

The Arts Faculty Journal
Vol. 12, No. 17, July 2021 - June 2022

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Dean
Faculty of Arts
University of Dhaka

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Department of English
University of Dhaka



University of Dhaka

The Arts Faculty Journal

Published by

Dean
Faculty of Arts
University of Dhaka
Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh

Published in January 2023

Printed at : **The Dhaka University Press**
University of Dhaka
Email: Press@du.ac.bd

The Dhaka University authority is not in any way responsible for the opinions expressed in the articles.

Price

Tk. 100

US\$ 5.00

ISSN : 1994-8891

The Arts Faculty Journal

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[30 June 2022]

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THE BATTLE OF CHALDIRAN: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Dr. Md. Abul Kalam Azad*

Abstract

The general trajectory of Ottoman-Safavid relations during the 235 years period between 1501 and 1736 outstandingly marked by persisting hostility and military conflict with brief and rare intervals of tranquility. The Battle of Chaldiran that took place in 1514 was the first major Ottoman-Safavid military clash and it was an important event in the history of Islam. The battle tested the military strength of two Muslim powers of the time and ended in favour of the Ottomans. The battle occurred for a good number of reasons and finally it left a long lasting legacy for both the Ottoman empire and for the Safavid state. This article makes a humble attempt to critically present the battle of Chaldiran from a historical point of view. To that purpose, the article first addresses the points of contention that ultimately resulted in the armed clash between the Safavids and the Ottomans at Chaldiran. The article next looks into the devastating consequences of the battle.

Introduction

The first significant Ottoman-Safavid military conflict, which took place at the plain of Chaldiran on August 23, 1514, was a turning point in Islamic history. The Safavids were originally Sunni,¹ however, they eventually adopted Shi'i Islam and converted most of Persia (present-day Iran) to Imami or Twelver Shi'ism.² In 1501, they established Shi'i Islam as an official state religion of Persia under the leadership of Shah Ismail, and as a political force they ruled the country till 1736. By making Shi'ism the state religion, Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavid dynasty and the state, distinguished his country from its Sunni Muslim neighbors and adversaries: the Ottomans and the Uzbeks. The establishment of the Shi'i Safavid state in Persia in 1501 caused significant consternation among Ottoman rulers. Shah Ismail and his Qizilbash³ (meaning red-heads) fighters soon initiated an era of conquests and captured Persian cities one

* Professor, Department of Islamic History and Culture, University of Dhaka

by one. The newly established Safavid state soon expanded over a large area in the following twelve years and thus, Shah Ismail created an empire extending as far as Qandahar and Balkh in the east and Baghdad and Basra in the west. This fact plus the increasing influence of the Safavid over the Qizilbash-Anatolian tribes of the Ottoman empire posed a serious challenge to Ottoman authority.

Sultan Bayzid (1481-1512) abstained from the confrontation with the Safavids as a result of domestic and international problems. However, his son and successor, Sultan Selim (1512-1520), who was critical of his father's policy of appeasement towards the Safavids, vehemently opposed the emerging Shi'i Safavid power and made a decision to take military action against Shah Ismail. This resulted in the battle of Chaldiran, the first military conflict between the Safavids and the Ottomans that occurred on August 23, 1514. This article makes an attempt to critically present the battle of Chaldiran from a historical point of view. To that end, the article first deals with the areas of hostility that eventually led to the military conflict between the Ottomans and the Safavids at Chaldiran. Then the article tries to find out the devastating consequences of the battle.

Early Ottoman-Safavid Low-intensity Hostile Relations

Historically, the Safavid began their journey as a Sunni⁴ Sufi movement, the Safaviyya, which had been initiated by Sheikh Safiuddin Abul Fath Ishaq Ardabili (1252-1334). However, the process of transforming the Safavid order into a viable political entity was begun by Sheikh Junaid (1430-1460)⁵ and it culminated under Ismail in 1501, when Ismail founded the Safavid dynasty, proclaimed himself the Shah, and declared Shi'i as the state faith in Persia. The emergence of the Shi'i Safavid state in 1501 on the north-eastern frontier was an unpleasant development to the Sunni Ottoman empire. Despite this reality the Ottoman Sultan Bayzid II (1481-1512) congratulated Shah Ismail for his victories, offered him fatherly advice and asked him that he should cease the destruction of the graves and mosques of the Sunnis and refrain from the use of religion as a means of grasping political power. It is pertinent to state here that the establishment of the new Safavid dynasty in Persia resulted in imposing Shi'ism as the official religion, which was forcibly converting the Sunni population. The advice of Sultan Bayzid II came in this background; however, Shah Ismail paid little heed to the advice and continued his policy of expansion of Shi'i faith at Sunni expense even into the Ottoman

territory.⁶ Needless to say, during his territorial conquest between 1505 and 1507, Shah Ismail advanced as far as the western frontier with the Ottoman empire by capturing Diyar Bakr, Marash and Albistan. Thereby, Shah Ismail reached eastern Anatolia—the eastern frontier of the Ottoman empire which resulted in some tensions between the two Muslim powers.⁷ Yet, a sort of unwarlike relationship prevailed between the newly founded Safavid state and the Ottoman empire, chiefly due to the conciliatory policy of Sultan Bayzid II, who was known to be a friend and protector of dervishes and Sufis. It is also stated that the Ottoman Sultan Bayzid II had always observed the protocol necessary for a policy of close friendship and alliance, and that the two powers had followed the path of entente.⁸

Deterioration of the Ottoman-Safavid Relations and Prelude to the Military Confrontation

The early nonviolent, low-intensity hostile relationship between the Safavids and the Ottomans quickly followed a new course of hostility since 1512. In fact, after Selim, the son of Sultan Bayzid, assumed control in Istanbul, the two Muslim powers were fast heading towards a military confrontation which eventually occurred in 1514 at the plain of Chaldiran in Azerbaijan. There were a good number of factors, indirect and direct, accounted for the rapid deterioration of the Ottoman-Safavid relations which made a military conflict inevitable and unavoidable. These factors are explained briefly in the following.

a. Ideological or Religious Differences

The first thing that turned the prevailing Ottoman-Safavid unwarlike low-intensity hostile relations into an inimical one and set them to the path of military confrontation was ideological or religious differences. When Ismail founded the Safavid dynasty in 1501, he proclaimed himself the Shah and declared Shi‘i as the state faith and quickly built an empire directly to the east of the Ottoman frontier. With it, the Shi‘i Safavid Persia became a potential threat to its most powerful Sunni neighbor—the Ottoman Empire.⁹ Although Shi‘i Islam was a minority faith elsewhere, Twelver Shi‘i was dominant in Persia and this factor effectively guaranteed conflict between the Persian Safavids and the Ottomans. Shah Ismail himself was a bitter enemy of the Sunnis and he forced the inhabitants of Persia to become Shi‘i. Besides, by making Shi‘ism the state religion of Persia he thwarted the ambition of the Ottomans, especially of Sultan Selim, who

wanted to be the supreme ruler of the Muslim world.¹⁰ Moreover, the great schism between the Sunni and Shi'i is not merely a theological speculation upon articles of belief, but at the same time a practical point in politics, involving the succession to the throne. Shah Ismail's success depended on his followers' belief that his descent from Muhammad's (pbuh) son-in-law Ali (R.) made him the true and only legitimate successor to the Prophet. Such a claim implied that all other Muslim rulers including the Ottoman Sultans were usurpers. This doctrine was especially explosive because large numbers of people in Asia Minor of the Ottoman territory were predisposed to accept such an idea. In addition, for generations, a semi-secret Shi'i propaganda had taught that the rulers of Islam were all illegitimate, and that the true head of the Muslim community, the Imam, would appear someday to overthrow the mighty and set all things right. Shah Ismail's meteoric career in Persia seemed to match such expectations, and the many views which had developed about how and when the Imam would manifest himself tended to coalesce around his person.¹¹ On the other hand, as guardians of the Sunni Islam, the Ottomans considered Safavid Persia as heretical and saw themselves as the center of the Muslim Caliphate. According to Kaveh Farrokh, this factor alone was sufficient to rally the Ottomans for a holy war against Safavid Persia.¹² Particularly, Sultan Selim, being an ardent Sunni and supported by his anti-Shi'i orthodox Sunni advisors, was determined to crush the upstart Safavid power and the heresy it represented before it should be firmly established in Persia.¹³ This position of Sultan Selim made the military conflict between the Ottomans and the Safavid inevitable.

b. The Security of the Ottoman Empire

The security of the Ottoman empire also played an important role in the occurrence of the battle of Chaldiran. The establishment of the Shi'i Safavid state on the eastern borders appeared as a grave danger to the security of the Ottoman empire. The nature of this threat reflected on the Safavid ability to manipulate the Shi'i population and large Turkomen¹⁴ Qizilbash followers of Shah Ismail in the Ottoman territory. Since Shi'i influence was strong among the Turcoman tribesmen of eastern Anatolia, therefore, this issue had become a potential threat to the very foundation of the Ottoman empire.¹⁵ As a matter of fact, the Safavid movement had become a rallying point for the Turkomen Shi'i population of Anatolia and upper Mesopotamia whose territories were disputed among three powers: the Ottoman, the Safavids and the Mamluks. There is credible

evidence to suggest that when Ismail had made his bid for power in the late summer of 1499, the first contingent of troops to join him were Turkomen Qizilbash Sufis from Anatolia. Later, many Anatolian Qizilbashes flocked to Ismail's standard when he embarked on his first military exploits. Shah Ismail's military successes, his reputation for generosity in the distribution of booty, the revolutionary zeal of Twelver Shi'ism and above all the persistent economic crisis among the population of this region played their part to increase the influx of Anatolian Qizilbashes into Persia to join Ismail's army.¹⁶ The presence within the borders of the Ottoman empire of large numbers of Turkomen following the Shah Ismail's line thus actually constituted what in more recent times would have been referred to as a "fifth column"¹⁷ while their movement to Safavid Persia either as mercenaries or as true supporters and army of the Safavid state was viewed in Istanbul with growing disquiet since this confirmed of certain separatist tendencies from the Ottoman rule. Sultan Bayzid II during his time had faced harsh realities of possible mass Turkomen exodus into the Safavid realm and the possibility that eastern Anatolia might be detached from allegiance to the Ottoman empire. In response to these circumstances, in 1502, he issued the first edict for the persecution of the Qizilbash in Anatolia in an effort to stop the large migration of able-bodied Ottoman people and prevent the reinforcement of a future foe. The persecution included branding on the face of every inhabitant who was known to have Safavid sympathies and their deportation (large in numbers) from Anatolia to Morea, Modoni and Koroni in southern Greece. He also ordered the amirs or chiefs on the eastern frontier to prevent Qizilbash from crossing the border.¹⁸ In response to this Ottoman action, Shah Ismail sent Sultan Bayzid II a written appeal requesting him not to forbid his adherents to cross the frontier.

As time progressed, the Ottoman repression on its Shi'i Qizilbash subjects took a serious turn. The Shi'i Qizilbash subjects of the Ottoman province of Tekke or Teke-lli (capital Anatolia), on the Mediterranean coast of Asia Minor, rose to open revolt in late June 1511 out of fear of further deportation and resentment at not being permitted to enter into Persia. Led by Shah Quli Baba Takkalu, and inspired by Safavid missionaries, the Takkalu Turkomen of the Ottoman empire sought to replicate Shah Ismail's movement of Persia and rebelled against the Ottoman authority, perhaps in anticipation of a union with the Safavids. Reportedly, they received encouragement from Shah Ismail and the Ottomans had real grounds to fear that the tribes would abandon them for the Safavids. Soon

the Turkomen Qizilbash rebels were joined by the discontented soldiers (*sipahis*) of the Ottoman empire, and the joint forces revolted against the Ottoman rule in Anatolia. They roamed the whole region murdering and plundering.¹⁹ They also defeated and killed Beylerby—the Ottoman governor of Anatolia and captured Bursa—the capital of the first Ottoman Sultans. Without a doubt, this was a major anti-Ottoman rebellion in Anatolia and it shook the very foundation of the Ottoman empire. The insurrection in Anatolia gave Shah Quli Baba Takkalu the opportunity to spread the uprising to other parts of the Ottoman empire, which was worse for the Ottoman Sultan. The magnitude of the rebellion compelled the Ottoman Sultan Bayzid II to send his Grand Vizir Khadim Ali Pasha to suppress the rebellion. An encounter took place near Sivas on July 2, 1511, and the rebellion was crushed while Shah Quli was killed. The Ottomans were able to restore peace at the cost of their Grand Vizir in the encounter.

After the killing of Shah Quli, neither the Ottoman anxiety over losing much of their Asian possessions was eased, nor was their hatred for Shah Ismail diminished. When such was the Ottoman position, another serious revolt broke out in the province of Rum, now with open encouragement of the Safavids. The proximity of the Safavid frontier allowed the rebels an opportunity to withdraw on to the Safavid territory in face of Ottoman punitive action. This clearly showed the precarious state of Ottoman security along the eastern and southern Anatolian borders. Roger Savory has rightfully articulated that the active subversive of large numbers of Ottoman subjects in Anatolia by the politico-religious propaganda of the Safavid was the principal reason for the outbreak of war between the two states.²⁰ Sultan Selim, who was best known in English as Selim the Grim because of his cruelty or ferocity, took very seriously the subversive role of pro-Safavid Qizilbash sympathizers within the Ottoman empire and decided to put an end to it by means of force. Sultan Selim was also probably aware of the dispatch of Safavid envoys to the Mamluks of Egypt and to Hungary for forging an alliance against their common enemy—the Ottomans.²¹ Therefore, once firmly established on the throne, Sultan Selim wanted to deal with the roots of the problems that had threatened the security of the Ottoman empire. Instead of placating the Safavids as his father Sultan Bayzid II had done previously, Sultan Selim adopted clearly an aggressive policy towards Shah Ismail to prevent him from exporting Shi'i revolution to Ottoman lands. This aggressive policy, aiming also to protect the integrity of his realm, led Sultan Selim to carry the offensive

into his enemy's territory on the battlefield of Chaldiran on August 23, 1514.²²

c. Sultan Selim's Desire to Avenge on the Safavid for Humiliating the Ottomans

Sultan Selim's desire to take revenge on the Safavid ruler Shah Ismail for humiliating the Ottomans was another reason for the battle of Chaldiran. From the very beginning the Shi'i Safavid state was surrounded by two powerful Sunni political rivals: the Uzbeks in the east and the Ottoman in the west. The Uzbeks were making regular invasions in the Safavid territories. To contain the Uzbeks, Shah Ismail defeated Uzbek ruler Muhammad Shaibani Khan in the battle of Marv on December 2, 1510. Muhammad Shaibani Khan was killed along with his 10,000 men. Shah Ismail had Shaibani Khan's skull fashioned into a jeweled drinking vessel and the skin of the head of slain Uzbek leader stuffed with straw, was sent to the court of the Ottoman Sultan Bayzid II.²³ Sultan Bayzid II sent his representative to Shah Ismail with a message of friendship and to congratulate the Safavid ruler on his victory over Shaibani Khan despite his apparent humiliation after receiving the stuffed head of Shaibani Khan from the very man he was now congratulating.²⁴ The heinous act and apparent humiliation of the Ottomans by Shah Ismail, though not entirely outside the norms of the time, not only generated outrage in the Ottoman capital but also aroused a strong desire for revenge in Sultan Bayzid's son, Selim. Therefore, even before his coming to power, Selim developed in him a strong hatred for Shah Ismail. The Ottoman historians 'consider this to be the immediate cause of war between the two' that took place at the plain of Chaldiran on August 23, 1514 when Selim was the Ottoman Sultan.²⁵

History also records that as a governor of Trebizond (Trabzon) Selim ordered raids that were carried out against Shah Ismail's dominions in the environs of Arzinjan and Bayburt. Shah Ismail sent an envoy to the Ottoman court with an insulting message and a 'gift' consisting of feminine garments to Selim in an effort to defy Selim's raids into the Safavid territories and to complain for that to his ruling father, Bayzid II. An expert of the Ottoman-Safavid relations has stated that this Safavid gesture of injuring the dignity of Selim plus Shah Ismail's repudiation to send diplomatic envoy to congratulate Selim on the occasion of his coronation as Sultan in 1512 also contributed a lot to the encouragement

of Sultan Selim for a revenge on the Safavids.²⁶ Given this fact, upon assuming power Sultan Selim made his political goals clear. He ordered the execution of thousands of Qizilbashs who had participated in the 1511 revolts and resolved to crush Ismail and the Shi'i of Anatolia and Persia.²⁷

d. Territorial Disputes and the Safavid Provocative Military Campaign into the Ottoman Territory

The Ottoman-Safavid territorial disputes and the Safavid provocative military campaign into the Ottoman territory also contributed a lot to their first military confrontation in 1514. Before, his military engagement with the Ottomans, Shah Ismail had been victorious over the rulers of Shirvan, Mazandaran and the Aq-Quyunlu (White Sheep Turkomans) and Qara-Quyunlu (Black Sheep Turkomans), the latter's being the friends of Sultan Selim. Shah Ismail in this way extended his conquests westward as far as Iraq and eastward as far as Khorasan.²⁸ Then, Shah Ismail turned his attention towards the Ottoman frontier. It is recorded that the Ottoman-Safavid frontier stretched over 600 miles from Batum on the Black Sea to Basra on the Shatt al-Arab.²⁹ In 1507, Shah Ismail made a campaign against the principality of the Dulghadir which lay within the Ottoman sphere of influence. The Safavid ventures to Ottoman territory continued unabated. In the height of such territorial infringements, Shah Ismail had appointed Muhammad Khan Ustajlu as the Governor-General of Diyar Bakr, who with the help of the troops under him took control of some strategically important forts from the Ottomans. According to Safavid court historian Eskandar Beg Monshi, disputes over various forts in Diyar Bakr added fuel to the flames, and gradually, for a variety of reasons, the cause of war between the two sides increased. It is pertinent to state that when Sultan Selim demanded the return of his nephew Murad (who was given refuge in the Safavid court) from Shah Ismail by sending an envoy, his message also included a claim to strategically important Diyar Bakr province. However, in both cases, Shah Ismail responded negatively. Specially, with regard to the return of Diyar Bakr, Shah Ismail included an insulting refutation highlighting that this province was his by right of conquest and that only by the force of arms would he cede it. The failure of this embassy gave Sultan Selim grounds to open hostilities against the Safavids.

