

Memory as Palimpsest in Tehmima Anam's *The Good Muslim* and *The Bones of Grace*

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Abstract

The research paper deals with the application of Palimpsestic approach on the major events and characters in Tehmima Anam's Bengal Trilogy including *A Golden Age* (2007), *The Good Muslim* (2011) and *The Bones of Grace* (2016). In her Bengal trilogy, she presents this interplay of the past and the present and their haunting effect on the future. The three narrators of the trilogy belong to a Haque family and represent a normal Bengali family living in the crisis of 1971 where East Pakistan is about to be separated from West Pakistan after the 1970 elections. Anam presents her female characters and their connection with the history of their country as a multilayered phenomenon, like human memory, which creates a link between past, present and future. She has created women icons who are the personifications of the crucial time in the history of Bangladesh. This research paper deals with the role of memory and recollection of events in the texts and its connection to the major aspect of Palimpsest where memory resembles the structured layers of Palimpsest and how they work alike which is supported through Thomas De Quincey "Palimpsest of the mind". Major shifts in narrative resemble the nonlinear approach of human memory which further links it with one of the main elements of palimpsest of the mind which foregrounds a fragmented and disturbed approach towards an event. Intertextuality or the relation between two artistic texts is analyzed through textual analysis to examine the thinking process of Zubaida Haque in *The Bones of Grace*. Through Zubaida, Anam sheds light on the current status of women in Bangladesh by referring back to Rokeya Sokhawat Hussain's *The Sultana's Dream* and Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* while using intertextuality. Anam does not only portray heroes of her history, but also their internal conflict that is mainly caused by the separation of East Pakistan from West Pakistan.

Keywords: Palimpsest, memory, war, recalling, rape, intertextuality

History comprises of layers, revisions and rewritings in different time periods. These layers are preserved not only by remnants, monuments and reconstruction of destroyed places but also by personal or collective memory of an important event which is mostly conflict or war. During war times solidarity, enthusiasm and dedication play a key role for everyone, but the aftermath of it always creates doubts and division. Many official and unofficial memorials of 1971 conflict cover various narratives. There are multiple voices in a nation which give way to multiple narratives, but represent different interpretations of the same event. Any memory of wartime violence creates engagement with the narratives of the past. Maurice Halbwachs, French Sociologist (1992), says that every memory is a product of social construct, no matter it is institutionalized (as the interpretation is presented by political elite) or presented by an individual. Similarly, memory is a product of all symbols and narratives coming through various filters, through various tellers at different times. That is why every political change also overpowers these symbols and narratives by controlling its construction. Jeffery K. Olick (1999) states that the collective memory of a country or society is not what the inhabitants of that society have rather it is mainly associated with what they do. It can be manipulated by the political circumstances of a particular time. Olick explains that collective memory emphasizes the social and cultural patterns of the collective and individual as well as public and personal memory. After wartime this collective memory gives birth to collective identity.

In this research paper I have used a qualitative research methodology which further utilizes textual analysis and comparative study. The main reason is to demonstrate

the working of human mind which resembles the palimpsest approach. The interrelation between past and present and how it affects and determines the future is presented through recalling of certain events of history by specific characters to form a connection between palimpsest and human memory. A sufficient body of literature has already been dedicated to the palimpsest theory in general and its application on several related texts in particular. But no study upto date has explored palimpsestic approach in relation to human memory specifically dealing Tehmim Anam's Bengal Trilogy. My research tries to explore this aspect by driving a comparison between palimpsest and human mind and how they work alike when it comes to historicise history in a particular context.

War and Rape

As Brecht De Groote (2014) claims "The palimpsest is a trope for memory and absolute origins; for its own origins, it invokes the name of Thomas De Quincey"(3). Memories associated with any event cover multiple perspectives and are also referred to as Palimpsest. Thomas De Quincey (1891) articulates his point that palimpsest is a profound metaphor for memory and most importantly reading of memory and its structure of layering. Thomas Carlyle seconds this opinion by emphasizing the importance of memory while considering past as palimpsest. He suggests his readers to "search more and more into the Past; let all men explore it, as the true fountain of knowledge; by whose light alone ... can the Present and The Future be interpreted or guessed at" (qtd. in Groote 4).

