalities and atrocities of the time of the 1971 conflict. The "killing of small children, the slow movement of clouds, the deaths of women, the sigh of fleeing birds, the rush of blood on the pavement" (Anam, 2007) has implanted hatred for newly, brightly and beautifully built places erasing every sign of history. She does not want to forget the sacrifices and hardships that her countrymen, women and places had faced during the time of war.

A palimpsest is also used in terms of geology. In the third edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, a palimpsest is "a structure characterized by superimposing features produced at two or more

distinct periods" (n. pag.). Dhaka is a very significant metaphor in *A Golden Age*, *The Good Muslim* and *The Bones of Grace*. Ahsan ul Kabir in "Planning and Development of Dhaka – A Story Of 400 Years", states that before the independence of Bangladesh, Dhaka served as a hub of trade, a strong capital, and a significant city of a nation with more than sixteen million inhabitants. It gained this worth after 1947, acting as a capital for East Pakistan and a major province for Pakistan. Kabir further states, "While travelling through a political rollercoaster, the city received attention, negligence, political instability, poverty, natural calamity and went through different philosophical views for its development" (2012). However, in its present condition, Dhaka is frequently characterized by overcrowding, mismanagement, political turmoil, ruler's negligence, and degradation. Similarly, Kabir quotes M. A Mahmud that corruption and negligence of the leaders in severe climate change multiplied the problems of the city:

Much of the country is prone to annual flooding that delimits the spatial growth for a country with limited economic strength. Moreover, poor city management, lower efficiency in administration and management and large corruption in service provision are exacerbating the problems. (qtd. in Kabir, 2012)

In *A Golden Age*, Anam presents Dhaka as an escape for those who want to run away from the smell of "Burned thatch", but Dhaka itself comprises narrow, dusty and flooded streets with no or little inspiration for any artist. Joy, a younger brother of Sohail's best friend Aref, feels no attachment towards Dhaka, but at the time of his release from jail, he falls unexpectedly in love with it. This happens because of the time he spends with his twenty-three mates in the jail, and the cruel treatment by the jailers turns Joy's world into a never-ending nightmare. In a very mocking atmosphere of jail, Joy is forced to stop the singing bird in the Bengali language; he tries to act according to the order and eventually ends up losing his finger "That was the last day he was whole, later they took his finger as payment, so the birds would have one less place to perch, one less reason to sing" (Anam, 2011). When he is free, the first thing he sees is the city of Dhaka. A city crowded with lots of villagers, narrow streets and hopelessness, Dhaka

becomes a place that could be loved and admired by a person who has spent a great time of his prime youth in the darkness of jail; a place to feel free, safe, and content. During the Independence movement, different areas of Dhaka such as Motijheel, Mirpur, Mohammadpur and Dhanmodi turned into occupied areas. Independence enhanced the urbanization in Bangladesh (Kabir 19). In *A Golden Age* (2007), Anam describes a scene of Dhaka from April 1971, under the title of "Radio free Bangladesh", as a place gradually "adjusting to Occupied life" (2011). It adjusted to the curfew life where soldiers placed their tanks, dug out the graves for dead bodies, had a warehouse where they tortured the prisoners. Anam presents the condition of Dhaka during and after independence as the city that gradually lost its beauty due to the cruelty and violence it suffered during the war.

In *The Bones of Grace* (2016), Anam compares Chittagong as a smaller version of Dhaka but with some attraction "the city retained its old character as a hill station, a place where the air was cool and empty and lightened by its proximity to the sea" (2016). Zubaida Haque, the adopted daughter of Maya, addresses Elijah Strong (her lover) in this text and tells him that Chittagong port (also known as Prosperity Shipbreaking) is perfect for any kind of punishment "because it was beautiful and ruined" (Anam, 2016). This shipyard consists of narrow rectangles of oceanfront where many ships rest in various states of decay. It is a place where half of the novel takes place dealing with the most significant issue of child labor. Zubaida finds herself with an unexpected job opportunity of helping a foreign group making a documentary about the laborers in the ship breaking industry. This ship breaking industry is a place of human abuse where the laborers work as zombies because "there was an order on the lot, a hierarchy that had to be maintained and obeyed" (Anam, 2016). One of the owners of the site was Mirza Ali, who normalizes every mishap by saying, "Shipbreaking is important for Bangladesh. We need steel. Lot of construction everywhere" (Anam, 2016). He arranges meetings of workers with Gabriela and Zubaida in his office who end up all counting the blessings for being here and praising everything on the site "how kind the owners were, that they were always paid on time, and it was the

best job they could hope for" (Anam, 2016). Most of the children worked at ship breaking yard as cutter helpers and sweepers. Giving an interview to the executive director of NGO shipbreaking platform Patrizia Heidegger, a 16-year-old child worker said, "I am afraid to be struck dead by a falling steel plate. Often, the other workers do not tell us before they cut a large piece and it just falls down without warning" (Anam, 2016). Mohammad Ali Shahin, the platform coordinator, says that poverty is the sole reason behind ship breaking yards. The starting point for this is the death of the head of the family, and then survival becomes a threat; the family has to send the child to the yards to earn as much as he can.