In the meantime, the Safavid aggressive and provocative military expeditions headed by Nur Ali Khalifa Rumlu, the governor of Arzinjan in eastern Anatolia in 1512, added new tensions to prevailing hostilities

between the two Muslim powers. Supported by the Ottoman subjects loyal to the Safavids, Nur Ali Khalifa launched a very damaging offensive incursion deep inside Anatolia and crushed several Ottoman armies which were led by Yular Qisdi Sinan Pasha, Husayn Beg and Tajuddin Beg. He sacked several Ottoman towns and the city of Tokat of Malatiya province was added to the Safavid realm. He finally entered the city of Tokat where he read the Khutbah (Friday sermon) in the name of Shah Ismail.³⁰ He then headed for Sivas. Fighting side by side with Murad (Ahmad's son, who was given refuge by Shah Ismail)—the fugitive Ottoman prince, Nur Ali Khalifa had defeated Ottoman army commander Sinan Pasha with heavy losses. He eventually levied on the spot from among the Turcoman Sufis of the Safavid order in these newly acquired territories. Earlier, Shah Ismail sent a Safavid expedition under Nur Ali Khalifa to effect an emigration of his followers from the Ottoman territory. Accordingly, Nur Ali Khalifa was able to collect 2,000 to 4,000 Qizilbashs at Qibla Hisar.³¹ Roger Savory has stated that this Safavid act was one of the two actual *casus belli* of the battle of Chaldiran.³²

e. The Ottoman Policy of Conquest

There is no doubt that the Ottoman policy of conquest had made a military engagement between the Ottomans and the Safavids inevitable. Sultan Bayzid II followed a conciliatory stance toward the Safavids due to his dual commitments to consolidating Sultan Mahmud II's (1444 to 1446 and 1451 to 1481) earlier conquests and regaining control over the Black Sea and Morea. The reign of his son and successor Sultan Selim was marked by a major shift in Ottoman expansionist policy. History documents that Sultan Selim was arguably the most successful field general of his age and in 1512, when he ascended the throne, the Ottoman field army was probably superior to any other in the world.³³ From this vantage point, Sultan Selim set on territorial expansion westwards into Europe and eastwards into the Middle East and thus he tripled the size of the Ottoman empire during his eight years (1512-1520) reign. However, at the core of Sultan Selim's rage was his fear of a Safavid offensive from the east, an old concern and humiliating memory of the Ottomans who were a century earlier routed with utter humiliation by Timur in the battle of Angora in 1402.³⁴ Given this reality, eastward expansion of the Ottomans would set them on a collision course with the Persian Safavids. To Sultan Selim, westward expansion into Europe with a hostile Safavid

Persia on their eastern flank would mean that the Ottomans had to face the possibility of a two-front war. Moreover, given the fact that the Europeans were eager to forge alliance with the Ottoman foe—the Safavid Persia, the Ottomans under Sultan Selim resolved to strike the Safavid first.³⁵ Because of his expansionist policy Sultan Selim had good reason to view the development of the Safavid state as a threat to the Ottoman empire and he could not accept the risk of being attacked from the rear. Under the circumstance, Sultan Selim made his position clear and decided to wreak a havoc on the Shi'i Qizilbash Turcomen of eastern Anatolia and their Safavid patrons in Persia.³⁶ This position of Sultan Selim quickly paved the way for the battle of Chaldiran.

f. Shah Ismail's Reluctance to Accept Selim as the New Ottoman Sultan and His Support for Sultan Selim's Rival Murad

The political asylum and support provided by Shah Ismail to Sultan Selim's rival Murad is argued as the direct cause as well as the second actual *casus belli* of the battle of Chaldiran.³⁷ Sultan Bayzid II had three sons—Ahmad, Korkud and Selim—for the succession to the throne. Of them, Ahmad was declared as an heir apparent to the throne by Sultan Bayzid. Angered with this announcement, Selim rebelled and he forcibly took power on April 24, 1512 by deposing his father. This resulted in a struggle for power among three brothers: Ahmad, Korkud and Selim. This presented Shah Ismail with an immense opportunity to meddle in the affairs of the Ottoman empire. When congratulatory embassies to Sultan Selim had arrived upon his coronation from different parts of Europe and from Egypt, Shah Ismail declined to send such an embassy to the Ottoman court to congratulate the new Ottoman Sultan.³⁸ Instead, Shah Ismail supported the legal heir to the Ottoman empire—Ahmad against Sultan Selim and sent an embassy to the Sultan of Egypt for two reasons: to conciliate his friendship and to request his aid against Sultan Selim. There is no shadow of doubt that Shah Ismail's such gestures only doubled the trouble and Sultan Selim took these issues very seriously.

Meanwhile, when Ahmad was put to death by Sultan Selim, Shah Ismail lent his support to Ahmad's son Prince Murad who was governor of Amasya. Ismail's objective in this regard was to use Murad to mobilize an effective opposition to Sultan Selim, who was his virulent enemy. Murad, like his father, first disputed the succession of Selim and then advanced his claim following the murder of his father by Selim. Murad then joined the

Qizilbash rebels with thousand of his supporters and at the end of April 1513 the combined forces laid waste areas in the vicinity of chorum and Amasya. He then established contact with Nur Ali Khalifa—the invading Safavid general into the Ottoman territory. The combined forces burnt the city of Tokat. However, Prince Murad finally was routed in a battle and was forced to take refuge at the court of Shah Ismail in Tabriz. Sultan Selim dispatched an embassy to the Safavid court to demand the return of his fugitive nephew Murad. Shah Ismail responded that he considered Murad as a guest and that as such he could not turn him over to the envoys.³⁹ Shah Ismail even raised an army to invade the Ottoman territory in order to support Murad's claims. Sadly enough, around this time, Murad fell ill at Kashan *en rout* to Fars and died at Isfahan. With the death of Murad, Shah Ismail abandoned his scheme of mobilizing opposition to Sultan Selim. However, the irreparable damage was done since such attitudes of Shah Ismail created a very strong grudge in the mind of Sultan Selim which eventually blossomed into open hostility at Chaldiran.⁴⁰

Sultan Selim's Precautionary Measures on the Eve of the Battle of Chaldiran

When the ground for military confrontation between the Ottomans and the Safavids became more evident, Sultan Selim declared his intention of attacking Persia in his war council. The war council spontaneously approved his plan. Previously he had expressed his intention to attack Persia three times and every time he was supported by his Janissary troops. After taking the final decision to attack Persia, Sultan Selim was seen to take the following precautionary measures.

i. The Securing of Fatwas or Religious Decrees to Fight the Safavids

Sultan Selim was deeply concerned that the local pro-Safavid Anatolian Qizilbashes could harass his army when it would march towards Persia. Therefore, after his successful struggle against his brother for the throne, Sultan Selim moved to deal with this internal issue. To that end, he secured two fatwas or religious decrees from the influential Sunni Ulama (theologians) namely Hamza Saru Gorez and Kemal Pasazade condemning the Qizilbash and sanctioning their persecution. The fatwas declared the Qizilbashes and Safavid followers in the Ottoman empire as 'unbelievers', 'heretics' and 'anti-Muslims' and it was the duty of the Ottoman Sultan to fight these unbelievers in accordance with the Qur'anic

verses: “O Prophet! Strive hard against the unbelievers and hypocrites, and be firm against them. Their abode is Hell, an evil refuge indeed.” The Sunni Ulama also decreed that the eternal reward for killing one Shi‘i was equal to killing 70 Christian infidels. After securing these fatwas Sultan Selim followed a policy of annihilation of the Qizilbash in his empire. He now proscribed Shi‘ism in his dominions, prepared a register of the Turkomens Shi‘i Qizilbash of Anatolia and massacred some 40,000 out of a total of 70,000 that included able-bodied, young and old Safavid sympathizers. Those who were not put to death were arrested and branded and sent to Ottoman territory in Europe.⁴¹ The act of terror also involved atrocities, rape, enslavement of Shi‘i women and children. The fatwas of the Ottoman Ulamas have another significant part since these provided the Sultan with the necessary license to fight the patron of these pro-Safavid Qizilbashes: Shah Ismail in Persia. Adel Allouche has stated that having obtained legal justification for fighting the Qizilbash, Sultan Selim ordered his army to prepare for a military campaign against Safavid Persia.⁴² Referring to the Ottoman historian Sir John Malcolm has stated that Sultan Selim declared a religious or holy war against Shah Ismail after securing the fatwas from the Ulama and made his expedition against Persia.⁴³

ii. The Encouragement of Uzbek Leader to Attack the Safavids

Sultan Selim’s second move was to weaken his adversary—Shah Ismail—by conspiring with the Uzbeks, the enemies of his enemy. In late March 1514, Sultan Selim wrote a long letter and sent it by the hand of an especial envoy to Ubaydullah Khan in order to summon him as an ally (he being a Sunni) against Shah Ismail.⁴⁴ In the letter he informed him of his intention to march against Persia and suggested joint action against their common enemy by highlighting the Shi‘i Safavid menace. He also encouraged Ubaydullah Khan to avenge the killing of his uncle and former Uzbek ruler Muhammad Shaibani Khan who was defeated and killed by Shah Ismail in the battle of Marv in 1510.⁴⁵ Sultan Selim thus provoked Ubaydullah Khan to attack Shah Ismail from the east while he himself moved to do so from the west.⁴⁶

iii. The Confirmation of the Allegiance of the Aq-Qoyunlus and Kurdish Chieftains

As the third precautionary measure, Sultan Selim sent embassies to the last Aq-Qoyunlu (White Sheep Turkmen) ruler Murad as well as

Farrukhshad, another Aq-Qoyunlu prince (who governed Bayburt and threw off his allegiance to the Safavids) to call them to oppose Shah Ismail. Both leaders confirmed their allegiance and cooperation prior to Sultan Selim's final move against Shah Ismail.⁴⁷ Sultan Selim also received the allegiance of a number of influential Kurdish chieftains prior to the start of his campaign against Shah Ismail.

iv. The Maintaining or Securing of the Neutrality of the Mamluks

Maintaining or securing the neutrality of the Mamluks before launching his assault against Shah Ismail of Persia was Sultan Selim's fourth strategy. His strategy in this regard consisted of aborting a possible Safavid-Mamluk rapprochement during the time of his military engagement with Shah Ismail which might force him to fight on two fronts. That is why, Sultan Selim sent his envoy to the court of Sultan Qansuh al-Ghawri of the Mamluk Egypt with a message of his impending move against Shah Ismail and for that both the Ottomans and the Mamluks may unite against him. Sultan Selim also wrote another letter to the Sultan of Egypt while he was moving from Erzenjan to Tabriz, requiring him to march and fight Shah Ismail.⁴⁸ Analysts consider Sultan Selim's such message as a veiled ultimatum to the Mamluk Sultan al-Ghawri not to support the Safavids, rather than a genuine invitation to join an anti-Safavid alliance.⁴⁹

v. The Sealing of the Ottoman Border

Sultan Selim's fifth and final precautionary measure before his military engagement with Shah Ismail was to seal the Ottoman-Persian border which was extended over 600 miles. This was indeed a difficult task but Sultan Selim did it for two reasons. Firstly, by sealing the Ottoman-Safavid border he sought to initiate a commercial blockade against the Safavid Persia. Sultan Selim wanted to deliver a crippling economic blow to Persia by preventing it from exporting its silk to the Ottoman markets and to the west. Secondly and most importantly, Sultan Selim sealed the border in a bid to cut off all potential sources of supplies of weapons from the west into Persia.⁵⁰

Sultan Selim's Ultimatum to Shah Ismail and the Declaration of War

After taking the above-mentioned precautionary measures Sultan Selim wasted no time and began final preparations for the invasion of Persia. On March 20, 1514, Sultan Selim left Adrianople and arrived in

Istanbul on March 29, 1514. He mobilized an army of more than 100,000 the size of which was unprecedented and remarkable in the Middle East warfare of the period and left Istanbul for Karaman on April 19, 1514.⁵¹ On the way, a Safavid spy by the name of Kilij, who was entrusted with the task of reporting on the strength and movements of the Ottoman army, was captured. It was by his hands, on April 23, 1514, Sultan Selim sent to Shah Ismail his first letter of ultimatum and the declaration of war addressing Shah Ismail *amir* not Shah 'who clothed in the garb of falsehood and hypocrisy, had spread abroad uproar and insurrection, had planted the standard of impiety and heresy, had given the reins to his passions, had been guilty of the infamous abuse of the pure, of the murder of the virtuous, of the profanation of the mosques, of the overthrow of the sepulchers, of the contempt of the learned expounders of the law, of the imprecation of the three first chalifs [Caliphs], of the ill treatment of the holy writing of the Koran: that, therefore, he (the Sultan) had on these accounts put on helmet and cuirass instead of silk and gold, and had grasped the sword of battle'.⁵² Thus accusing Shah Ismail of blasphemy, perjury and wrongdoing Sultan Selim asked him either to return without delay of all the lands which formerly belonged to the Ottomans or to prepare for a war. Sultan Selim also informed Shah Ismail in a second letter that he had secured fatwas from Ottoman theologians sanctioning a war against him and that he was marching immediately on Persia. In the second letter Sultan Selim called on the Shah to repent for his past actions and become his vassal.⁵³

On July 20, 1514, when Sultan Selim was at Aq-Dih near Kamakh, a reply came from Shah Ismail which accused Sultan Selim of aggression against fellow Muslims, killing innocent people and violation of sexual mores,⁵⁴ and questioned Sultan Selim's improper language in his previous letter to him. Shah Ismail in his letter also lamented on the deterioration of Safavid-Ottoman relations under Sultan Selim and reminded the good days during his father's time. Referring to the majority inhabitants of Anatolia who were his followers, Shah Ismail boasted that he could have moved against Anatolia, but had decided against it. He slighted the Sultan by mentioning that his aggressive activities might have invited chaos as it did in the time of Timur. Shah Ismail finally concluded his letter with an insult, remarking that Selim's letter showed a lack of total respect which was worthy not of a ruler but of a person addicted to opium. The reply from Shah Ismail infuriated Sultan Selim hugely who put the messenger to death immediately after reading it.⁵⁵ Sultan Selim then sent his third