Anam's Bengal trilogy, comprising three books covers three generations of the Haque family starts during the struggle for independent Bangladesh, its recent aftermath

and its deep effect on the present generation. Through these three narratives Anam deals with the concept of memory and collective memory by foregrounding the case of war victims, especially rape victims. The memories of such instances deeply affect the mind of the victim. Those who are raped during a war can never forget the torture and abuse for their entire life. Mostly sexual violence like rape is used systematically to destroy the honor and dignity of the opposing group. It is also used as a weapon to maintain dominance over another group. The predominant way of winning any conflict is to target women, subjugate them, impregnate them and wound their self respect so that the men of their society will be in shame for their entire life. Catherine MacKinnon (1994) describes this specific form of rape as “ethnic rape used as an official policy of war in a genocidal campaign for political control” (11).

Every country during its struggle for freedom experiences cultural traumas. The collective or personal memory of such traumas is passed through, what Ron Everyman (2018) says, different means such as “oral telling, literature, music, drama, film, monuments, museum installations and commemorative events” (1). Women suffer from these traumas more in South Asian societies where their honour is usually associated with the honour of the communities. They are considered to be the embodiment of chastity and purity on which whole family depends for future reproduction. Similarly, Bangladesh’s case has no exceptions, women are considered as the epitome of integrity and honour, the mother of the soil and the bearer of generation and culture. After the 1971 conflict Bangladesh faced a huge amount of sexually abused women. Exactly six days after the tragedy they decided to call these survivors as Birangona which is

a Bengali word for war heroines. Nayanika Mokherjee (2017) explains this term by highlighting the main reason behind it. She says the foremost objective of using this term was the attempt to minimize the social hatred and exclusion. In a sense most of the Bengalis try to historicise rape in Bangladesh and went for war crimes tribunals to deal with such experiences and traumas. Fehmin Ahmad quotes Rounaq Jahan and states:

The organised and systematic rape to have been the second phase of the conflict when the Pakistani army decided to use it as a strategy. Girls and women were abducted and taken to rape camps where they were gang-raped repeatedly and sometimes women and girls were raped in front of their family members to inflict terror and shame on the family honour. (4)

Anam also addresses these victims as Birangona. Maya Haque in the third book of the trilogy *The Bones of Grace* (2016), works for the rehabilitation of these women. In the third book of the trilogy Maya expresses her reason for choosing this profession as she wants to ensure that “at least I can look them in the eye and tell them we’re doing something. That we haven’t forgotten” (311). After the independence of Bangladesh she left her house and also worked as a gynecologist in the refugee camps made for these women. These rehabilitation centers also assist these victims in abortions, adoption of their children, arranging their marriages, educating them in domestic skills and also spread awareness among the other members of society to accept and welcome them in their families. In *The Bones of Grace*, Maya works as an active agent for these rape victims and at an instance shares the case of a rape victim to her daughter, Zubaida,

about the woman who was denied to draw water from the tube-well and for her “it’s become a label for life” (311).

The Palimpsest Structure of Historical Memory

Jose M Yerba (2019) while analyzing the difference between palimpsestous and palimpsestic, foregrounds his opinion that “both are ways of remembrance” (212) and is strongly associated with the individual’s way of memorizing a certain event. Anam’s remembrance of the 1971 conflict and Maya’s memory of refugee camps recur over and over again in the novel *The Good Muslim* (2011) creating the textual layer of that time. Even after the 12 years of war Maya’s memory still occupies with that phase of her life when she helped the rape victims being their lady doctor. In *The Good Muslim* Anam says “She didn’t think of the debt she was repaying, that each of the babies she brought into the world might someday be counted against the babies that had died, by her hand, after the war” (11).

Maya volunteers at the medical college hospital in Rajshahi town and is given the permission to start a clinic. She remembers how Nazia had given her this idea after she rescued her baby from dying. Due to the lack of facilities and resources she comes all the way on the back of the rickshaw van because her “baby stuck in the breech position. Impossible, Maya argued, for the women to travel all the way to the hospital to give birth. Too many babies were dying” (11).