The Mystic Writing Pad in Relation to Palimpsest

Sigmund Freud's concept of "The Mystic Writing Pad" is closely related to palimpsest. In *A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad* (1925), Freud presents the idea of a "perceptual apparatus of mind" where it is compared to the children's toy of writing pad that consists of a celluloid sheet and a waxing paper. The Mystic Writing Pad resembles the human psyche as to how it records material. Just like the pad, it can have an infinite number of recordings while always remaining receptive to the new material. But like the writing pad, it does not become absolutely new; the previous material or recordings do leave traces and become faint. Freud believes that this is how the human psyche works, always receiving impressions from the outside world and layering them in the unconscious. Freud writes:

I do not think it is too far-fetched too to compare the celluloid and waxed paper cover with the system Pcpt.-Cs (Perceptual Conscious) and its protective shield, the wax slab with the unconscious behind them, and the appearance and disappearance of the writing with the flickering-up and passing-away of consciousness in the process of perception. (1925)

Anam in *A Golden Age* (2007) traces her country's history, her close relatives' experiences during the time of chaos in 1971, her own observations while living in contemporary Bangladesh, and the effects of that brutal period on the psyche of the young generation. By examining all the layers that came before us, one can truly

understand the real nature of a country. To understand a country/city, De Certeau claims, one must acknowledge how all these complexities “intertwine and create an urban fabric” (2002).

Another historian, Mravin Bram, claims that when one erases the past layer by layer, this process is similar to demolishing depth with the surface. The palimpsest foregrounds the dialogue between the old and the new in order to understand contemporary culture. In *A Golden Age* (2007), the Pro-Bangla stance gradually increases and eventually encapsulates every person in the country, ending in the fall of Dhaka in 1971. Rehana lived in her huge old bungalow at Road 5 in Dhaka, even after the death of her husband. But she has to do something to make a smooth living and she, as suggested by Mrs Chowdry, turns the big plot comprising her Garden into another house for rent out for her children. “Rehana looked at the house with pride and ache. It was there to remind her of what she had lost, and what she had won. And how much the victory had cost. That is why she had named it Shona, gold” (Anam, 2016).

The reminiscence of Rehana’s old house haunts her every time whenever she looks at the “Two gates, two driveways, two houses” (Anam, 2016). Every year she holds a party to memorize the day she had returned to Dhaka with her children. Dr Moonis Ahmer calls the postponement of the session of the national assembly one of the major causes for the loss of the Eastern Wing of Pakistan. The young generation of that time had grown hatred in their heart for West Pakistan, which is clearly depicted when Sohail lashes out, “West Pakistan is bleeding us. We earn most of the foreign exchange. We grow rice, we make the jute, and we got nothing- no schools, no hospitals, no army. We can’t even speak our own bloody language” (Anam, 2016).

Sohail, Joy, and their friends join many students from Dhaka University in their protests. Sohail, with his friend, heads towards the Bengali regiments to evaluate the situation. When Sohail returns, he asks Rehana to help him to store ammunition in their house for the future guerrilla operation that would be placed in Dhaka as the struggle for independence is in its full form. Once again, she starts imagining the history associated with her house “Shona with her

back to the sun. Shona that had given her children. Proud, vacant Shona of many dreams” (2016). Maya leaves for Calcutta to write press releases and work in the nearby refugee camps.

While explaining Bengali nationalism M. G Kabir in *Religion, Language And Nationalism In Bangladesh* states as follows:

The Pakistan movement in the 1940s, the emergence of Bangladesh in less than a quarter-century of the achievement of Pakistan and finally the search for a new identity in post-1971 Bangladesh-all these facts point at the volatility of nationalism in Bangladesh. (1987)