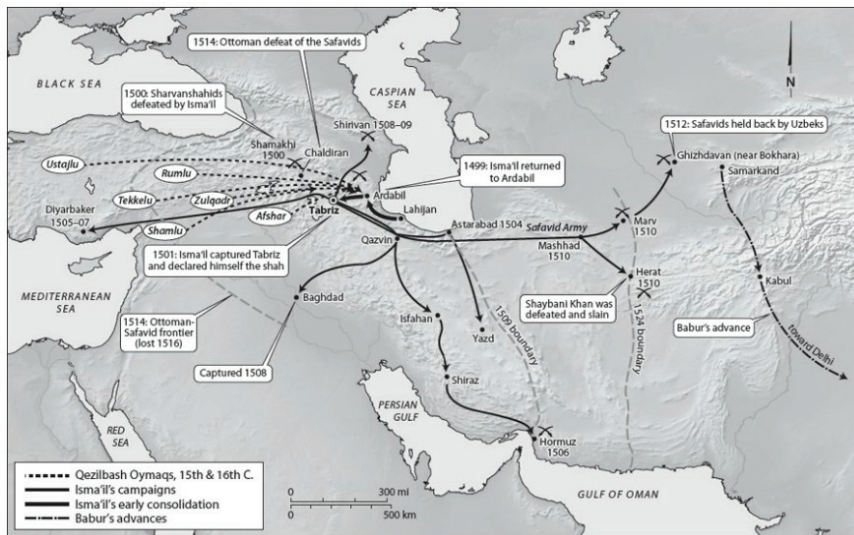
message to Shah Ismail expressing his warlike intentions. As a reciprocal insult to Shah Ismail, Sultan Selim now labeled the Safavid ruler as the “Sufi kid” and the “Ardabil lad” and sent a gift consisting of a rag, a staff, a device for cleaning the teeth, a rosary and begging bowl, intended as a reminder that Shah Ismail was unfit to rule and would be better off to follow his ancestor’s way of ‘mendicant’ mysticism.⁵⁶ In this way, Sultan Selim and Shah Ismail were openly insulting each other and exchanging war of words under the cover of irony and mockery, conveyed sentiments of contempt or hatred.⁵⁷

Sultan Selim Provoked Shah Ismail for a Set-Piece Battle

While exchanging of war of words with clear insultation were taking place between Sultan Selim and Shah Ismail, Sultan Selim and his army continued to march towards Persia. The Safavid scorched-earth tactics all along the Ottoman advance deprived the Sultan’s advancing army of food and fodder. It is recorded that despite the army’s apparent grumble (which was tantamount to a near mutiny) at the interminable march through a devastated region the indomitable and uncompromising Sultan continued his march towards Azerbaijan. At one stage of his perilous journey from Erzenjan to Tabriz, the capital of Shah Ismail, Sultan Selim was seen to be increasingly worried as he predicted that the Safavid ruler would not consent to a set-piece battle which would mean a prospect of a prolonged military campaign in Persia during the bitter winter months. To overcome his concerns, Sultan Selim dispatched his fourth message to Shah Ismail challenging and provoking him to a set-piece battle. Addressing Shah Ismail merely as a common soldier, Sultan Selim wrote in the message: “If you conceal yourself in the corner of fear and fright, you cannot be permitted to call yourself a man. Instead of the helmet, put on the woman’s bonnet; instead of the coat of mail, take the parasol, and lay aside your thirst for dominion and royalty.”⁵⁸ In his message, Sultan Selim also advised Shah Ismail to show his valor instead of running away “like a woman”. Sultan Selim went on to say: “In such case, you had better wear a *chadur* (a veil) instead of your armor.”⁵⁹ This message was accompanied by a present of women’s clothes, as a double irony upon the pusillanimity of the Shah.⁶⁰ As expected, Sultan Selim’s letter produced desired results. Following a hasty military meeting with his Qizilbash chiefs after receiving Selim’s letter, Shah Ismail chose to engage Sultan Selim in a set-piece combat, despite the advice of several of his generals to the contrary. Ismail then pitched his camp at a place called Chaldiran which is about 80 miles

towards the north-west of Tabriz and 50 miles northwest of the city of Khuy in Azerbaijan (in present day northwestern Iran). Shah Ismail was able to assemble an army of 40,000 men at Chaldiran. On August 22, 1514, Sultan Selim appeared on the scene with his 100,000 fighting troops consisting of 300 field guns (200 cannon and 100 mortars) after a journey of about 1000 miles in four months.

Below is a map of the battle of Chaldiran.



Source: Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History*, Yale University Press, London, 2017, p. 59.

Events of the Battle of Chaldiran

Reportedly, before finally setting up his camp at Chaldiran, Shah Ismail consulted with his military commanders of the war council. Ismail's two military chiefs namely Muhammad Khan Ustajlu and Nur Ali Khalifa Rumlu who had first-hand experience of Ottoman methods of warfare counselled against a frontal attack because of the strength of the Ottoman artillery and advised that an immediate attack should be made upon the enemy forces, before they could bring up their field-guns and fasten them with strong chains, thus making the Ottoman front impregnable and unassailable. However, this tactical advice was turned down by a senior Qizilbash commander named Durmish Khan Shamlu (who had a privileged position at the court) and by Shah Ismail himself. The Ottomans were allowed to complete their war preparation at Chaldiran for Shah Ismail and

Durmish Khan Shamlu wanted that enemy's arrangements to be completed, so that the Persians may have a chance of displaying their bravery and military ardour in full view on the battle field. Equal in religious zeal, personal bravery and material discipline, Shah Ismail was far inferior to the Ottoman Sultan Selim in the numbers of his troops and in the total absence of artillery. Once the preparations of both warring parties were completed, the Safavid army led by Saru Pira opened the battle on August 23, 1514, by attacking the Ottoman forces with a wild cavalry charge. The Ottoman war tactics were to draw the Safavid cavalry within the range of their artillery and muskets, because the guns were concealed behind the infantry. As a result, the Ottoman suffered the initial enormous casualties as Shah Ismail and his Qizilbash commanders attacked the enemy on both flanks simultaneously. Shah Ismail was able to compel the Ottoman troops to move back on to the rear-guard. But when the Ottoman troops brought firepower (guns and mortars) into play it quickly decided the fate of the battle with a devastating effect on the Safavid side. The Ottoman firepower shattered the Safavid defence and Shah Ismail was forced to leave the battle field wounded. Shah Ismail, with 300 men, first fled to Tabriz and then to Darguzin in Iraq. Suspecting an ambush Sultan Selim forbade the pursuit of the fleeing Safavid army, however, he celebrated his victory by erecting a pyramid of skulls of his enemies on the battle field. The Safavid army was so devastated that it failed to reappear and Sultan Selim made his triumphal entry into the Safavid capital Tabriz on September 5, 1514. The Sultan proposed to stay in winter in Tabriz and complete the subjugation of whole Persia the following spring. But the war council and his ministers rejected the proposal in the face of scarcity of food and fodder and for fear of the approaching bitter winter and anxiety about their long supply lines. Therefore, after spending eight days in Tabriz, Sultan Selim started his return march on September 13, 1514, to his capital. On the way, he conquered and annexed the Safavid provinces of Diyar Bakr, Albistan, Marash and Arzinjan.

Causes of the Safavid Defeat

A good number of reasons can be cited for the Safavid defeat at the hands of the Ottoman at Chaldiran. **Firstly**, the battle of Chaldiran is marked by the unequal military power of the two contending parties which decided the fate of the battle in favor of the Ottomans. The numerical superiority of the Ottoman army (100,000) was a key factor in this regard and the Ottoman troops outnumbered Ismail's 40,000 army men by two to one. **Secondly**, the battle of Chaldiran, which ended with an Ottoman victory,

is usually presented in history books as an example of the effectiveness of firearms technology. That is, the Safavid military forces were not as technologically advanced as the Ottomans were. The Ottoman victory at Chaldiran essentially owed to this new firearms which they adopted rapidly, extensively, and with great effect. In fact, the Ottoman possession of artillery and firearms including 200 guns and 100 mortars and the use of this firepower was crucial in deciding the result of the battle. **Thirdly**, Shah Ismail's decision to reject the war strategy proposed by some Qizilbash war veterans who had first-hand experience with the Ottoman warfare was another cause of his defeat at Chaldiran. The short-sighted decision with an unmatched military power brought a total disaster for Shah Ismail. An analyst has put: "Had the advice of Muhammad Khan Ustajlu been followed and the battle of Chaldiran fought on the first of Rajab (that is, on August 22) when the Ottoman army, worn by travel and disarrangement, had just arrived, the Persians might have secured a victory."⁶¹ **Fourthly**, the Ottoman campaign came at a time when the Safavids faced a renewed Uzbek incursion in Khurasan and this compelled Shah Ismail to station some of his forces on the Uzbek frontier. Shah Ismail's inability to raise a larger force to combat the Ottomans compelled him to take a defensive strategy.⁶² **Fifthly**, in Ismail's view there were no legitimate grounds for Ottoman belligerence. Hence he was not fully prepared and was busy hunting in Isfahan when Sultan Selim actually appeared for a war. Moreover, Ismail was certain that the Ottoman would not prevail the long and extended lines of communication, the difficulties of transportation and the harsh climate of eastern Anatolia and Azerbaijan and above all the Safavid scorched-earth defensive tactics. But all proved wrong when the Ottomans came with the ultimate intention of giving a battle with the Safavids which ended up in their favour. **Sixthly**, Shah Ismail's record of past victories might have made him overly confident about the superiority of the Qizilbash cavalry and its spirit of sacrifice on the battle field, a fact that explains his lax preparation despite the glaring disparity in troops' numbers. As an ardent follower of Shi'i Islam and a dedicated defender of the cause of Ali (R.) and his sacred house, Shah Ismail could not have doubted that divine providence would not prevail. Perhaps, for this reason Shah Ismail and his Qizilbash chiefs spent the night before the battle drinking until dawn while drunkard Ismail began his day hunting quail on the adjacent plain at a time when his vanguard forces suffered heavy blows from the Ottoman artillery. **Finally**, Sultan Selim made his long perilous march to Persia mostly through loyal territory which certainly contributed to the Ottoman victory over the Safavids.⁶³

Consequences of the Battle of Chaldiran

Now we turn to the far-reaching consequences of the battle of Chaldiran which are discussed in the following sub-headings.

a. Human Casualties

The Ottomans inflicted a crushing defeat on the Safavids at Chaldiran in 1514. The Safavids lost 2000 strong men in the battle. The extent of the disaster for the Safavids was remarkable because many of the figure fell in the battle were highest ranking Qizilbash officials who were known for their efficiency in the battle fields and many of them helped Shah Ismail to establish his new dynasty in Persia in 1501. There were also a number of the highest Twelver religious dignitaries of the Safavid empire among those who were killed. Military prisoners, whether officers or soldiers captured by Sultan Selim were all put to the sword.⁶⁴ The Safavid human casualties continued even after the battle ended. During the course of Sultan Selim's return march, he occupied the Safavid provinces of Marash, Arzinjan, and Diyar Bakr by killing Shah Ismail's great generals and governors of those provinces: Alaud-Dawla Dhul-Qadr, Nur Ali Khalifa Rumlu, Qara Beg Khan (brother of Muhammad Khan Ustajlu) respectively. The Ottoman losses at Chaldiran were not negligible at all. True, Sultan Selim celebrated his victory by erecting a pyramid of the skulls of the fallen generals and soldiers of Shah Ismail, he had to purchase this victory by the important lives of his veteran generals like Hasan Pasha (governor-general of Rumelia), Hasan Beg (governor of Morea) Atak Beg alias Alquj Ughli, Uways Beg, Sulayman Beg, Ayas Beg.⁶⁵ It is estimated that Sultan Selim lost his 3000 army men in the battle of Chaldiran.

b. The Safavid Lost their Capital Temporarily

The Ottoman victory at Chaldiran was definite though not conclusive. Their victory opened the road to Tabriz—the Safavid capital—which surrendered peacefully and Sultan Selim entered the city on September 5, 1514 and left it on September 13, 1514. The loss of the capital, although for a short period, brought the Safavid power on the verge of collapse. Abbas Amanat has stated that before he left Tabriz, Sultan Selim allowed his troops to loot the city and rounded up and took to Istanbul a considerable number of artists, artisans, and merchants from Tabriz and elsewhere in the Safavid domains including more than twelve painters, book illuminators, and calligraphers.⁶⁶ The victorious Ottomans also took

many precious things from the Hasht Bihist Palace of Shah Ismail and according to Muhammad Ada'i-i Shirazi, "they piled what was looted on the ground which looked like mountain.The army had looted so much that the camels' backs were bent under the weight of gold."⁶⁷

c. Territorial Loss of the Safavids and the Readjustment of the Safavid-Ottoman Border

The Safavids not only lost in the battle, they also lost strategically important provinces of Albistan, Arzinjan, Diyar Bakr and Marash. The Ottomans, following their victory at Chaldiran, put an end to the Dhul-Qadr dynasty of Marash and Albistan and absorbed them into their empire.⁶⁸ The occupation of Diyar Bakr and Arzinjan by the Ottomans strengthened their hold over eastern Anatolia. According to Adel Allouche, of these two, the control of Diyar Bakr was of utmost importance because it led to the creation of an Ottoman zone in the upper Euphrates—an area crossed by major routes linking Persia to Anatolia and northern Syria. This permitted the Ottomans to keep a watchful eye on the respective movements of the Safavids and the Mamluks, thus decreasing the chances of coordination of their armies. The capture of Diyar Bakr also involved a logistic advantage: the Ottoman, having acquired such permanent strategic base, would be able to launch future expeditions into either Persia or Syria with relative ease. Thus, the battle of Chaldiran resulted in a major readjustment of the Ottoman-Safavid frontier which remains almost unchanged to this day.

d. Economic Blow to the Safavids

Following their victory at Chaldiran, the Ottomans continued to consolidate their position in central and eastern Anatolia. This Ottoman consolidation not only cost the Safavids direct loss of territory but also removed their hopes for unhindered access to the Black Sea for economic purposes through an Anatolian enclave. While Sultan Selim's commercial blockade, which he initiated prior to the battle of Chaldiran to sever the flow of goods between the two states and thus to deliver a crippling economic blow to the Safavid Persia by preventing it from exporting its silk to the Ottoman markets and to the west, continued and it started biting the Safavid economy severely. Not only that after the battle of Chaldiran, for at least four centuries the Safavids and their successors faced an Ottoman barrier that deprived them of direct political and commercial access to the Mediterranean world. In the meantime, the Portuguese took possession of the island of Hormuz from the Safavids as a result of the latter's defeat

at Chaldiran. The Portuguese established a garrison there which placed the entrance to the Persian Gulf in their hands for a century to come, thus hitting the Safavid economy very badly.⁶⁹

e. The Safavid Revolutionary Zeal was Contained

The most immediate consequence of the battle of Chaldiran was a serious downturn in Safavid revolutionary zeal. As stated previously that the Safavid movement which started as a religious movement by Sheikh Safiuddin, eventually resulted in the establishment of a political power in 1501 by Shah Ismail, with Twelver Shi'ism as its official state religion. The newly established Safavid state became very much offensive in nature and began to show every sign of exporting revolutionary zeal to the Ottoman territory by manipulating the Shi'i population and large Turkomen Qizilbash followers of Shah Ismail. The Ottoman victory at Chaldiran not only stopped the expansion of the Safavid Shi'i messianic revolution but also eliminated any potential replication of a Safavid-like revolution in Anatolia. The Safavid defeat at the battle of Chaldiran in 1514 also marked the end of their military expansionism. Thus, after the battle of Chaldiran, the Safavid Shi'i state was in effect confined to Persia while the Ottoman patronage of Sunni Islam further expanded throughout the Arab Middle East and beyond.⁷⁰

f. Change in Safavid War Strategy

Following the defeat at Chaldiran, a major change was brought in the Safavid war strategy. After their shocking defeat at Chaldiran, the Safavids were thrown on to the defensive in their subsequent long-drawn-out struggle with the Ottomans.⁷¹ The Qizilbash leaders also took into account the lesson of the battle of Chaldiran and avoided engaging the Ottoman army in future pitched battles. The superiority of the Ottoman artillery displayed in the battle of Chaldiran thus compelled the Safavids to limit themselves to occasional attacks and skirmishes. The Safavids, who were appalled at the power of fire-powers of the Ottomans in the battle of Chaldiran, not only cleverly avoided a decisive and retaliatory battle with the Ottoman for many years, they paid keen attention to have such war equipment at their possession. However, it took them close to a century before they were able to match the Ottomans' capabilities and later defeat them at their own game during the time of Shah Abbas the Great (1588-1629). Thus, the age of Gunpowder Empires came to Persia with an experience of defeat at Chaldiran.⁷²

g. The Loss of Shah Ismail's Morale

Another serious consequence of the battle of Chaldiran was a melancholic bend in the personality of Shah Ismail. Until his humiliating defeat at Chaldiran in 1514, Shah Ismail had record of victories in the battle fields and he subscribed publicly to the belief that he was a manifestation of not just the spirit of Hazrat Ali (R.), the third caliph of Islam, but also a wide array of mythical and historical icons. The Safavids' first defeat at Chaldiran destroyed the confidence of the Qizilbash, if not their belief, in Shah Ismail's invincibility. For Shah Ismail, Chaldiran did not mean merely the loss of a battle and of extensive tracts of land; the defeat at Chaldiran was a severe blow to both the myth of his invincibility and the Qizilbash's steadfast adherence to him. His claim of divinity was seriously weakened by the defeat at Chaldiran. As a result, he would never lead the Safavids into battle again during his remaining ten years life and thus ended Shah Ismail's expansion for good.⁷³ Shah Ismail left military responsibility to his officers and he indulged into music, drinking, hunting, carousing and lapsed into a persistent passivity. Consequently, his last decade was marked by his indulgence and escape from state affairs and the charismatic Safavid leadership gradually transformed into a traditional Persian kingship.⁷⁴