Like palimpsest Anam’s trilogy is structured in generations/layers, each denoting the significance of its own times, while complementing and conflicting each other. In *The Bones of Grace* Zubaida holds war responsible for the reaction of every person

and event. She is the representative of the third generation in the trilogy. Zubaida's way of remembering her past signifies her generation's thinking pattern which is filled with doubts and ambiguities about their own origin. Her disturbing views are the outcome of her uncertain childhood, especially her ninth birthday when the secret of her adoption was revealed to her by her parents. After which she started questioning her identity "to whom did these long bones belong, the tone of my skin? Not to the ancestors collaged onto my history"(Anam 42). In order to satisfy her search for identity, she comes to the point that she is a product of rape. Rape that widespread in 1971 conflict which was also used as a strategy to win the conflict and to damage the honour of the family. She weaves a story that her existence can be an outcome of sexual violence and may be her father had raped her mother and left her to lead a lonely life where she felt helpless after her birth and that is why the mother chose to give up the daughter for adoption. With this fabricated story in her mind, she "walked around with this heavy, sludgy feeling in my bones for a few weeks. I practiced saying to myself in the mirror that I was the product of rape" (111).

War Victims and the Need of Validation

Zubaida's imagined stories about her real identity reflect her struggle for validation. She needs a kind of confirmation about her birth, a confirmation which is far beyond the truth, but by delving into the history she chooses the most frequently used reasons for adoption. The aftereffects of rape pressurize the victim to give up a part of her being because it belongs to an unknown filthy man who comes from the opponent side (as in the case of Bangladesh). In the form of sexual violence like rape War haunts her life,

her memory which is ineradicable and multilayered, like a palimpsest, with the violence meted out to them by the society. Zubaida expresses her feelings of disgust when she feels disturbed “by the sight of my own blood” (111). It is a war wound and they are war heroines “Birangona”, a crude way to boost up the morale of the victims by reminding them again and again about the most torturous moment of their life. A similar view is expressed by Maya in *The Good Muslim* when she expresses her resentment for calling them as war heroines because it demolishes the violence that they experienced. Maya further states that these war heroines are not even willing to be called by such titles which actually devalue their worth “Calling them heroines erases what really happened to them. They didn’t charge into the battlefield and ask to be given medals ... They deserve for us to remember” (Anam 223).

Through Maya, Anam does not demand any post war labels for such victims because she has witnessed the reality during her exile. Maya does not only stitches their wounds, but also provides them with moral and legal support because she knows “not one of them wanted to file a report, or tell her husband or her father” (223). Maya also recalls when these war victims were being told to forgive and forget and how easily they said to “Erase and move on” (70) like a palimpsest, and write another layer comprising of this new independent era where everything looks fresh and old at the same time.

Abortion and Adoption

Maya and Joy’s decision for adoption has a reason behind it as Joy tells Zubaida “After the war, everyone was looking for meaning, for something that would help us to make sense of what happened ... for us it was a baby”(335). Everyone tested their

own ways for coping with the memories of war. Zubaida is exercising her own way to come to terms with her trauma of losing her mother. Her memory is actually her living experience. She sometimes feels the need to confess that she is not as patriotic as her parents. The way their worlds revolve around war, and everything is still connected to it, make her feel bore and hesitant in such circumstances. She even confesses that she feels reluctant about the space these war related things took in their life, especially the way their conversation always rotates around war “as if there was nothing, but a bead curtain between this moment and that, so that all it needed was a brush against history to reveal the shiny betterness of the past”(326). She even thinks that those who fought at that time were set free because they had done something which was unexpected and to some extent impossible, but the rest of them lived in continuous struggle to survive, especially the children of those people. War is inevitable for her, but the confusion it generates leads her into an eternal abyss eventually corresponding to her identity crisis. In order to come to the final point, where she can have the feeling of contentment, fulfillment where everything is gem-clear in front of her, she chooses to become a paleontologist who studies the record of life on earth left as fossils. She decides to investigate the existence of *Ambulocetus* (an extinct land living whale) “an amphibian that was also a tetrapod, a creature embracing its duality, its attraction to both the lure of the seas and the comforts of land” (20).

Recalling as a Palimpsestic Strategy

Anam makes a novel comprising of memory on its own, which can be rewritten and recalled considering the post conflict period of 1971 of Bangladesh. Max Silverman