Kabir further explains that religion was replaced by language at the time when Bengalis were struggling for independent Bangladesh. The achievement of Bangladesh further aggravates Bengali nationalism. Similarly, Zilur R. Khan in *Islam and Bengali Nationalism* claims that the rise of Bengali nationalism is due to intra-national and international conflicts. In *Bengali Nationalism and the Emergence of Bangladesh: An Introductory Outline*, A.F Salahuddin Ahmad points out another harsh reality when he says that the combination of East and West Pakistan was a bizarre look to an already politically unstable scenario. The writer also claims that there was nothing common between these two wings of Pakistan other than religion; they were poles apart when it comes to language, lifestyle, culture, and political values. Anam calls General Tikka Khan “The Butcher of Bengal” in *A Golden Age* (2007). Gen. Yahya Khan appointed Tikka Khan as the Chief Martial Law Administrator of Bangladesh to control the uprising revolution while the negotiation was going on between Yahya and Sheikh Mujib. After the failure of their meeting, Yahya Khan ordered Tikka Khan for a crackdown on the Awami League and its supporters. Anam recalls that throughout June, Tikka Khan’s soldier made their way across the summer plains of Bangladesh. They looted everything, homes, women and even their will to survive on earth. “Why did you initiate the genocide in Dhaka?” a journalist asked Tikka Khan in 1997. He casually replied that there was no genocide. “Some terrorists were making preparations at the Jagannath Hall to attack the patrol force with firearms. After that, I sent some forces to Jagannath

Hall. It is true that some Hindus died on occasion. When two groups fight or are in combat, it can't be called genocide" (n. pag.). Hassan Askari Rizvi points out that the military action in East Pakistan turned violent when there was no point of return for any group. It eventually leads to the dismemberment of Pakistan, which was also the combined result of "several domestic and external factor... Basically, it represented the failure of Yahya Khan, Bhutto and Mujibur Rehman" (1976).

In killings by General Tikka Khan during the Bengali's struggle for freedom in Bangladesh, Aref, Joy's older brother and Sohail's wife, Silvi's first husband, Sabeer, dies, which turns out to be the vital point in Silvi's life, as she strongly starts following Islam "I am in pordah. I don't appear before strangers" ([Anam, 2016](#)). These incidents in Bangladesh deeply affected each individual at that time, even those who chose to remain inactive during the struggle for freedom. Silvi's condition is totally a surprise and, at the same time, a shock for Rehana and Maya (who consider themselves as not so religious persons), as Maya thinks, "what religion had possessed her? Certainly not the familiar kind" ([Anam, 2016](#)) which they are practising. When Sabeer gets married to Silvi, he is in the Pakistan army, but during riots, he rebels against it because he considers the independence of his country more important than his loyalty to the army that is supposedly working against it. Pakistan army soldiers capture him and put him into jail, but he is released due to Rehana's efforts as she pledges her brother-in-law (who is serving at a high post for the government of West Pakistan) to convince the concerned personnel. Sabeer faces physical abuse during his imprisonment. Rehana accidentally holds his hand to push him into the rickshaw; he immediately screams because his "nails were soft and pulpy. Closer. Not nails, just red-tipped fingers. There were no nails. No nails; only red-tipped fingers" ([Anam, 2016](#)). Through these mini-narratives, Anam recalls the individual experiences of those who lived at the time of the 1971 conflict. Alison S. Fell and Nina Wardleworth, in *The Colour of War Memory: Cultural Representations of Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, analyses the role of Tirailleurs Senegalese during the first and second world war. They also point out that these war representations

(produced by authors) can be considered as examples of what Max Silverman has defined as 'palimpsests memory', containing traces of the present and the past. Anam actually traces the present by delving into history. Her representation of war and its atrocities is basically a way to remember the struggle behind the creation of Bangladesh.

The enthusiasm of students of the University of Dhaka and other institutions created massive pressure on Mujibur Rehman for independence. Similarly, in *My Own Country*, Major General Khadim Hussain Raja writes that a Bengali gentleman, who was the close friend of Sheikh Mujib, came to him and pleaded that he was under great pressure of the extremists and Student leaders of his country and demanded to send a military escort to take him from his Dhanmandi residence.

Anam recalls another event that is extremely important in the history of Bangladesh. She beautifully describes the whole scene of Mujibur Rehman's speech on 7 March 1971. Her remarkable skills are shown when she fabricates a word image of Bengalis as they stood there in the midst of that huge crowd, where people flooded the ground as Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters) and listened to their great Leader who called them "His. They belonged to him now; they were his charge, his children. They called him father. They loved him the way orphans dream of their lost parents: without promise, only hope" ([Anam, 2016](#)). While evaluating the speech, A. Arefin Siddique calls it "The Greatest Speech of the Greatest Bangali" and "A message about the emergence of a new state on the global map and a notification cum narrative on the winding up of the eastern region of the then Pakistani state as a natural progression". Subhrendu Shekhar Bhattacharjee remarks, "The speech was extempore... Bangabandhu did not disappoint the waiting millions" [Dr Imtiaz Ahmad \(2018\)](#). states that this is the time when on the other side of the world Biafran war was going on, "Biafra wanted to secede, the Nigerians cracked down really hard on them, and the international community agreed that the response was justified" (2018). Ahmad further points out that the international community would not think that Bangladesh is seceding while considering the speech of Sheikh Mujib on 7 March 1970. He voices his opinion by saying that after the genocide of 25 March 1971 by