The magnitude of the disaster of the battle for Shah Ismail and his subsequent behavior may be judged from the fact that with his ignominious defeat two of his favorite wives named Tajlu Khanum and Behruzeh Khanum fell into the hands of his enemy.⁷⁵ Although Abbas Amanat has mentioned that Tajlu Khanum was later able to join Shah Ismail,⁷⁶ however, Joseph Von Hammer and Adel Allouche have stated that she was captured and taken to the Ottoman capital by Sultan Selim where she was married to his state secretary (or to the army chief judge) named Jafar Celebi who was later executed. Before she was taken to Constantinople, Shah Ismail had sent a delegation consisting of four theologians Sayyid Abdul Wahhab, Qadi Ishaq, Mulla Shukrullah, and Hamzah Khalifah to Sultan Selim (who was then at Amasya on his return march to his capital) in order to obtain the release of his beloved wife Tajlu Khanum. Selim lent a deaf ear to this request and jailed Shah Ismail's envoys.⁷⁷ Thus, the defeat at Chaldiran, the loss of his favorite wife along with the capital Tabriz (although for short time), had a lasting legacy on the mind of Shah Ismail who later chose to a life of isolation instead of active life of the state. Sir Malcolm has put: "The effect of so great a reverse, on the sanguine mind of Ismail, was deep and lasting: though before of a cheerful disposition, he was never afterwards seen to smile."⁷⁸

h. The Change of the Safavid Geographical Centre of Gravity

The battle of Chaldiran had immense repercussions not only on Shah Ismail's personal conduct but also on the history of Persia. With the resulting loss of extensive tracts of land in eastern Anatolia including Diyar Bakr, Albistan, Marash and Arzinjan, the Safavid capital Tabriz now found itself deprived of its more or less central location and placed on the frontiers of the empire. The Safavid court in Tabriz now lay within the action-radius of the Ottoman army. Given the fact, the Safavids felt urgent to transfer their capital from Tabriz to a relatively more central place of their state. Although Shah Ismail clung to Tabriz as his capital and the seat of government, but his son and successor Shah Tahmasp (1524-1576) moved the capital to Qazvin in 1555.

i. The Birth of Long-term Enmity between the Ottomans and the Safavids

The low-intensity hostility between the Ottomans and the Safavids increased over time and flared into a devastating war at Chaldiran in 1514 that gave birth to a long-term enmity between the two Muslim powers of the time. In the wake of the battle, Shah Ismail sent an apologetic letter to Sultan Selim with suitable presents. Sultan Selim replied by imprisoning the envoy and his companions. Shah Ismail sent another letter to Sultan Selim with messages of friendship, however, it remained unanswered.⁷⁹ Therefore, no peace agreement was signed and a state of war remained between the two Muslim neighbours.⁸⁰ Resultantly, the Safavids and the Ottomans were seen to engage militarily at intervals during the whole of the Safavid period till 1736 over eastern Anatolia, Azerbaijan, and parts of Iraq. According to an expert, this rivalry and military engagements had international ramifications because the Safavids often engaged Ottoman armies and resources, limiting Istanbul's ability to act against the Habsburgs in the Mediterranean and Hungary and thus altering power relations in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries.⁸¹

j. The Safavid Enemies were Emboldened

Apart from the Ottoman, the Safavids had other enemies in the east, the Uzbeks. The Safavid defeat at Chaldiran emboldened them and they renewed their attacks on the Safavid state. As stated before, in the battle of Marv that occurred in 1510, the Safavid enemy in the east, the Uzbeks, were severely punished by Shah Ismail. Taking the advantage of the

Safavid defeat in the battle of Chaldiran, the Uzbeks, under their new leader Ubaydullah Khan increased aggressive activities in the Safavid frontier and invaded Khurasan.⁸² The Uzbeks aggression continued unabated and it increased as time progressed. Muhammad Zaman Mirza governor of Damghan also rose in open rebellion thinking to himself that he would never get a better opportunity than this and created troubles for the Safavids after Shah Ismail's defeat at Chaldiran.⁸³ Meanwhile, Babur, Shah Ismail's former ally captured Balkh and Qandahar and Shah Ismail had to witness such things as he remained aloof from the affairs the state following his defeat in the battle of Chaldiran. The Portuguese in the Persian Gulf also became aggressive following the Safavid defeat at Chaldiran.

k. The Ottomans Moved to Annex the Mamluk Empire

The Ottoman triumph at Chaldiran and the annexation of Marash by Sultan Selim accelerated the Ottoman hope to conquer the Mamluk empire. Two years later following the victory at Chaldiran Sultan Selim took it through the battle of Marj-e-Dabiq in 1516. As a result, the Ottoman authority was established in Egypt, Syria, northern Sudan, in the Red Sea area as well as over Yemen and the Islamic holy cities in Arabia.

Conclusion

The history of interactions between two major contemporary Muslim powers, the Shi'i Safavid state and the Sunni Ottoman empire, is full of acrimony, enmity and military engagements. The battle of Chaldiran was one of the first military conflicts of a series that took place in 1514 and ended with a decisive victory for the Ottoman empire. The establishment of the Shi'i Safavid state challenging the authority of the Sunni Ottoman empire, a series of its anti-Ottoman policies, provocative activities and territorial disputes invited Sultan Selim's aggressive reaction and this resulted in the battle of Chaldiran in 1514. True, the battle ended in favour of the Ottomans, it left long-lasting negative legacy for both the Safavids and the Ottomans themselves. While the battle seriously contained the Safavid revolutionary zeal, it also gave birth to permanent enmity between the Safavids and the Ottomans. This in turn, engaged the Ottomans permanently with the Safavids which actually absorbed the Ottoman power and as a result, the Ottomans failed to extend their sphere of influence in the Mediterranean and in the European front.

Notes and References

- 1 The basis of the Safavid dynasty and state was the Safaviyya religious order, a Sunni order based in Ardabil, northwestern Iran, which was named after the order's founder, Sheikh Safi al-Din Ishaq (1253–1334). John McHugo, *A Concise History of Sunni and Sh'is*, Saqi Books, Great Britain, 2017, p. 137; Gabor Agoston and Bruce Masters, *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman empire*, Facts On File, Inc., New York, USA, 2009, p. 284.
- 2 Sh'ism is the major sectarian division standing outside the "orthodox" Sunni majority in Islam. Derived from the word "party," the first Sh'i promoted the candidacy of Ali ibn Abu Talib (R.), the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad (sm) as his rightful successor (caliph). After the death of Ali (R.) 661, the Sh'i formed a religious community with the development of distinct sources of authority and law. The Imami or "Twelver" rite of Shi'i Islam—the largest and most tolerant subdivision within that religion, whose followers believe that the 12th imam (Muhammad al-Mahdi) who went into occultation in the ninth century will return in future.
- 3 The Qizilbash were formed out of several Turkish Shi'i groups that were living in northwest Persia (Azerbaijan) in the fifteenth century. They were: Ustajlu, Shamlu, Takalu, Rumlu, Baharlu, Zulkadar, Qajar and Afshar. They bore the titles of Beg, Khan and Sultan. They were called the 'men of sword' in Persia while the Ottomans sarcastically called them Qizilbash or red-heads.
- 4 Sunni is the member of one of the two major branches of Islam and the Sunni Muslims regard their denomination as the mainstream and traditionalist branch of Islam—as distinguished from the minority denomination, the Shia. The name 'Sunni' comes from the word sunnah, referring to the behaviour of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. The differences between Sunni and Shi'i Muslims arose from a disagreement over the succession to Muhammad and subsequently acquired broader political significance, as well as theological and juridical dimensions. The Sunnis recognize the first four caliphs or Khalifas as the Prophet Muhammad's (SM) rightful successors, whereas the Shi'i believe that Muslim leadership belonged to Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali (R.) and his descendants alone.
- 5 .Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1980, p. 16.
- 6 Kaveh Farrokh, *Iran at War: 1500-1988*, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, New York, 2011, p. 21.
- 7 Eastern Anatolia was home of large number of pro-Safavid Qizilbashes, some of whom migrated to Persia and helped Shah Ismail to seize power in 1501. Later years only witnessed their growing influx into Persia.
- 8 Eskandar Beg Monshi, *History of Shah Abbas the Great*, vol. I (tr. by Roger M. Savory), Westview Press, USA, 1930, p. 67.
9. Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500–1700*, UCL Press Limited, 1999, UK, p. xvii.
- 10 Yahya Armajani, *Middle East Past and Present*, Prentice Hall, Inc, New Jersey, USA, 1970, p.163.
- 11 THE LETTERS OF OTTOMAN SULTAN SELIM I AND SAFAVID SHAH ISMAILI,<http://www1.udel.edu/History-old/figal/Hist104/assets/pdf/readings/02selimismail.pdf>

- 12 Kaveh Farrokh, *op., cit.*, p. 21.
- 13 Sir Percy Sykes, *A History of Persia*, Vol. II, Macmillan and co., Limited, London, 1921, p. 162.
- 14 Turcoman and Turkman, is a term that was widely used during the Middle Ages for the people of Oghuz Turkic origin. Oghuz Turks were a western Turkic people that, in the 8th century A.D, formed a tribal confederation in an area between the Aral and Caspian seas in Central Asia.
- 15 Adel Allouche, *The Origins and Development of the Ottoman-Safavid Conflit (906-962/1500-1555)*, Klaus Schwarz Verlag, Berlin, 1983, p. 65.
- 16 Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 6, Cambridge University Press, London, 1993, pp. 218-219.
- 17 Roger Savory, *op., cit.*, p. 39.
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- 28 Joseph Von Hammer, *Campaigns of Osman Sultans Chieftly in Western Asia: From Bayezyd Ildrim to the Death of Murad the Fourth (1389-1640)*, translated from the German by Thomas Aquila Dale, Vol. I, London, 1835, p. 115.
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- 30 Adel Allouche, pp. 96-97; Kaveh Farrokh, *op., cit.*, p. 22.
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- 34 In the battle Timur defeated the Ottoman Sultan Bayzid I and after capturing and caging him he was displayed for public.
- 35 .Kaveh Farrokh, *op., cit.*, p. 21.
- 36 *Op., cit.*, p. 22; Ghulam Sarwar, *op., cit.*, p. 73.
- 37 Roger Savory, *op., cit.*, p. 40.

- 38 Adel Allouche, *op. cit.*, pp. 98, 106-107.
- 39 *Op. cit.*, pp. 109-110.
- 40 Eskandar Beg Monshi, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
- 41 Ghulam Sarwar, *op. cit.*, p. 74; Roger Savory, *op. cit.*, p. 40; Adel Allouche, *op. cit.*, p. 112.
- 42 Adel Allouche, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-112.
- 43 Sir John Malcolm, *The History of Persia, from the Most Early Period to the Present Time*, Vol. I, London, 1829, p. 327.
- 44 Joseph Von Hammer, *op. cit.*, p. 134.
- 45 Ghulam Sarwar, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75; Adel Allouche, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
- 46 Reportedly, in his answer, Ubaydullah Khan expressed his readiness to join in an attack on the Safavid state; however, due to internal problem, he could not join Sultan Selim to attack the Safavid.
- 47 Adel Allouche, *op. cit.*, p. 115; Joseph Von Hammer, *op. cit.*, p. 129.
- 48 Joseph Von Hammer, *op. cit.*, p. 134.
- 49 Adel Allouche, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
- 50 Kaveh Farrokh, *op. cit.*, p. 22; see also: Ghulam Sarwar, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88; Adel Allouche, *op. cit.*, p. 113. The commercial blockade went into effect at the beginning of the summer of 1514 and lasted through Sultan Selim's reign.
- 51 Joseph Von Hammer, *op. cit.*, p. 130; Adel, p. 118; Ghulam Sarwar, *op. cit.*, p. 76. The figures for the size of the armies of the warring parties in the battle of Chaldiran differ widely. According to the Ottoman eye-witness historian Hakimuddin Idris Bitlisi, the numbers of the forces of two belligerents were: 40,000 Safavid army and 100,000 Ottoman army. However, according to Persian sources, the disparity of the number was even greater: 12,000 or 20,000 Safavids against 120,000 or even 212,000 Ottomans. (Ghulam Sarwar, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79). Roger Savory (pp. 40-41) and Adel Allouche (p. 119) have supported these figures. Apart from these figures, Markham has recorded the number of Ottoman troops was 200,000, and the Safavid was only 30,000. (p. 270). Percy Sykes has mentioned the Ottoman force constituted 120,000 and the Safavid force consisted of 60,000. (pp. 162-163). Abbas Amanat records that the number of Ottoman force was 160,000 while the Safavid was only 20,000.
- 52 Joseph Von Hammer, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-128.
- 53 Ghulam Sarwar, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-76; Adel Allouche, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-117.
- 54 Kaveh Farrokh, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
- 55 Adel Allouche, *op. cit.*, p. 117; Joseph Von Hammer, *op. cit.*, p. 132; Ghulam Sarwar, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
- 56 Adel Allouche, *op. cit.*, p. 118; Abbas Amanat, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.
- 57 Joseph Von Hammer, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
- 58 *Op. cit.*, p. 134.
- 59 Adel Allouche, *op. cit.*, p. 118.
- 60 Joseph Von Hammer, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

- 61 Ghulam Sarwar, *op., cit.*, p. 80.
- 62 Percy Sykes, *op., cit.*, p. 162.
- 63 Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol., 6, *op., cit.*, p. 225.
- 64 Those who had been killed at Chaldiran included: Muhammad Khan Ustajlu, Nizamuddin Abdul Baqi, Syed Sharifuddin Ali, Syed Muhammad Kamuna, Saru Pira Ustajlu, Husain Beg Lala Shamlu, Khulfa Beg, Yusuf Beg Warsaq, Pira Beg, Sultan Ali Mirza Afshar and a number of provincial governors. Shah Ismail himself was wounded in the arm and foot and his horse fell under him and he barely escaped captivity.
- 65 Ghulam Sarwar, *op., cit.*, pp. 80-82; Roger Savory, *op., cit.*, p. 42.
- 66 They later established in Istanbul a Persian community of artists who would have a lasting influence on Ottoman fine arts. Abbas Amanat, *op., cit.*, pp. 72-73.
- 67 Vural Genc, 'From Tabriz to Istanbul: Goods and Treasures of Shah Isma'il looted after the Battle of Chaldiran', PhD University of Istanbul, *Studia Iranica*, Vol. 44, 2015, p. 228.
- 68 Roger Savory, *op., cit.*, p. 45.
- 69 Adel Allouche, *op., cit.*, p. 122.
- 70 Abbas Amanat, *op., cit.*, p. 74.
- 71 The Safavid had to wait until the reign of Shah Abbas the Great to regain the lost reputation and restart their offensive war strategy.
- 72 Abbas Amanat, *op., cit.*, pp. 74-75.
- 73 John McHugo, *op., cit.*, p. 139.
- 74 Abbas Amanat, *op., cit.*, p. 73.
- 75 Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol., 6, *op., cit.*, p. 224.
- 76 Abbas Amanat, *op., cit.*, p. 72.
- 77 Joseph Von Hammer, *op., cit.*, p. 148; Adel Allouche, *op., cit.*, p. 120-121.
- 78 Sir John Malcolm, *op., cit.*, p. 327; Sir Clements Robert Markham, *A General Sketch of the History of Persia*, Longmans, Green, and Co., London, 1874, p. 271.
- 79 Ghulam Sarwar, *op., cit.*, p. 83.
- 80 On, May 29, 1555, following another conflict, Shah Tahmasp of Iran signed the first official peace agreement with the Ottoman Sultan Suleyman in Amasya.
- 81 Gabor Agoston and Bruce Masters, *op., cit.*, p. 284.
- 82 Ghulam Sarwar, *op., cit.*, p. 86.
- 83 He abandoned Shah Ismail's service and went to Astarabad to join the Turkomans. He was supported by a Turkoman leader named Qazi Khan and they moved against Pir Ghayb Khan, the governor of Astarabad, who finally left the province for Dāmghān in face of joined forces of Muhammad Zaman Mirza and Qazi Khan.