(2013) detailed evaluation of the concept of palimpsestic memory “a ceaseless process of straddling and superimposition of elements, and condensation and displacement of meaning whereby memory traces overlap, intersect and are transformed” (22), resembles Anam’s way of presenting memories in her trilogy. This is similar to Sarah Dillon (2005) reappropriation of Quincey’s palimpsest, which describes the working of palimpsest which “is an involuted phenomenon where otherwise unrelated texts are involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other”(254). In other words memory and palimpsest work alike. Maya’s memories and Zubaida’s validation embrace different forms throughout the trilogy. Therefore palimpsest is not only about the original, but its reconstruction, its erasure and its impact (245). Zubaida recalls many instances in *The Bones of Grace* when she witnesses her parents, especially her mother who suffers a lot due to the memories of wartime. As Anam says “she exists in a shroud of other people’s memories as she gently, patiently coaxes out their stories and write them down”(84). Maya leaves her medical practice to gather research for the prosecution and interview witnesses and survivors. Her choice of this work costs her much as Zubaida remembers when she returns from the courthouse and starts crying:

As if someone is beating her ... I know that she is remembering something, or remembering it through the story of someone else, heavy with what she knows and what she has learned, because it’s always worse than she remembers, and every memory takes something away from the rest of her life (85)

These memories are like a torture cell for her where there is neither escape and nor light even a little or no hope for the future as well. For her these survivors do not only record their stories in front of her, but remind her of her time when she was struggling to survive. Their stories act as a way of remembrance, but they also yearn to forget for a hopeful future.

Another major characteristic of Palimpsest is the relation between the presence and absence at the same time. The presence of war, memories of war in Haque family, while living many years after of it, exemplify the absence of the bond of unity, togetherness and love they shared when the country was in crisis. Rehana, Sohail and Maya lived a happy life before the conflict began. During the struggle for independence everybody chooses his/her own way of serving the country, as Sohail joins guerilla fighters, Maya writes articles for the press club and Rehana helps her son by providing shelter and food to his injured fellows and storing ammunitions. After independence Sohails's transformation as a member of Tablighi Jamaat (the congregation of Islam) creates a breach between the two siblings. For Maya it was the hazardous effect of Silvi, his wife, who turned his life upside down. After witnessing brutality and violence in his own country, he starts considering his life meaningless and chaotic. And finally Islam provides him with a place where he can rescue his bewildered soul. Sohail and his wife Silvi turn the upper storey of their house into a place where they hold meetings and preach others "about everything there was to know about being a Muslim"(Anam 22). When Maya returns from the refugee camps, she starts remembering the days when she thought that she could persuade him to change his mind, "she had known him all

her life, and all her life he had been the opposite of a religious man”(158). For Maya the strong presence of Islam marks the absence of a loving son, brother and eventually a loving father to Zaid. Anam describes a scene where he recites words from the Holy Quran and praises its simplicity as well as its intense powerful messages. In order to forget the war wounds, he turns to God and the holy book speaks to his every wound, to every fractured part of his life “It spoke to the knife passing across the throat of an innocent man; it spoke to the day his father died, hand on his arrested heart, and it spoke to the machine gun sound that echoed in his chest” (167). For Sohail the Holy Book is here for him to answer all his queries and ambiguities. It is here to clear all his doubts regarding every aspect of his life.

The strong faith Sohail has developed becomes a kind of hindrance between him and Maya. Maya eventually fails to reconnect her bond with her ex-soldier brother who is now a charismatic preacher in his society and even travels around the world spreading the message of God. This creates a rift between the two which Maya finds hard to digest. Sohail’s conversion generates a gap and what is left in the family is Maya and Rehana’s memories associated with him “this is how the war made its way into their house... A shake of hand. A silence between siblings”(123). Sohail’s transformation has another reason behind it, he killed an innocent man when he was fighting for his country because he just uttered wrong words for him and when he returned from war his hands started shaking. In order to hide his feelings from the world he set up a number of things on his rooftop comprising his memories attached to each one, a comb that belongs to Piya (whom he saved during war), a shirt of his friend, Aref (Joy’s elder brother who was

killed in the war), a picture of his father and The Holy Book which he called "Ammoo's Book"(125). He starts believing the Book because it reassures him that he is good and that it is his nature to be good. He creates a secret chamber on the upstairs of his house in order to address his absence and seek refuge. It is, in short this absence implicit in secrecy that describes palimpsest. His conversion presents another layer superimposed and interwoven with each other. Maya describes his condition as a victim who is shell shocked. A term coined after world war one for the soldiers who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. Sohail was one of those soldiers who contributed as an active agent in the 1971 conflict. Anam does not only depict the contribution of the soldiers, the way they get freedom and all the struggle but she is also spotlighting the cost of that freedom which steals them even from their true selves. As Levinas says he is the "being that appears, but remains absent (81).