General Tikka Khan, it was actually Pakistan who seceded. On the other hand, Hassan Zaheer in *The Separation of East Pakistan* (The Rise and Realization of Bengali Muslim Nationalism) states that at the end of October 1971, “the Mukti Bahini, armed and trained in large numbers during the last six months in India, had intensified its operation inside East Pakistan and on its border” (1994). Zaheer further states that under such circumstances, it was impossible for the Pakistan army to defend East Pakistan territory because the public support was already with these Mukti Bahinis. Similarly, Rizvi highlights two factors that went against the success of the Pakistan Army in 1971; first Pakistan Army was at a loss due to the absence of public support; secondly, India played a key role in fueling the fire against the Pakistan army by providing arms and training to the Bengali freedom fighters “once the civil strife broke out the Indian Government made no secret of her deep sympathies and support for the Bangladesh/insurgent movement” (1976). In *A Golden Age* (2007), Maya also says that the Pakistan army knows that “India is going to come down on our side. And then it’ll be over” (Anam, 2016). But Indian government further provokes the situation by presenting a negative image of Pakistan as an instigator of the “massacre of defenceless people” (Rizvi 1976). Due to this support by India, the Pakistan army found itself in a very embarrassing position. The biggest advantage of this was the availability of the opportunity to India to internationalize the crisis. However, Pakistani historians hold Mujibur Rehman, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Yahya Khan responsible for these deadly circumstances.

Rehana, at the end of *A Golden Age*, expresses her joy about the end of the war by addressing her husband and says, “we have to try to find ways to exist in a country without war” (Anam, 2007). She says that Niazi will sign the treaty and “I will walk in the streets” (Anam, 2007). Here she is referring to the Eastern Commander of Pakistan A.A. Khan Niazi, when he signed the treaty on 16 Dec 1971 at the Ramna Racecourse garden in Dhaka. The treaty is as follows:

The PAKISTAN Eastern Command agree to surrender all PAKISTAN Armed Forces in BANGLADESH to Lieutenant-General JAGJIT SINGH

AURORA, General Officer Commanding in Chief of Indian and BANGLADESH forces in the Eastern Theatre. This surrender includes all PAKISTAN land, air and naval forces as also all para-military forces and civil armed forces. These forces will lay down their arms and surrender at the places where they are currently located to the nearest regular troops under the command of Lieutenant-General JAGJIT SINGH AURORA.

The treaty known as “The Instrument of Surrender” signed by General A A K Niazi led to the disharmony and disintegration between East and West Pakistan and the creation of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. Rehana is overwhelmed at the end of *A Golden Age*, where she expresses her happiness, “the roads are flat and

dusty; we are spellbound, love-bound, homebound, singing How I love you my golden Bengal” (Anam, 2007).

Conclusion

Anam reuses past events for her readers to revitalize the 1971 conflict and its after-effects by remapping particular places (Shaheed Minar, Louis Khan’s Parliament, Dhaka, Chittagong and its port, and many residential houses) in her trilogy. Anam’s remapping of these places presents the intrusion of war in an unexpected way and how war does damage not only the physical outer structure of anything but also the internal pattern of human minds, which is filled with uncertainty, disturbance and confusion in such circumstances like the 1971 war. Rehana, Maya, Sohail, Joy and other characters represent the people of that time who suffer in different ways. Active participants like Maya, Sohail and Joy experience physical as well as psychological traumas after the conflict, while on the other hand, Rehana and other minor female characters endure intense hardships due to their fractured relationships. Anam’s representation of such instances highlights not only the disintegration of Bangladesh, but also its devastating result, which leads towards the disintegration of families as well, as Rehana does loses not only her son, Sohail but also a beloved and caring brother for Maya too. I have analyzed the character’s association with places and important events of Bangladesh under the light of palimpsestic

approach, where everything has multiple interpretations. The multiplicity of a single event foregrounds different points of view while each denotes a distinctive approach towards the same incident. Anam explores these distinctive approaches of her characters to present a realistic portrayal of the 1971 conflict. This chapter does not only highlight Anam's point of view about the independence of

Bangladesh but also presents a comparative study of a previous body of literature about the same event, which is contested through textual analysis of both the text and the secondary sources of this research. Through the textual analysis of major events, it is hereby stated that Anam lays out a new pattern of many things related to her country for her readers to reinvestigate the 1971 conflict.

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