GENDER AND SUBALTERNITY IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

Dr. Golam Gaus Al-Quaderi*

“Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.” — Arundhati Roy

1.1 Love, Loss, and Longing in *The God of Small Things*

At the core of *The God of Small Things* there is a deep-rooted sense of love, loss, and longing in various characters. In a blog for Culturetrip, Shikhar reminds us of Roy's reaction to the whistleblowers such as Edward Snowden and Danielle Ellsberg who have no place left to go. Roy writes, “Daniel Ellsberg's tears made me think about love, about loss, about dreams and, most of all, about failure” (qtd. in “Reading Arundhati Roy: Beyond Lyricism & Controversies”). Shikhar convincingly argues that the same phrase can be used to understand the emotional bedrock of Roy's novel. He adds:

The book unravels like a personal tragedy, with a sense of impending doom throughout. It involves 8-year-old twins innocently grappling with losses they can't even understand, carrying their pain for 23 long years as they slowly come to terms with it; it involves a love affair between a low-caste “Paravan” and a high-caste divorced mother of two that ends tragically; at its kernel, it constitutes of a love mangled in the labyrinth of caste system, “familial values,” hypocritical societal mores, communism and political ambition. (“Reading Arundhati Roy: Beyond Lyricism & Controversies”)

While the Ammu-Velutha affair is an enactment of thinking the unthinkable, the novel unfolds the way the twins are trying to make sense of their surroundings, Threatened by the twin dangers of the rise of Communism and the residual effects of the caste system officially annulled in 1950. Repeatedly, the twins try to escape into the History House, which was once inhabited by an Englishman who went native, Kari Saipu. Their uncle Chacko told them about this house, “to understand history ... we have to go inside and listen to what they're saying. And look at the books

* Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka

and the pictures on the wall. And smell the smells” (*TGST* 51). And later, “we can’t go in ... because we’ve been locked out. And when we look in through the windows, all we see are shadows. And when we try and listen, all we hear is a whispering” (*TGST* 52). Even as children, the twins realized that they have been locked out of the symbolic History House. They can see through the windows to get certain glimpses of shadowy truth or certain sound-bytes of the narrative, but never the whole truth. They are the outsiders. The story of Ammu and Velutha’s tryst are set by this shadowy history. They too are locked out. Roy’s feminist project for me involves finding a room of their own, finding a story of their own. Such a story is informed by a desire that is born out of loss and the love it gains.

This explains why *The God of Small Things*, despite its stylistically difficult features, remains so popular in so many languages. Mullaney estimated in 2002 that the novel had been sold in over six million copies in forty different languages (77). Roy’s sincere portrayal of love, loss, and longing experienced by almost all the characters strike a raw nerve in her readers. These emotions are relatable across cultures. Roy is at her best in both coding and decoding human emotions, in revealing and hiding passions. Her lyrical language, use of literary tropes and poetic metaphors give us rare insights into the mindscape of her characters, and how they respond to their landscape.

The gender role of the characters in the novel is defined through interactions tinged with trauma, memory, abject, subordination, (m)othering, sexism (hostile, benevolent, and internalized) within patriarchy, victim blaming, and the male gaze. The feminist overtones in the novel are obvious, yet, in my opinion, it is difficult to reduce Roy to simply a feminist as her artistic project is more overarching than that. As I have been arguing, Roy’s first novel is definitive in the sense that it includes the activism available in her non-fictional works. For Roy, gender is one of the exclusionary grids. Having said that, it is also important to notice the alternative future that she considers, as is evident in the epigram: the god she ultimately aspires to have is female. I shall discuss the issues of her feminism in the Indian context towards the end of this article. Given her environmental concerns, recent scholarship on eco-criticism has also been applied to understand her gender construct. I shall begin with a general commentary on Roy’s characterization of female characters before moving on to the central character Ammu, and her relationships with her lover and children, to understand the role of gender in *The God of Small Things*. For

the purpose of this article, it is important to reflect on the representation of women, gender relations, and the embedded sexual differences.

The depiction of the characters in the novel is intricate and realistic, but the readers feel that none of the relationships is simple. The relationships are subjected to a three-way-pull between familial love, social responsibilities, and personal dislike. This is true about the Ipe family. The most negative character of the family, Baby Kochamma, becomes treacherous to her family because of her desire for social approval and her dislikes. Outside the Ipe family, VellyaPaapen, prefers social approval over fatherly /familial love and offers to kill his own son, the Untouchable, Velutha, for sleeping with Ammu. This tension between familial love and social responsibilities is the cause for most of the conflicts in the novel.

Roy, as has been stated earlier, is an activist-writer and there is no visible tension between her two selves. She portrays in *The God of Small Things*, among other things, the opposite pulls towards society and family, and the tension created by it. Gender role in a patriarchal society is one source of tension. The women of the Ipe family are impacted upon by societal laws, customs, and values. While Ammu and Rahel try to resist the inherent sexism and othering, arguably representing the position of Arundhati Roy, other characters such as Mammachi and Baby Kochamma comply with patriarchy's sexism. The conflict between familial bond and social duties is one that can also be categorized as a conflict with patriarchy and other regressive forces, as it is one of the oldest power-structures in human society.

1.2 A Room of their Own

Ammu's story is tragic. Hers is a story of being imprisoned in a patriarchal society with an effort to find freedom and dignity. Death ultimately mutes her, but Roy allows death as a speech-act¹. Her death speaks for her gender; she is the subaltern who speaks. She is the one who reminds us that another world is possible where a Syrian Upper Caste Touchable can fall in love with a Paravan Untouchable. Her gender role is defined through her interactions not only with male characters but also with the female characters such as her mother and aunt.

Ammu's family is well-off enough to send Chacko to Oxford. Ammu was sent to Delhi. But her father Pappachi does not see any value in her education: "Pappachi insisted that a college education was an unnecessary

expense for a girl, so Ammu had no choice but to leave Delhi with them” (39). Her Rhodes Scholar brother Chacko returns from the UK without a degree. Instead of being reprimanded for his failure, he is pampered by his parents. Meanwhile Ammu is left to her own resources to find herself a husband as the family was unwilling to pay the dowry needed for an educated woman. She moves to a tea garden in Assam with her Hindu husband whom she marries because “She thought that anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem” (*TGST* 39). Her choice of a Hindu man, someone who does not belong to her religious caste, turns out to be wrong. She soon realizes that her husband’s father is a fraud while her

“Speech Act theory was first introduced by J.L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words* and further developed by American philosopher J.R. Searle. ... Since 1970 speech act theory has influenced ... the practice of literary criticism. When applied to the analysis of direct discourse by a character within a literary work, it provides a systematic ... framework for identifying the unspoken presuppositions, implications, and effects of speech acts [that] competent readers and critics have always taken into account, subtly though unsystematically” (“Speech Act Theory”)

husband is both abusive and a drunkard. She shows her defiance by divorcing her husband who wanted to pimp his wife to his employer Mr. Hollick in order to save his job at the tea garden. And so, Ammu returns to her family as a divorced woman.

The treatment she receives from her family is symptomatic of sexism that persists in the Keralite society that Roy depicts. Interestingly, the men in the family, despite their western education and overseas exposure, have little sympathy for women’s rights. When posted in Austria, Pappachi, the entomologist, comes to know from his wife’s violin teacher that his wife was “potentially concert class” (*TGST* 50). Pappachi becomes jealous and immediately terminates her music lessons. He starts torturing his wife every night to ventilate his own frustrations, which include not being able to patent a moth that he has discovered. The other reason is, as Roy tells us, “Pappachi, for his part, was having trouble coping with the ignominy of retirement. He was seventeen years older than Mammachi and realized with a shock that he was an old man when his wife was still in her prime” (*TGST* 47). Perhaps Ammu’s exposure to such a toxic relationship damaged her faith in men of her own community.

After returning from Oxford, Chacko stopped his father from

abusing his mother. He once twisted his father's hand when he was about to beat his mother: "'I never want this to happen again,' he told his father. 'Ever'" (*TGST* 48). Pappachi's role as the alpha male in the family was compromised, and the frustrated figure of male chauvinism stopped communicating with Soshamma, known to Rahel and Estha as Mammachi, for the rest of his life. Chacko's protectionism may appear like benevolent sexism as he is privileging his mother over his father, however, his treatment of his sister as well as his flirtatious behavior with the female factory workers will prove otherwise. His libido is justified as "Man's needs" (*TGST* 168), suggesting the inherent patriarchy in society.

Chacko's support for his mother turns out to be the turning point for the Ayemenem House as after this the family is run by the matriarch Mammachi. Mammachi's privileges come through the silencing of her husband who was 17 years older than her. Her power position is established through her founding and running of the pickles factory. Mammachi produces an unlawful banana jam in her factory; it is unlawful because the condiment occupied a liminal space between jam and jelly and the food control authority remains confused about its identity. Similarly, Mammachi's supposed power position is both confusing and utopian, as is suggested by the name of the factory, Paradise Pickles.

Women are allowed to have symbolic emancipation in their own paradise, but not in real life as Ammu will realize the hard way. The factory becomes Mammachi's room of her own, a place to preserve her memory of her musical days; the place to forget the trauma of her abusive husband. The pickles, figuratively, suggest both the spices and the preservation that she lacked in her marital life. The paradoxical state of this paradise is further elaborated by Roy:

They used to make pickles, squashes, jams, curry powders and canned pineapples. And banana jam (illegally) after the FPO (Food Products Organization) banned it because according to their specifications it was neither jam nor jelly. Too thin for jelly and too thick for jam. An ambiguous, unclassifiable consistency, they said ... Looking back now, to Rahel it seemed as though this difficulty that their family had with classification ran much deeper than the jam-jelly question ... They all broke the rules. They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much. The laws that make grandmothers, uncles uncles, mothersmothers, cousins cousins, jam

jam, and jelly. (*TGST* 30-31)

The factory symbolically stands for a site that produces all those relationships. It is the site that gave them relational identity. I use this long quote to suggest how Roy illustrates gender construct. In non-fiction, one can see facts and details. Only in the imaginary landscape of fiction, facts can be felt. *The God of Small Things* is making relationships because there is love and unmaking them because there are laws. Laws without love will always be an antagonistic force. Mammachi excels in her business because she breaks rules out of her love for the place. In her treatment of her daughter she adheres to old laws without showing any love. Hence, the mother-daughter relationship disintegrates.

After the death of her husband, Mammachi strengthens her role as the matriarch of the house. She, however, remains tied to the patriarchal norms of ethnic and religious prejudices against the Hindus as well as against divorcees. She blames Ammu for divorcing her Hindu husband. As a mother, she shows no sympathy for the plight of her daughter. Despite being a modern entrepreneur, her cultural allegiance to the ancient Love Laws found in the *Manu Smriti* goes on to show how women themselves can be barriers in changing patriarchy. The women harbor and execute the male prejudices against divorcees. This is spelt out by Baby Kochamma:

A married daughter had no position in her parents' home. As for a divorced daughter – according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage. As for a divorced daughter from an intercommunity love marriage – Baby Kochamma chose to remain quaveringly silent on the subject. (*TGST* 45-46)

Roy's use of oxymoron is suggestive of the tension: quavering silence. Silence here is a strategy for Baby Kochamma. But the underlying implication is that it is a taboo that should not be discussed. The silencing comes from the age-old practice of the Love Laws, which holds lovemarrriage to be wrong. A daughter who has been involved in love marriage and consequently divorced is considered an outcast. Being doubly guilty of being involved in an inter-community love marriage, Ammu's role in the family is reduced to nothing. Two factual points need mentioning. First, when Ammu invited her parents to her wedding, they did not attend or intervene. Secondly, Ammu's courage to walk away from an abusive marriage is overlooked by her family. These are small things

compared to the big thing of Love Laws in the novel. Love Laws is big enough to encapsulate questions of caste, class, religion, and gender, and contains the power to trample small things such as love or sentiment.

Once Mammachi takes over control of the house, she shows her clear favors for Chacko over Ammu, partly because her son has earlier “saved” her from the torture of Pappachi, and mainly because the son has more privileges in a patriarchal society. The mother’s apathy towards her daughter generates a sense of hostility towards Ammu and her twins. Chacko calls the twins a burden on his shoulder. Even Baby Kochamma, despite being a distant relative and a dependent lodger, dislikes them and considers them intruders. Miss Mitten, their tutor, believes that the twins could change their fate by mastering English language, but they revolted by repeating her words backwards.

Ammu knows how unwanted she is in her own house. She does not have what Virginia Woolf called a room of her own. She is allowed to stay on sufferance. As Roy describes, “Forherself she knew that there would be no more chances. Only Ayemenem. A front verandah and a back verandah. A hot river and pickle factory. And in the background of constant, high, whining mewl of local disapproval” (*TGST* 43). According to Hindu inheritance laws in India, which are the State laws, she has no claim to the assets. Roy allows her activist self to seep into the fiction to remind us, “Legally, this was the case because Ammu, as a daughter, had no claim to the property” (*TGST* 57). Ammu can resort to sarcasm, “Thanks to our wonderful male chauvinist society” (57), while Chacko can coldly and unashamedly confirm, “What’s yours is mine and what’s mine is also mine” (57).

As a mother, it is difficult for Ammu to see how her children are treated. The house becomes her own prison where her childhood trauma of being bullied becomes her constant companion. Once Ammu sees her childhood friend Velutha, she relapses to an earlier time to escape her present ordeal. The untouchable Velutha becomes the illusory retreat.

Ammu and Velutha were childhood friends with Velutha being three years younger than her. Even as a child Velutha was artistic. He used to make little wooden toys for Ammu. However, as an Untouchable, he was not supposed to touch the upper-caste Syrian girl. Hence, he would put the toys in her outstretched palm without touching her. Ammu became fond of him and eventually stopped reaching out her palm to accept the toys, allowing Velutha to touch her. Even as a child, Ammu ignored the social

taboos to enjoy the small things of life. What stands in the way of touching the untouchable is a set of rules that goes back hundreds of years, the Love Laws. Roy points out the oxymoron in these ancient set of rules prescribed in Vedic scriptures that decides, “who should be loved, and how. And how much” (*TGST* 33).

Velutha first appeared in the text when the family was on its way to the Cinema. He was parading with his comrades, donning a red flag. He had returned to Ayemenem to work in Mammachi’s pickle factory as a carpenter. The physical change in Velutha is remarkable. The omniscient narrator reveals how Ammu’s appreciation of his physique involves longings of a sexual nature:

She saw the ridges of muscle on Velutha’s stomach grow taut and rise under his skin like the divisions on a slab of chocolate. She wondered at how his body had changed – so quietly, from a flat-muscled boy’s body into a man’s body. Contoured and hard. A swimmer’s body. A swimmer-carpenter’s body. Polished with a high-wax body polish. He had high cheekbones and a white, sudden smile. (*TGST* 80-81)

Ammu’s attraction for Velutha is driven by her bodily needs, her libido. While Mammachi approves Chacko’s “Men’s Needs,” she has no concern for her daughter’s “woman’s needs.” When the affair becomes public, Mammachi is disgusted by her daughter’s behavior. She describes the act thus: “Like a dog with a bitch on heat” (*TGST* 257-258), and “locked away [Ammu] like the family lunatic in a medieval household” (*TGST* 252). Ammu thus becomes the madwoman in the attic, whose madness is related to the hysteria, the wandering uterus. Luce Irigaray, in her *Speculum of the Other Woman*, has shown how historically patriarchy uses biology to justify women’s destiny, starting with Plato who explained hysteria as a womanly disease that originated from lust.

However, the language used by Roy to speak-act Ammu’s desire can be construed as a deconstruction of phallogocentric patriarchy. Helene Cixous, for one, has taught us that with the use of language one can break the shackles of binaries that patriarchy imposed on the second sex: active/passive, high/low, parole/ecriture, and so on. Cixous demands a new kind of language for female writers to express their femininity. Language should not privilege linear rational argument or logocentrism and initiate a new kind of writing ,ecriture feminine or feminine writing.

Roy's explicit sexuality has been dubbed as obscene. The male readership is not used to seeing such candid articulation of sexuality. But once we look at the way Mammachi, empowered with patriarchal agency, revolts against sexual thoughts, we realize that Roy is using her language strategically. Her choice of diction is deliberate, as Ammu reminds Rahel that careless words "make people love you a little less" (*TGST* 112). I shall come to her view on feminism towards the end of this article..