Maya dislikes Sohail's continued religiosity, but somehow when Rehana is in the hospital for a surgery she is seduced by his strong faith in Allah. In order to connect with him she finds the alternative in the form of Zaid (Sohail's son). For Maya, Sohail is so busy in his religious congregation that he is neglecting his son's future. His devotion towards his religion is so intense that he is unable to fulfill the basic needs of his child. Anam skillfully depicts the intricacies that lie within a family when loyalty and love is at stake between two siblings. She does not forget any of the religious, political and personal changes occurring at that time. Maya's struggle to relive the previous bond with her brother allows her to find new ways of dealing with the problem. She considers the Islamic fundamentalist attitude of Sohail and many others responsible for the violence

they had to face in 1971. At one time she even extremely shouts at Sohail “don’t you remember what they did to us in the name of God... look what your greater being has brought us. War ...” (Anam 128). Through Sohail, Anam reflects the point of view of a person whose realization is too intense as he finds God as the ultimate support for him after witnessing wartime brutalities and torture. Maya’s perspective about Sohail basically spot-lights the behavior of those around him witnessing such changes and the fear of losing a companion. Rehana’s approach is not that rigid as Maya’s as Rehana understands the contentment religion has given to Sohail and how healthy it is for him at such stage of his life when he is trying to forget the torture. But Maya finds it too knotted in everyday life where even the country’s dictator, as Smith Field says:

Who said Allah between every other word, and because she decides, when Sohail takes the religious path, that ‘she will not become one of those people who buckle under the force of a great event and allow it to change the metre of who they are’. This is the last line of a particularly exquisite paragraph, in which Anam writes like a mixture of George Eliot and Virginia Woolf. (8)

Anam presents three different thinking patterns through these three members of a family constituting a palimpsest model where each layer exposes something totally unique and adds to the complexity of the whole model.

Resurrection of Post War Bangladesh

Thomas De Quincey explains “palimpsest of the mind” as something like a “resurrective fantasy, as well as the uncanny type of ‘living on’” (Dillon 245). Like Quincey Anam

attempts to resurrect Bangladesh in her trilogy. Similar to this, Maya also tries to resurrect Sohail in *The Good Muslim*. The bond between the two was exceptional in *A Golden Age* when they both chose to serve the country in their own way. But in *The Good Muslim* Maya continues to maintain the first original layer of her memory while Sohail's original layer is erased by his superimposed personality when he joins Tableeghi Jamaat where he was best "known for his bayan, his sermons" (Anam 78). Many times Maya attempts to resurrect her ex-soldier brother and keep an eagle eye on him in order to have a reunion with his old personality, but eventually the realization occurs to Maya when she accepts "he was fragile and he was remote" (81) far beyond her approach.

Anam shifts narrative in *The Good Muslim* between the recent year after the war and the mid 1980's while following the nonlinear pattern of human memory. One of the main characteristics of Palimpsest is also nonlinear approach and shifting from one layer to another. This shifting of Palimpsest as well as of memory foregrounds the irregularity of life especially as an outcome of war. This shift denotes a change of time, a transition which is significant enough to be noticed. *The Good Muslim*, mostly presents the perspective of Maya, but the change in place and time, when she memorizes an event which shakes her from her present state and reminds her of a previous event, suggests the usual way a human memory works. While shifting the narrative indicates the way a same story is told from a different angle. Narrative is always a product of political discourse and is actually "a Big Story, rooted in shared values and common themes, that influences how audiences process information and make decisions" (Jenkins 3).

All narratives influence the audience to look at a certain event in a clearly defined way, thus creating a mindset of a nation which accepts the ongoing situation. The fabricated images change the mentality of any nation, but it is also a victim of time. Any change in political structure is followed by a change in narrative too, which adjusts the history according to its own need. These multilayered perspectives are prone to multilayered fabricated images presented in front of the audience to narrow down their points of view. Anam and many other writers, who deal with history, bring multiple narratives for the readers. Anam's Bengal trilogy constructs a narrative and a shift in narrative (especially in *The Good Muslim*) to deal with the history related to the creation of Bangladesh. These shifts in narrative not only suggest the working of a memory but also disclose the working of the politics of that time. Anam highlights the issue of war victims and the trials for the criminals who sided with the Pakistan army in 1971. In the chapter named as *1984* Anam touches ongoing condition of the country after a decade of independence, for instance Ghulam Azam's case who was found guilty, sentenced and executed at a trial. Anam skillfully describes these instances to assure her readers that she has enough knowledge and strength for stating her opinion about history. Therefore her novel is intertextual and "refers to itself, even when it alludes to other texts" (Yerba 214). All characters memories of war are actualized in the folds of language, or palimpsest, used by everyone to address it and make it alive, recalled, celebrate and mourn. Every memory is interwoven and interrelated with the other and hence creates a text as a thing which is woven "corresponds to the figuration of the palimpsest as a surface phenomenon in which two or more texts are inextricably entangled and intertwined" (Dillon 82).