In fact, Mammachi's thought of Ammu having a sexual act with Velutha provides an interesting contrast of how sexuality is viewed. She expresses her abject, as Julia Kristeva would express it, by mentioning that the thought was so repulsive that she would vomit. But a close analysis of the graphic nature of her thought reveals a suppressed sexuality that she never had in her marriage. Mammachi visualizes:

She thought of her naked, coupling in the mud with a man who was nothing but a filthy coolie. She imagined it in vivid detail: a Paravan's coarse black hand on her daughter's breast. His mouth on hers. His black hips jerking between her parted legs. The sound of their breathing. His particular Paravan smell. Like animals, Mammachi thought and nearly vomited. (*TGST* 257).

It was Mammachi who appointed the handyman Velutha to fix the machines in her pickles factory. The other touchable workers were however, not willing to share the workplace with an untouchable. Mammachi's sexually charged description is limited by her sense of righteousness depicted in the ancient scriptures. Love Laws is the Althusserian Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) that endorses patriarchal views in Indian Society, whereas, the second generation Ammu has the courage to transgress Love Laws and act on her impulses to think the unthinkable. The repressive state apparatus of society including the Police reacts to the scandal by making sure that Velutha receives the severest punishment for this act of transgression. Velutha was, the first one to be, arrested for the disappearance of Sophie Mol.

Mammachi lodges a complaint against Velutha for the kidnapping and raping of Ammu. But the instigation came from Baby Kochamma who hated Velutha for being a Naxalite,

who made her wave a red flag in a rally. Once again, we come to a position where women themselves are barring another woman from

responding to her biological urges. Ammu tries to offer an alibi as at the time of Sophie Mol's death she was with him. But she is called a "veshya" (prostitute) by the police. After Sophie Mol's body is found and cremated, Ammu is called back to the police station for further enquiry and abused by the officer: "He said the police ... didn't take statements from *veshyas* or their illegitimate children" (*TGST* 8). Baby Kochamma forces Estha to offer a different story supporting Mammachi's original complaint. Velutha is brutally killed in police custody. In this manner, Baby Kochamma thus becomes the instrument that ends Velutha's life.

Ammu remained defiant and unapologetic of her relationship with Velutha. Her tragic end once again reminds readers of the space denied to women in society. Chacko expels her from the house, leading to her slow death:

Ammu died in a grimy room in the Bharat Lodge in Alleppey, where she had gone for a job interview as someone's secretary. She died alone. With a noisy ceiling fan for company and no Estha to lie at the back of her and talk to her. She was thirty-one. Not old, not young, but a viable, die-able age. (*TGST* 161)

Ammu does not even get the proper ritual that she deserved as an upper-caste Christian. Instead, Chacko covers her body in a pale bed-sheet, puts her on a stretcher, and takes her to an electric crematorium for the final rites. Ammu did not have the Church space she had while attending Sophie Mol's funeral. Even at that time she was not allowed to stand with the rest.

By giving agency to Mammachi and Baby Kochamma, Roy does not necessarily present them as empowered women. They are also subjected to patriarchal norms. They are puppets in a society where they can only promote its inherent sexism and biases. Ammu and Velutha die because of the hidden patriarchal structure of society. They are the victims of a hypocritical society that has its double standards. We are told how Pappachi, the Imperial Entomologist, was admired in society for his donations to orphanages and leprosy clinics. But the same man, "alone with his wife and children [would] [turn] into a monstrous bully, with a streak of vicious cunning. They were beaten, humiliated and then made to suffer" (*TGST* 180). We are told how Chacko can maintain illicit affairs with factory women out of his "Man's Needs." "Neither Mammachi nor Baby Kochamma saw any contradiction between Chacko's Marxist mind and feudal libido," but the same duo denies his sister Ammu such freedom (*TGST* 168).

1.3 Body Politics

It is men's perverted need that is responsible for much of the chaos in *The God of Small Things*. The plot of Roy's novel can be explained through chaos theory, the proverbial butterfly on the wheel, where the slightest denomination can change the motion of an object leading to total chaos. The molestation of Estha is one such incident. When the Ipe family went to watch a movie before picking up Sophie Mol, Estha was attracted by the juice being sold by the OrangedrinkLemondrink Man. The man was a pedophile who forced Estha to masturbate him, and later hands an ice-cream to him saying that he knows where the child lives. Estha is traumatized and wants to escape his fear by crossing the river to go to another house far away from the clutch of the pervert. The boat capsizes, killing Sophie Mol and exposing the Velutha-Ammu affair. Thus, the apparently simple act has a lasting impact on the tragic outcome of the novel. The OrangedrinkLemondrink Man can also be a candidate for the god of small things. His molestation of the body is an act of terror that not only violates social norms but also damages an individual for good.

Seen from another perspective, this molestation shows how, in a patriarchal, modern capitalist society, children, even male children, are vulnerable. Secondly, a patriarchal capitalist state treats its women and children as components and elements of a system and the state itself is a sort of mechanical-contractual organization which does not have a human face. Thirdly, in such a capitalist state and society, sexuality is regulated so that it does not lead to any challenge to it and this means that this kind of a state and society is basically repressive which contributes to incidents of women and child molestation. Roy seems to be indicating that the existing type of gendered state and society needs to be replaced to minimize if not eliminate the kind of abuse that Estha had to suffer.

The Ammu-Velutha union is another butterfly on a wheel moment that is responsible for the chaotic world of Roy's novel. The action that takes place between individual bodies affect the entire community. Unable to accept the touchable/untouchable relationship, the patriarchal machinery uses the political system to bring accusations of rape and kidnapping against Velutha. Putting the affair and the union at the center of *The God of Small Things*, Roy and many of the critics in their readings of the novel have not just catered to the desire for sensationalism. They have perhaps pointed at two of the oldest types of crime, larceny and rape. They are connected with two kinds of

possessions – material possessions and the female body. Perhaps, from very early on, wealth and the female body have been thought of as sites for conquest and possession. Velutha, as a low-caste, has no right over the body of an upper caste woman. Baby Kochamma and Mammachi want Velutha to be punished for his desire to occupy Ammu's body. As a communist, private ownership is not Velutha's objective. As a proper proletariat, Velutha does not believe in the concept of private property, and that also contributes to the non-exploitative, non-coercive union between Ammu and Velutha. Subverting this truth, their enemies accuse Velutha of kidnapping and attempted rape. On the other hand, when Ammu goes to the police station, the policemen there call her a veshya, a prostitute. Ironically, Ammu walks out of her marriage because her husband wanted to prostitute her to a white man. The conflict between the powerful and the powerless that Arundhati Roy talks about has this gendered aspect.

The violation of the female body is symbolically used to represent the violation of the social body. It becomes obvious when Roy connects the assault on Ammu and her children by her Bengali-Hindu husband with the Liberation War of Bangladesh when millions of innocent women and children had to escape from their home, to seek shelter at the advent of violence: "When his bouts of violence began to include the children, and the war with Pakistan began, Ammu left her husband and returned, unwelcome, to her parents in Ayemenem" (*TGST* 42).

Sometimes the body can be colonized with thoughts. Baby Kochamma is a case in point. The odd spinster early on in her life falls in love with a Roman Catholic priest, Father Mulligan. She converts to Roman Catholicism to be close to him. Once Father Mulligan is transferred, her father sends her to America to do a diploma in Ornamental Gardening. She returns to India after the death of her father and starts living with Mammachi. Baby Kochamma gradually becomes fixated on watching wars on TV. Her cruelty can be attributed to her unrequited love and longing. The inherent violence that she carried inside is morphed into cynicism with which she acts against Velutha.

1.4 The Muted Subaltern

After the loss of their mother, the twins learn to live their adolescent lives on their own. There is no parental guidance to support them through the rites of passage to adulthood. They just had the memory of a maternal space, a promise that they made to their mother that they would always love each other which in a way influences their metamorphoses.

The transfiguration of the body is an important theme in *The God of Small Things*. We have already seen how Velutha and Ammu defy their gender roles. Ammu's revolt within a patriarchy can be construed as masculine, while Velutha's strong masculine physique is complemented by his softer feminine side. He is quite natural with children. He has been Ammu's playmate as a child, and later as an adult, he acts as a playmate of the twins. The twins see him as an equal in the way he associates with the world of toys and imagination. The role reversal is true for Mammachi who assumed a patriarchal role while managing the factory. Rahel and Ammu show their independence in choosing their partners, and both of them initiate the sexual act. Ammu approaches Velutha: "A luminous woman opened herself to a luminous man He sailed on her waters" (TGST 336-37). Rahel approaches Estha, which is described by Roy thus: "They were strangers who had met in a chance encounter ... There is very little that anyone could say to clarify what happened next" (TGST 327-28).

Joëlle Célérier-Vitasse makes a list of textual instances in which Rahel wants to reject her female identity. She wanted to do so when her teachers "whispered to each other [it was] *as though she didn't know how to be a girl*" (TGST 17). In addition, Célérier-Vitasse adds, "in the *Abhilash Talkies* ... she identifies herself with the film actor in *The Sound of Music* whereas Estha compares himself with Julie Andrews ... later on, she starts looking like Estha when their great-aunt 'noticed the same eerie stealth, the ability to keep very still and very quiet that Estha seemed to have mastered'" ("The Blurring of Frontiers").

Comparing Roy's style with Kathakkali dance-drama, Célérier-Vitasse notices the blurring of gender borders in Estha too. He terms Estha as an effeminate man:

Estha, the wardrobe-master, "the draping expert," excels in the art of disguise: they "looked like three raccoons to pass off as Hindu ladies" (189); he has got "a nun's voice, as clear as clean water" (101), "a clear soprano" (197), and he does not jib at doing the housework at his father's: "He did the sweeping, swabbing and all the laundry. He learned to cook and shop for vegetables" (11), refusing masculine privileges. ("The Blurring of Frontiers")

Rahel and Estha, the twins, are also victimized by the big figures in *The God of Small Things*. They are marginalized in their grandmother's house by Mammachi; her son, Chacko; the maid servant Kochu Maria; and

all other members of the house. When Margaret and Sophie Mol come to visit them, people in the house show special favor to the half-white child: “There would be two flasks of water. Boiled water for Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol, tap water for everybody else” (*TGST* 48). The divorced Margaret would still be called Kochamma, as if she was still the daughter-in-law of the house. As a white woman, her status seems to be different from the other divorcee in the house – Ammu. Estha gets molested by the OrangedrinkLemondrink Man at the movie theatre. Instinctively, the child knows that no one will protect him, and his condition is no better than his neglected mother. The trauma of being molested, followed by the threat from the pedophile perpetrator, causes Estha to behave strangely.

Only Rahel, deeply attached to him, understands the wounds that he carries. The twins reunite twenty three years later, after the death of Ammu and after Estha is returned by his father before migrating to Australia. The patriarchy in Keralite society does not provide shelter to Estha, while the matriarchy at Ayemenem House ignores him. Rahel frees herself of the encumbrance of a husband in America and returns to take care of Estha in Ayemenem House. This union does not mean a family union only, rather it speaks of the muted subalternity. The incestuous union is a protest against the Love Laws that killed Ammu and Velutha.

The affair between Ammu and Velutha lasted for about two weeks, a lunar cycle, before being found out by Vellya who saw his son standing “skin to skin” with Ammu in the moonlight (*TGST* 255). He shares this with Mammachi out of fear. His initial tears turned to terror as he became scared of the outcome of such a transgression. But the lovers had no concern for their future. They knew that there was no future for them, as the narrator tells us: “Even later, on the thirteen nights that followed this one, instinctively they stuck to the Small Things. The Big Things ever lurked inside. They knew that there was nowhere for them to go. They had nothing. No future. So they stuck to the small things” (*TGST* 338).

It is no coincidence that all four subalterns in the novel reverse their gender roles to challenge the male authority, the big things that rule society in the name of the father. Ammu, Velutha, Rahel, and Estha are the small objects, the Lacanian *objet petit a*, to challenge the big things. The stories of Ammu, the twins, and Velutha are the stories that occupy an ideal space. Their togetherness, the time they spent together, is devoid of domination and repression. The four members of this family are

playmates of each other. The relation between Ammu, the sympathizer with all kinds of subalterns, and Velutha, the “God of Small Things,” is non-hierarchical. Ammu and Velutha challenge the powerful through their liaison and forming this family of the excluded and the marginalized, and thus try to resist the domineering ones. Rahel and Estha challenge and resist the powers that be through their incestuous union and creating their own micro-family, against the taboo of incest, enshrined in the Love Laws.

These two generations of forbidden lovers speak up against their subordination through their action. That for me is the basis of Roy's feminism. She envisions a society that is gender-sensitive. However, the plurality of repressive structures requires a multifaceted liberationist system, one that will physically unite not only the touchable Ammu and untouchable Velutha, but also the twins and their emotional needs. Roy's overwhelming concern for the caste system cannot be described under the Eurocentric feminism. For this perhaps. We need to look at a type of female space in the Indian context which takes both the local culture and nature into consideration.

1.5 Alternative Female Space

Roy as an Indian feminist works within the parameters of Indian civilization and culture. It is the whole human personality of a woman that is targeted for emancipation by Roy and not only women's financial/social condition. This approach of Roy's is both holistic and culture specific. Velutha, Ammu, and the twins are victims of the society, yet their resistance is passive. Their non-violent approach is akin to Gandhian *Satyagrahis***. In the fictional space, Roy presents three generations of women dealing with different types of abuse. Mammachi frees herself by establishing a pickles factory, Ammu frees herself by getting into an intra-community marriage and then by the sexual act with an untouchable, while Rahel does so by filling her emotional void with her love for her twin.

The factory that Mammachi was running so successfully is ruined once Chacko tries to make it profitable. He becomes the symbolic Satan in the paradise to cause its fall. The view that the patriarchal world order

** The Editors of *Encyclopedia Britannica* in their entry on Satyagraha write that it meant in Sanskrit and Hindi, to hold onto the truth. The concept was introduced in early twentieth century by Mahatma Gandhi to mean a

“determined but nonviolent resistance to evil” (Satyagraha Philosophy).

is detrimental to our environment is the mainstay of eco-criticism. This is the other alternative space in which the characters can be set. Kunhi and Kunhi illustrate the point in their eco-critical reading of Roy's novel by identifying the connections between human beings, plants, and animals. Ammu, for instance, is compared to the river that passes by Ayemenem.

Her romance with Velutha is set by the river. Velutha is subject to the female gaze as Ammu admires his body coming out of the river. The description makes the male body an organic growth of nature that has been crafted by history. Ammu muses,

As he rose from the dark river and walked up the stone steps, she saw that the world they stood in was his. That he belonged to him. The water. The mud. The trees. The fish. The stars. He moved so easily through it. As she watched him she understood the quality of his beauty. How his labour had shaped him. How the wood he fashioned had fashioned him. Each plank he planned, each nail he drove, each thing he made had moulded him. Had left its stamp on him. Had given him his strength supple grace. (*TGST* 333-334)

The diction used to describe Velutha as an object of nature has allowed eco-critics to look for gendered nature in Roy's novel. Ammu is compared to the river, and when Estha returns, she finds the river polluted. It carries the memory of a forbidden love that was muted by the patriarchal agency. The oppression and repression meted out to the subaltern women characters in *The God of Small Things* is replicated symbolically in the environmental pollution that the river is subjected to. Nature, which was considered symbolically as part of Mother Nature or Mother Earth in many pre-colonial traditional societies, went through many a cataclysmic holocausts in the modern capitalist period. Like the molestation of Ammu in the police station, nature was continuously maltreated, symbolically molested, and dishonored in the capitalist and late-capitalist periods.

There is something primordial in the way Velutha is described. It is both exotic and erotic, following the Othering tradition that Edward Said has expounded in *Orientalism*. It seems Roy is writing back to the West to suggest that women of the Indian subcontinent are not the docile other. They can return the male gaze too.

In her seminal essay, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," Chandra Mohanty points out the follies of Eurocentric feminism. She finds the West guilty of reproducing the

unequal power relations, albeit unconsciously, that they are trying to resist. Mohanty shows how the western eye views Third World women in stereotypical terms to suggest they are all religious, family-oriented, illiterate and domestic. This they do to pit Third World women as “the other” of Europe, where women are supposedly more progressive and modern. Furthermore, Mohanty reacts against how western feminists tend to reduce Third World women to a monolithic entity, where women are nothing more than powerless exploited objects and victims while males are the powerful exploiters. Such views also ignore both the relationships between women and different kinds of relationships between women and men.

Roy's novel offers a different perspective of Third World women. Here women are not without desires. Women are both victims and perpetrators of crime. Women take charge in a relationship. The male-female dichotomy is not standardized, rather there is a plurality of relationships in the novel. The female characters in the novel are deeply divided by boundaries like class, caste, and religion. Instead of allowing the First World to speak for this subordinated group, Roy uses her fictive space to allow the women to speak for themselves with their actions.

Roy's criticism of Western feminism becomes clear in her critique of the French government's recent ban on the head scarf. I quote in full:

When, as happened recently in France, an attempt is made to coerce women out of the burka rather than creating a situation in which a woman can choose what she wishes to do, it's not about liberating her but about unclothing her. It becomes an act of humiliation and cultural imperialism. Coercing a woman out of her burka is as bad as coercing her into one. It's not about the burka. It's about the coercion. Viewing gender in this way, shorn of social, political, and economic context, makes it an issue of identity, a battle of props and costumes. It's what allowed the US government to use Western feminist liberal groups as moral cover when it invaded Afghanistan in 2001. Afghan women were (and are) in terrible trouble under the Taliban. But dropping daisy cutters on them was not going to solve the problem. (*Capitalism: A Ghost Story*)

Roy makes it clear that western feminism often gives lip service to women's conditions by looking at some external factors. Without getting into the “social, political, and economic context,” the issue of identity cannot be addressed.

In the Indian context, the identity of a woman is tinged with various exclusionary grids. For the purpose of categorization, I have identified three: caste, class, and gender in Roy's novel. It is true that Roy is adopting a feminist writing to reverse the male gaze, it is true that Roy is trying to enact a speak-act by giving voice to the subalterns. It is also true that Roy is engaging with the Love Laws to break the negative duality that binds women. Roy has used various western literary allusions in her text, still it is evident that she is trying to carve a style of her own. The issue of gender is prominent but not paramount in the novel.

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PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR IN HOLY CROSS EDUCATION IN THE BANGLADESH: A CASE STUDY ON NOTRE DAME COLLEGE

Dr. Md Shaikh Farid*

Abstract

This article examines how the Congregation of Holy Cross responds to Vatican II's recommendations on the preferential option for the poor in education and implements those recommendations at Notre Dame College. It is argued that the preferential option for the poor should be the core of the rationale of Catholic education. This paper is based on document analysis and interviews of Holy Cross personnel. The study reveals that, as recommended by the Catholic Church, Holy Cross educators have taken different educational programs and social projects – both formal and non-formal – to serve the poor and underprivileged at Notre Dame College. Among all social projects conducted at NDC, particularly the night school and Martin Hall program seem to have noteworthy impacts on education and its students. However, the college mostly fails to serve the poor because the poor students who get financial support or get admitted under the Martin Hall program belong to their Catholic community, therefore, the poor and underprivileged belonging to other religions are excluded from the program. Moreover, as the admission policy of the college is based on meritocracy, there is very little scope for the poor to get admitted in the college.

Key words: Holy Cross, Vatican II, Missionary Education, Catholic Education, Bangladesh.

Introduction

The Congregation of Holy Cross, a Catholic religious congregation, has been working on evangelization and education in Bangladesh since 1853. Over the years, there have been many significant changes to Holy Cross education in Bangladesh because of internal and external events. One such notable event is the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). This paper addresses how Holy Cross missionaries in Bangladesh have interpreted the Catholic Church's teachings on education and guidelines on

* Associate Professor, Department of World Religions and Culture, University of Dhaka

educational objectives and have implemented its recommendations on the preferential option for the poor in their elite educational institutions, such as Notre Dame College. The Catholic Church's documents on education provide direction, purpose, and rationale for school administrators, principals, teachers, and leaders in different countries across the globe. The documents also provide authoritative guidance on the nature and purpose of the Catholic education worldwide, and how the Catholic education is or ought to be. The Vatican's documents on education provide an overview of how Catholic educational institutions can care for the poor in educational settings. Hence, the paper aims to examine how Notre Dame College, a Holy Cross elite institution, has addressed the Vatican's recommendations on the preferential option for the poor in education.

Methodology and methods

The research was based primarily on a combination of examination of written documents and fieldwork involving oral history interviews. A qualitative case study research method was chosen. The broad methodological framework for this qualitative case study is interpretive which is also compatible with both historical and post-modern frameworks for analysis. The study included Notre Dame College, the first Holy Cross college founded in 1949 in Dhaka, as a case study institution.

The available published and unpublished documents, especially in Bangladesh regarding Holy Cross education were critically and objectively examined. The researcher got access to published and unpublished sources in Holy Cross Provincial Archives of Priests and Notre Dame College Archive.

Oral history interviews were one of the forms of data collection. Interviews, with Holy Cross personnel who are/were directly involved either in teaching at their educational institutions or in the management of the college, were conducted. Eighteen participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide during the period from November 2015 to March 2016. Complete information was provided to them about the research. Participants' anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality were ensured, but almost all participants expressed their willingness to disclose their identity as they find it non-problematic.

Data derived from different sources were analyzed together, to identify similarities and themes. After the transcription of the interviews,

the transcriptions were examined thoroughly, and the key points of each interview from those transcripts, together with data from documents, were sorted out into key themes, patterns, and categories. The data analysis was guided by Miles and Huberman's (1994) technique of data analysis.

The Church's documents on education and the preferential option for the poor

The Catholic Church's involvement in education is firmly rooted in Christ's command 'Go teach all nations' (Matthew 28:19). Thus, the Church's involvement in education started before the advent of formal schooling and the state provision of schools, and it was mainly associated with the schooling and preparation for the clerical life (McKinney & Sullivan 2013; Miller 2006). After the Protestant Reformation, however, the founding of Catholic schools became one of the important strategies to counter the Protestant Reformation (Elias 2002). Most importantly, the emergence of Catholic schools was a result of interconnectedness between missionary activities and education in mission territories and countries (Whittle 2015). The Church understood that founding educational institutions were very effective means of missionary works (Morris 2012b).

Over the past centuries, the Vatican had issued several documents on Catholic schooling and education. Among those documents, *Divina Illius Magistri* (1929), and *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965) are the most authoritative documents. After the Second Vatican Council, the Vatican also formed a commission called the Congregation for Catholic Education, which has issued several documents dealing with issues that have not dealt with enough in the previous documents. Of these documents, *The Catholic School* (1977), and *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988), *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997), *Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools: Reflections and Guidelines* (2002), *Educating Together in Catholic Schools*, and *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools* (2013) are the recent ones. All these documents provide the Vatican's teachings on Catholic education and give direction on how to provide and defend the Catholic Church's involvement in education.

Divini Illius Magistri (1929), is an important document on the official Church's teaching on education which argues the Church's right to involve

in education across the globe. Firstly, it holds that the Church has the right to be involved in education. Whittle (2015) argues that the Church justifies its educational involvement by juridical claims not by theological arguments. By using natural law arguments, it holds that parents have a right to bring their children within their religion. Secondly, it advocates the theological anthropology which is interconnected between the goal of human life and educational theory. It emphasizes the concept of original sin and the formation of young children for the life hereafter. There is very little scope for religious freedom, autonomy, and individual conscience. Thirdly, the document upholds the Church's right and control over the curriculum in schools. Sullivan (2001) argues the Church wants to protect the children from errors since it has the God-given authority to act like a mother who wants to teach her children right and wrong. This is a theological justification for the Catholic Church to be engaged in educational activities and control of schooling and education.

The document holds that education and training received at schools played an important part in communicating the Church's truth to youths and guide and protect them from immoral activities. Therefore, defending the truth claim by the Catholic Church was the priority, and schooling and education were seen as an essential tool for the Church. It claims that proper education is one in which Christianity is focal. Catholic schools are to install the Catholic faith to students.

The authoritative and conservative approach of the Catholic Church on education was not revised until Vatican II. Thus, in 1965, the Council issued the document *Gravissimum Educationis* (Declaration on Christian Education), which has great importance on Catholic education. Although the document attempted to reaffirm the fundamental principles formulated in *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929), the emphasis has been shifted to some extent in response to the time, and the social conditions. One of the major shifts from the earlier document was that there is no strong emphasis that Catholic education should prepare students for death and the life hereafter (Morris 1998; Whittle 2015).

Although the declaration reaffirms the right to education for all, particularly the primacy of children and parents, it justifies the Church's involvement in education. The declaration also asserts the dignity of the human person which ensures the right to education for all. The focus on human dignity, which was an important priority of the Council, underscored

that every person has a right to education, in the same way, every Christian has a right to Christian education. It also refers to the right of a child to religious and moral education that could include love and knowledge of God. The declaration mentions that Christians have a right to Christian education. Although the declaration acknowledges the need for secular education, it strongly believes in the explicit need for faith formation and helping students to be believers and able to help them to participate in prayers and worship (Pope Paul VI 1965)

However, Whittle (2015) argues that the Catholic Church's teaching on education unveils both a theoretical looseness around the meaning of Catholic education and an obscure relationship between educational theory and Catholic theology. It can also be argued that the theory of Catholic education is a confessional one and fostering the Catholic faith is its principal goal. Moreover, the main purpose of Catholic schools is the transmission of Catholic truths and values, and all other educational goals are secondary. Morris (2012a) argues for the Catholic Church, education is fundamentally a religious act, the social and economic purposes come subsequently. Therefore, the distinctiveness of Catholic education derives from this Catholic religious point of view.

However, Vatican II initiated some significant shifts in theology and religious life of the Catholic Church. It is mentioned that the Vatican II aimed to underscore the Church's pastoral and apostolic mission and represent the Catholic faith in a more accessible way both to the believers and the world in general (Ahmed 2018; Morris 2008). Sullivan (2001) argues that after Vatican II, it becomes more fluid of what is meant to be a Catholic. It is not so essential to practice external Catholic rites and rituals. McDonough (2012) adds that a defining feature of being a Catholic is to be committed to the needy and poor. As such, section 9 of *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965) states:

This Sacred Council of the Church earnestly entreats pastors and all the faithful to spare no sacrifice in helping Catholic schools fulfill their function in a continually more perfect way, and especially in caring for the needs of those who are poor in the goods of this world or who are deprived of the assistance and affection of a family or who are strangers to the gift of faith.

This paradigm shift posed a problem in defining Catholic identity and educational practices in Catholic schools. However, it also acknowledged the importance of Catholic schools as an institutional witness for the

Church and its values in society (Sullivan 2001). The Church's document entitled *Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World* (1965) also explained the importance of serving humanity, particularly the needy and poor. The Church also acknowledges the concern that it needs to play in helping humankind (Declaration on Christian Education 1965).

The Catholic Schools (1977) asserts that the importance of Catholic schools is much more significant in foreign missions, because Catholic schools work as a saving mission of the Church, and a means to proclaim the Gospel to the world. The Church also expresses the need for Catholic schools to bear institutional witness for the Church and its values, especially in the face of declining values and debilitating influences in society, including materialism and secularism. It also emphasizes that the effectiveness of the Catholic school depends on its ability to adapt and meet the local needs and ensures the true reflection of the local and national Catholic community. In the document, there is a renewed and strong emphasis on the service to the poor, particularly emotionally poor, poor in the faith, and materially poor.

Similarly, other documents of the Church such as *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997), recognized the need for social justice and addressed the effects of the economic gap between the poor and the rich, and acknowledges the importance of services of the Catholic schools to the material and spiritual development of less fortunate people. The document also discusses the historical and contemporary role of the Catholic school for all, particularly for the weakest. It also asserts that the Catholic school educates the poor. Thus, it manifests Christ's love for the poor. It also describes that one of the features of the Catholic school is being a school for all.

The Consecrated Persons and their Mission to Schools (2002) gives more attention to the preferential option for the poor in education. The document points out the poverty of Christ and the challenges of poverty and its impacts on poor people. The Church's people who work in schools have chosen freely the poverty and help the poor and marginalized by creating solidarity with them. Although the document reiterates that the Church offers its educational services to the poor in the first place, it admits that Catholic educational institutions have sometimes stayed from the preferential option for the poor.

Educating Together in Catholic Schools (2007), *Educating to*

Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools (2013), and *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion, Instrumentum Laboris* (2014) also highlight poverty, the economic gap between the rich and poor countries, and the impact of poverty on the society. Therefore, the Catholic school must address the unequal distribution of resources and various forms of poverty and its causes. For the Catholic school, the poor and needy students should not be considered as a burden rather they should be treated as the most important students and should be given special attention in education. However, the document entitled *Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion, Instrumentum Laboris* (2014) acknowledges that Catholic schools that get no state financial support face challenges in serving the poor. The document also admits that the Catholic school is being perceived as aiming at establishing elitist meritocracy that must be overcome.

It is stated that the preferential option for the poor was an integral part of Jesus's teaching, and was manifested through Christ's love for the poor. Therefore, the preferential option for the poor is included in the Church's teaching on social justice (Hession 2015; McKinney 2018). However, this principle has got its emphasis only after the post-Vatican II periods. It is also argued that Post-Vatican II prioritized the educational service to the poor as a policy as there was an impression that Catholic schools provide education only to the rich (McKinney 2018). Moreover, the concept has become problematic as issues surrounding the concepts 'poor' and 'preferential option' and how this principle is being practiced in Catholic schools around the world that charges tuitions and educates wealthy students (Grace & O'Keefe 2007).

There is also a concern between the mission of Catholic schools and the educational marketplace that has been taking place in recent years. Grace (2002) argued that Catholic schools are in a difficult position as the government policies of the market economy in education sectors. Therefore, there is a deep tension between the educational market place and the mission of Catholic education that has been taking place. As a result of this market economy, he also argued that in this situation, the leaders of Catholic schools have had to make some accommodations and compromises, and Catholic education is adopting a policy of giving more priority to academic achievement sacrificing the education missions, such as the preferential option for the poor.

Arthur and Grace (2002) argued that the primary purpose of Catholic education is unclear. The question of whether the purpose of Catholic education is the formation of Catholic faith or academic progress. As Catholics believe in God's unconditional love for all, they will confirm that belief by a mission of preferential love for anyone poor and oppressed, excluded, or voiceless. Because of this commitment, one would not only expect to find more Catholic schools in areas of poverty and educational disadvantage but that within all Catholic schools, children who are on the margins will be given particular attention and care.

To avoid the impression of the contemporary Catholic Church's documents emphasize on providing formal and non-formal education to the poor, asking the Church's people to listen to the poor and commit themselves within the sphere of non-formal education and bring the poor and underprivileged to education. Catholic educational institutions are asked to arrange educational activities suitable for them.

Vatican II and its implication on Holy Cross education in Bangladesh

Since Vatican II brought some shifts in Catholic religious congregations and their educational activities across the world, it brought some significant changes to Holy Cross educational missions, educational structure, and the meaning of mission in Bangladesh. Holy Cross missionaries working in Bangladesh find it hard to accept the changes brought by Vatican II because before Vatican II everything was defined and according to rules (Interview with Robi Purification, January 18, 2016). Although the Bible's command on preaching the gospel to the whole world and creation was the missionaries' motivation, Vatican II changed the understanding of the meaning of mission and missionaries. Previously missionaries would have gone to proselytize, but Vatican II asked people to find God as God is present everywhere. Missionaries cannot bring God as God is already there, and they cannot bring salvation. Rather they were asked to make people aware of who they are, and live accordingly (Interview with Benjamin Costa, January 23, 2016).

Many changes took place in Holy Cross academic institutions and the academic and professional life of missionary-teachers. As Vatican II declared that there is no need to practice celibacy, many veteran missionaries working on education couldn't accept lay people's involvement in educational activities as they believed that their involvement would be detrimental to the nature and purpose of Holy Cross education in

Bangladesh. As a result, half of the foreign missionaries who had been working in Bangladesh and their educational institutions left the country. Thus, the local Holy Cross people had to take the challenges gradually of running the Congregation and its educational institutions (Interview with Purification, January 18, 2016).

One of the important changes that happened after Vatican II was the involvement of lay people in the decision-making process. Both the hierarchy of the Church and lay people started collaborating and working together as a communion in the activities of the Church. Therefore, there has been a sharp rise in the appointment of lay teachers in their educational institutions after Vatican II (Interview with Hemanto Pius Rozario, January 13, 2016).