Intertextuality and Palimpsest

Palimpsest also resembles with the term “Intertextuality” first used by Julia Kristeva (a French linguist) in 1996. She points towards any relation between two different texts “A theory of the text that expands the identity of the text to include its origins in and its uses of the texts of the past is Intertextuality” (Mirenyat and Soofastaei 533). Kristeva explains intertextuality by emphasizing upon the fact that no text is itself self-born and original. Every text engages with the past in a different way to form the present and produces a piece of writing which is called inter-text. Similarly Gerrard Genet refines this term and also expands it by combining it with Hypertextuality. Genet has the point of view that hypertextuality and intertextuality both examine the way two artistic texts are related. Intertextuality is also associated with the shaping of a text. Genet specifies this term by foregrounding his categorization of it as he says “intertextuality is the relationship between two texts according to the co-presence. In other words, if part of a text (text 1) attends in the other text (text 2), the relationship between them is intertextual” (83). Intertextuality includes quotations, allusions and parallelism. Anam in *The Bones of Grace* uses overt intertextuality, which is an explicit reference to another text without hiding the presence of that text. Zubaida in the novel *The Bones of Grace*, time and again, refers to Rokeya Sokhawat Hossain's short story *Sultana's Dream*. Rokeya is a Bangladeshi writer from late 19th century, who grew up in a very conservative Muslim family. Rokeya belongs to that time when it was prohibited to study English and Bengali for Bengali girls. They were trained to learn Quran and Urdu in order to read those texts which refrained them from the radical ideas of that time.

However, Rokeya's older brother secretly taught her English and Bengali as he was a western educated man who was in favour of educating women in every possible way. Rokeya's brother, Ibrahim, got impressed by a Bihari magistrate named Syed Sokhawat Hossain, who was famous for his broad mindedness, and then he decided to marry his 16 years old sister to him who was in his late 30's. Fortunately Syed promoted his wife's talent and encouraged her to write in order to cure the disease of society about their narrow minded attitudes. Rokeya wrote *Sultana's Dream* in 1908 and published it in Madras in *The Indian Ladies Magazine*. For the sake of proving her proficiency in English language to her husband, she wrote this story to pass her time when he was on a tour as Zubaida remarks Rokeya's story made me think "how many novels were written to impress a beloved" (Anam 116). And luckily her husband encouraged her to publish this story because it was excellently written. In *Sultana's dream* Rokeya creates a utopian world where men are secluded technologically and do all household chores. She names this place as The Ladyland. Rafia Zakaria (2013) explains this place as follows:

Ladyland's man-less world is one of light and beauty and laughter, without violence and without war; the rule of femininity is an end to fear.

As the women of Ladyland say, 'Men, we find, are of rather low morals, and so we do not like dealing with them'. (10)

Rokeya creates a world where the gender based roles are reversed and women are in charge of the country while men are satisfied within their secluded places, happy with their kitchen related chores, ready to submit their selves in front of women and

disobedience is a sin for them. The land is free from any harm and sin because men are secluded in the mardana “you need not be afraid of coming across a man here. This is Ladyland, free from sin and harm” (12). In the beginning of the *Sultana's Dream*, men are unable to defeat the enemy so the scientific queen of the country orders the women to win the battle. Women studied in scientifically advanced universities where they invented different devices to control the climate changes and produce a new solar system. Looking at the present condition of her country Rokeya expresses her disappointment over the role played by the Muslim women in their families, they are secluded and silently tolerate this violence and enable its continuance. She believes that only science can enable this reversal of patriarchy as Sinjini Chatterjee states that the women scientist in this novel invent attractive machineries to make use of the blessing of nature instead of producing military weapons. According to Zubaida, Rokeya is Maya's heroine as she refers to her as other refer to Allah and Jesus “If Rokeya could do this, she said, so could we”(Anam 116). Zubaida remembers Rokeya's novella on her wedding day when she impulsively accepts her childhood best friend as her life partner because her family thinks he is the best suitable match for a foreign qualified paleontologist. Rokeya's story comes into more light when Zubaida tells the story of Anwer and his wife Shathi who act as if she was living in Rokeya's time where disobedience is a sin. Anwer weds Shathi out of his mother's choice, though he was intensely in love with Megna (a Hindu girl who lives with her mother in the same village). Shathi knows that Anwer loves Megna and wants to marry her at any cost and still she lives with him because she cannot deny her parent's decision. She acts as an all-time servant of Anwer and his mother and never

complains. The way she behaves is similar to a paid servant as Anwar recalls how she gave him dinner and listened to the sounds of the utensils to make sure he has finished eating “Then she comes pours a bowl of water over my hands, passes me a bar of soap. She dries my hand with the end of her sari. Then she eats alone” (Anam 193).

Another example of intertextuality, which Anam uses in her trilogy, is a novel *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy. It was published in 1877 in a serial installment in the periodical *The Russian Messenger*. A very complicated novel consisting of 800 pages deals with many themes of faith, betrayal, love, politics, desire and marriage. One major subject of the novel is characters extramarital affairs, which can be seen from the start of the novel when Stepan is repenting in front of his wife because she suspects his infidelity and he is found guilty. Tolstoy represents Russian society at the peak of hypocrisy, where everyone is deceitful. Everyone is busy in an illicit relationship. Anna, the protagonist, also plunges herself into it by having an affair with Vronsky. In *The Bones of Grace* Zubaida also has an infatuation with Elijah Strong, even after having a traditional Bengali wedding with Rashid, who loves her from his childhood. Anam intricately weaves the story of Zubaida’s birth and eventually her adoption by Maya and Joy, connecting it with Anwar’s illicit relationship with Megna (Zubaida’s twin sister). When Megna is found guilty of having an illegitimate child she leaves her village and works under the famous brothel in Chittagong. Time and again Zubaida refers to *Anna Karenina* in her letter to Elijah as well as to us where she is narrating the contemporary situation of Bangladesh and her confusion about her birth. Anam deliberately refers to *Anna Karenina* to suggest the ongoing situation of Zubaida’s thinking process. By

reading the novel Zubaida finds herself in the similar situation like Anna where her heart beats for Elijah, but due to the constraints of society she has to maintain her marriage. Because Rashid is her childhood best friend and her parent's top priority for Zubaida. She reconciles herself for this marriage but finds herself in a conflicting choice which is worsened by a chaotic condition after her miscarriage. Anam presents the relationship between Zubaida and Rashid that shifts from duty to the exercise of free will which is present in Zubaida's conflicting attitude. The strong connection Zubaida feels for Elijah is the consequence of her psychological ambivalence where she has to conform to the societal norms as well.

Conclusion

Anam uses memory as palimpsest to present the situation of those who live with the dilemma. She shares the experiences of her character who accept it with their full heart and those who develop a critical approach towards past identifying its significance. She highlights the double impact of both time and its connection with memories. The structure of character's memory is linked with the structure of the novel as well as of time. Rehana's memory about the struggle for liberation, Maya's memories of during and post-independence and Zubaida's memories of the current situation of Bangladesh are interconnected with the collective memory of the general Bengalis of that time. Three women from three generations cover their span of time when exposed to a particular time period. Past and memories play a key role in Anam's trilogy when she discusses the post conflict remapping of her country. This is done very convincingly through a nuanced examination of the reconstructed Bangladesh. Memory as palimpsest foregrounds the

concept that both consist of layers which enhance the idea of a nonlinear concept of time where past, present and future is inseparable and inevitable. Anam highlights the miseries of war victims, especially rape victims to connect the loose threads prevailing in the current situation not only through memories but also through intertextual references. Palimpsest is not only an exemplary metaphor for a reconstructed country/city, but also for the dead memories of those who become alive whenever someone tries to dig. These memories of the past decades are basically a revision of the layers of the palimpsest. Anam's trilogy revives Bangladesh palimpsestuously not only through remapping of several places, but also through memories. Characters act of memorizing events from history foregrounds the idea that truth could be found in the layers of palimpsest fabricated through collective as well as personal memories. All these memories unfold the layers of language as well as palimpsest to revive, recall, celebrate and mourn the creation of the country.

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