Besides, after Vatican II, the issue of inculturation also became a very important issue in education and educational philosophy because the Church realized and recognized that there are truths in other cultures and religions and asked people to search for them (Interview with Purification, January 18, 2016). Thus, the inculturation became a dominant mission model after Vatican II. And as a process, inculturation involves the proclamation of the gospel to the people (Bwangatto 2014). Another major contribution of Vatican II was the development of the local priesthood as Vatican II emphasized the formation of local priesthoods and the development of the local Church. Therefore, the Congregation trained local priests. Along with the development of the local priesthood, another important aspect that Vatican II brought to Holy Cross education was the involvement of lay people in education, information, and activities of the Church which were very effective in terms of the establishment of their educational institutions (Interview with Rozario, January 13, 2016). Although Vatican II brought substantial changes to the Holy Cross Congregation both in its structure and religious and educational mission in Bangladesh, there was a major concern over the issue of the relationship between Holy Cross education and Bangladesh education system, particularly the Catholic identity of Holy Cross institutions, the decline of missionary-teachers and appointment of local clergies and lay teachers at Holy Cross institutions. Moreover, there are some questions and concerns on how the Vatican Council's recommendations, particularly on the preferential option for the poor, have been received and implemented at Holy Cross educational institutions.

Preferential option for the poor at Notre Dame College

The Second Vatican Council mandated that each religious institution reevaluate its unique character and mission. Following two decades of consideration, in 1986, the General Chapter of Holy Cross made a deliberate effort to go back closer to the ideal of their founder Moreau. The Constitutions were promulgated in 1988, and this is the one that is still in use today (“Constitution of the Congregation”, 1988). The Constitutions offer direction, motivation, and understanding of the congregation. The two areas of ministry that Holy Cross have accepted as their own are the teaching of the Christian faith in schools, especially for the benefit of underprivileged and abandoned children, and the preaching of the Word of God, especially in remote areas and foreign missions (Farid, 2020: Beiting, 2005).

Since Christ was sent to bring good news to the poor, freedom for captives, sight for the blind, and healing for every shattered victim, education of the poor is one of the key areas of attention. His efforts reach out to the suffering, giving the underprivileged and oppressed priority. Holy Cross come to be among them and of them, not merely as their servants but also as their neighbors. The teaching of young in schools, colleges, and universities is one way for many of them at Holy Cross to express their sense of mission. Their role as educators is carried out in parishes and other ministries for others. Wherever they are employed, Holy Cross missionaries help people not just uncover and nurture their own gifts but also unearth their deepest yearnings. They also discover, as with every aspect of our profession, that Holy Cross have much to learn from the people they are supposed to be teaching (“Constitution of the Congregation”, 1988).

As recommended by the Catholic Church, Holy Cross educators have taken different educational programs – both formal and non-formal – to serve the poor and underprivileged in Bangladesh. Such as Dziekan (2002) mentions that Holy Cross schools and colleges find ways to provide educational opportunities for the poor and disadvantaged even at the cost of considerable sacrifice that requires the provision of financial assistance to the students who cannot afford full tuition and provision of educational support programs for those who require special assistance with learning.

Peixotto (1992) claims that the Catholic Church of Bangladesh is very small only with 2,000,000 members, but it is very active. In the context of a third world country with a population of 150 million, it is a missionary

Church. Thus, one of the primary goals of the Church is to serve the poor and oppressed. For example, the Caritas, a church social organization, is an integral part of that effort. Morin (1994) argued that as Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world and is confronted by the poverty they want to have solidarity with the poor of the country. Therefore, they commit themselves to the preferential option for the poor and this commitment calls them to adopt a simple lifestyle.

Richard Timm, former principal of Notre Dame College, mentions that they are trying to bring up the good citizens, and the people who are well-formed in relationship to the poor (Interview with Timm, January 23, 2016). Similarly, David Burrell argues that they give importance to the formation of human values, respect for persons, and dignity of the human person, and attention to the poor and underprivileged (Interview with Burrell, January 20, 2016). Similarly, Hemanto Pius Rozario argues that they give importance to the formation of human values, respect for persons, and dignity of the human person, feeling attention to the poor and underprivileged. He claims that there are many institutions in Dhaka but no institutions are helping the poor. They do it; others don't do it. They have many slum children in their college. He said, 'We do it because my faith tells me; my faith compels me to that' (Interview with Costa, January 13, 2016). Timm (2002) claims that education for the poor is a basic concern of Holy Cross. Similarly, the Church in Asia Holy Cross has made a preferential option for the poor in Bangladesh, which includes trying to give them the advantages at least in primary education. From the time of the foundation of Bangladesh, the college has made a determined effort to operate for the poor.

Hemanto Pius Rozario, the principal of Notre Dame College, claims that Notre Dame College was founded specially to give attention to the minorities, poor, tribal, and those who are underprivileged groups to educate them and provide service to them (Interview with Rozario, January 13, 2016)). Joseph Peixotto, former principal of Notre Dame College, also mentions that although Notre Dame College was founded to serve the Christian community and the country, after the independence of Bangladesh the college authority reflected on how the college can attach more to the preferential option for the poor and other social works. As a result, they made some changes to college policies to bring some more students and open programs for poor students mainly from villages. The college contributes to the application of the ideal of the Church in

society (Interview with Peixotto, February 5, 2016). The college decided that one of its main goals must be to try to inspire students to become socially conscious. Students must consider their intelligence, abilities, and education as gifts given for them to use for the benefit of society. Thus, the college started several social projects on campus. To the extent possible it tries to get students involved in social projects, or at least to make them aware of what the college tries to do so that they might appreciate the values the college considers as primary (Peixotto 1992).

For example, he mentioned that since 1972 Notre Dame College has been operating a literacy school for the slum dwellers and street children. The college was one of the first institutions in this new nation to respond to the appeal by the then President of Bangladesh to provide literacy instruction (Gillespie & Peixotto 2001). The priests at NDC felt that something should be done for the poor and slum dwellers, and one task would be to offer literacy training to the masses. The principal of NDC hired a couple of teachers and started school with 40 children. Over the years, the total enrollment has grown to 1200. Now, the school has three shifts: morning, afternoon, and evening. The night shift of the literacy school is for children and adults living in slums, most of whom work during the day attend classes from kindergarten to class seven (Peixotto 1992). These classes are taught by the Martin Hall students, who are poor students on a special work-program that enable them to pay their college fees and thereby study at the college for free (Timm 2002). The college has also a trade school for poor students, a dispensary and sick shelter, a handicraft workshop for destitute women (Peixotto 1992b). Of all the social projects conducted at NDC, the school seems to have the widest impact and must, therefore, continue to be given top priority (Banas 1999).

Many Holy Cross priests contributed much to social ministries after Vatican II. Fr. Jim Banas spent the time organizing and supporting a variety of programs for the poor who live around Notre Dame College's campus. He supervised jute handicrafts made by poor women and children in a training program that was located on the campus (Holy Cross in Bengal 1988). Peixotto (1992) notes:

From the time of the foundation of Bangladesh, the college has made a determined effort to operate projects for the poor. These projects not only provide direct service to the poor but also proclaim to students the

priorities of the college itself – with the hope that these future leaders of society will become imbued with the same spirit of social concern and service to the poor and oppressed. The college's efforts are in line with the priority of the church of Bangladesh of giving the preferential option to the poor. (7)

The student work program is Notre Dame's main means of making education available to students from poor families, particularly for Christian students. The college authority started the program in 1976, and Thomas Costa of the Student Welfare Department oversaw the program. Each year the director of the program sends letters to pastors and headmasters of Catholic schools asking for names of students who are completing their high school studies, are capable of studying in the college, but who cannot afford the cost of college studies. After scrutiny, about 50 students are selected each year. They live in Martin Hall, do part-time work at the college, and continue their study at the college. They work on the college grounds, office, labs, paint the buildings, serve as gatekeepers, etc. Their college fees and residence fees are paid with credit for the hours worked. They pay as much as they can afford for their food (Peixotto 1992).

The program provides many benefits. Students who otherwise could not possibly study in the college get an education with regular classes with other students. They also gather valuable work experiences. Those who earn good reputations get good jobs at the college after completing their studies. The college is also benefited by this student work program because many of its odd jobs are done by this large workforce at the college. Some of these students of this program return to their rural parishes and contribute to the work of the church and their communities (Peixotto 1992b). The program has enabled many tribal students to study at NDC. Although most students in the program are Christians, a small number of them are Muslims, Hindus, or Buddhists. Struble (1999) claims that the unique benefit of the Martin Hall program is the empowerment of village students as they move from dependency to the realization that they can build their future. This is the key to education at NDC.

Like Notre Dame College, other Holy Cross schools and colleges, such as St. Joseph Higher Secondary School has a special program for the poor and underprivileged. Robi Purification mentions that they have a responsibility for the children of rich people because they want to teach them, educate them. At the same time, they have the responsibility for

those who don't have - the poor and the underprivileged. Therefore, they have almost 200 students, who are studying the college campus in the afternoon. They get a basic education. As they don't always have proper nutrition, they are provided with some meals (Interview with Purification, January 18, 2016).

Although Holy Cross missionaries have been trying to serve the poor and underprivileged in the county and they have different programs concerning poverty alleviation and social justice, many of their programs and services are part of the broader missionary projects which are specially designed to achieve certain missionary goals, such as evangelization. For example, Peixotto (1992b) claimed in the context of third world countries, Holy Cross is considered a missionary Church. Thus, one of the primary goals of the Congregation is to serve the poor and oppressed. Morin (1994) argued that Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world and is confronted by poverty. Therefore, they commit themselves to the preferential option for the poor.

Although Holy Cross missionaries emphasize on 'preferential option for the poor' in education, they have intensified the program in post-war Bangladesh. They emphasized "preferential option for the poor" in the new country because there was a great need to support the people of the country, and they reflected on how their institutions such as Notre Dame College can attach more to that programs. Therefore, they made some changes to college policies to bring some more students and open programs for poor students (Interview with Peixotto, February 5, 2016).

Although they claimed that Notre Dame College has been serving the poor and underprivileged through formal and non-formal educational programs, the college mostly fails to serve the poor or has preferential options for the poor through formal or regular educational programs at the college. The poor students who get financial support or get admitted under the Martin Hall program belong to their Catholic community. Therefore, the poor and underprivileged belonging to other religions are excluded from the programs. Moreover, as the admission policy at the college is based on meritocracy, there is very little scope for the poor to get admitted in the college. The question also arises how the 'preferential option for the poor' is being practiced at the college that charges tuition and educates wealthy students. Studies claim that Catholic schools around the world charges tuitions and educate wealthy students (Grace & O'Keefe 2007; Robert & Morrison 2009).

Moreover, there is tension between the mission of Catholic education and the educational market-place that has been taking place in recent years. Catholic education is a global education enterprise of the Catholic Church (Whittle 2015; Grace 2002). As a result of this market economy in education, Catholic educators are adopting a policy of giving more priority to academic achievement sacrificing the preferential option for the poor. It is also argued that as Catholics believe in God's unconditional love for all, they will confirm that belief by a mission of preferential love for the poor, oppressed, excluded, or voiceless. Because of this commitment, it is not only expected that one would find more Catholic schools in areas of poverty but in all Catholic schools, the children who are on the margins will be given attention and support (Arthur 1995; Grace 2003). Notre Dame College is not an exception to market economy policy and is not beyond criticism as they have compromised their educational missions and preferential options for the poor and underprivileged with academic excellence that excludes the poor from formal and regular educational programs.

Conclusion

Vatican II created a major paradigm shift to the Roman Catholic Church and brought significant changes to its religious congregations and educational activities across the globe. Therefore, it brought changes to Holy Cross education at NDC in Bangladesh. The Vatican documents on education emphasized that the effectiveness of their schools and colleges depends on its ability to adapt and meet the local needs and ensures the true reflection of the national Catholic community. Therefore, being a Catholic religious congregation, the Holy Cross Congregation adopted the policy and means suitable for the local context and culture of Bangladesh to realize its educational objectives at NDC. Thus, after Vatican II and the emergence of Bangladesh as a new country, the college decided that one of its main goals must be to try to inspire students to become socially conscious so that they use their intelligence, abilities, and education for the benefit of society and mass people of the country. Hence the college started several projects on campus for the poor, and it tries to get students involved in those projects, or at least to make them aware of what the college tries to do so that they might appreciate the values the college considers as an important duty to the society and the country. However, Holy Cross educators mostly fail to include students in the college's formal and regular educational programs from a poor educational and economic background, and students from indigenous and minority communities.

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ANALYZING THREE TYPES OF ERRORS IN BENGALI SPEAKING CHILDREN'S FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Dr. Jennifar Jahan*

Abstract

Children go on to achieve remarkable cognitive feat in language acquisition. They demonstrate general knowledge and understanding of basic patterns in their language within the first few years of life. Children extend the meaning of words they hear by applying grammatical principles in new circumstances. Despite having this remarkable ability to learn and comprehend language at a young age, children make numerous errors and mistakes as their language knowledge and understanding grows. Overgeneralization, overextension and underextension are three common mistakes in early word use which are altogether mentioned as 'developmental errors' in psycholinguistics. In this paper these three types of errors will be presented through the analysis of data collected from young Bengali speaking children aged 1 to 2.5 years.

Key Words: *First language acquisition, Bengali, children, developmental errors.*

1. Introduction

Language acquisition is one of the major developmental features in children. During this process different strategies are adopted by the children to develop their vocabulary along with the meanings associated to them; lexical learning is one such step that includes learning vocabularies as well as knowing the proper use of the words with meanings. Children often use the majority of the words they learn correctly. However, enhancement of vocabulary accelerates the frequency of errors in word usage, and it decreases as vocabulary improves (Stowe, 2001).

Scholars debate the causes and reasons that underly these mistakes. Semantic feature hypothesis (Clark, 1973) indicates that children acquire the basic features of word meanings before knowing the more specific aspects and this is the major reason behind their errors. For example,

* Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of Dhaka

children may overextend any word's meaning (like calling all round object including fruits as ball) until they learn the more specific aspects of this word's meaning. Some other theories indicate that errors in early word use are the result of a failure on the part of the child to retrieve the correct words (Huttenlocher, 1974; Stowe, 2001).

The three types of errors in word use that are usually found in children are the subject matter of this paper. They are: overgeneralization/overregularity, overextension and underextension. Data are collected via observation, documentation, interviewing and audio-visual recordings of young Bengali speaking children. Thus, this research is exploratory, contextual and descriptive in nature in that the aim is to find out something new, being specific culturally and trying to produce accurate data and clear picture of the enquiry.

2. Language Acquisition

Language acquisition is one of the essential human traits. The way children learn their native language is referred to as 'First Language Acquisition'. This process enables children to perceive and comprehend language, produce and use words as well as sentences to communicate. According to Rice (1989), language acquisition needs three skills: (a) the language to be acquired, (b) the child and their abilities, (c) environmental settings or the language they hear and the speaking contexts. Researchers thought about the process that helps children to communicate and express themselves in the world. This area of interest has been taken into account from as early as the fourth century. Saint Augustine (397 AD) entitled the chapter of his 'Confessions' (autobiography) 'That When a Boy He Learned to Speak, Not by Any Set Method, But from the Acts and Words of His Parents' (Schaff, 1890). This reveals the fact that 'child language development' has been an area of interest for centuries.

2.1 Historical background of language acquisition

The above discussion indicates that the field of child language studies has its place preset long back in the history. Modern theories of child development were developed by English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) and French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Locke believed that children take birth with an empty mind which he named 'tabula rasa' (blank slate) and these slates start being written on after getting experienced from the environment and by interacting with other people

(Eng, 1980). Locke emphasized the importance of relationship between old and new knowledge (principles of association) and of imitation and repetition, believing in 'external forces' or 'nurture' as the driving force in development (Gianoutos, 2006). On the other hand, Rousseau emphasized the role of 'internal forces' or 'nature' on child development. According to him, children are born with a natural sense of right and wrong, so they are regarded as 'noble savages'. Moreover, two more vital issues related to this area, 'maturation' and 'stages of development', were also first introduced by Rousseau. Another name worth mentioning in child language study is G. Stanley Hall (1844- 1924). He was the first psychologist to focus on studying child development. In 1890's he founded the 'Child Study Movement' (White, 2002). Hall was greatly influenced by Charles Darwin's view on studying child development as the vital issue to understand the origins and nature of human beings. Consequently, it can be mentioned that, Darwin (1877) started a baby journal in which he recorded his son's developmental changes since his birth, named as 'A biographical sketch of an infant'. Later, Hall was highly influential to his contemporaries and because of his strong influence child study became a discipline in its own right (Gupta, 1995).

2.2. Early stages of child language development

Research on language development shows that children cannot acquire all the developmental goals at a time; they go through sequences of recognizable stages as they master their native language. For example, meaningless sounds precede single word utterances; joining two words and associating meanings comes to them much later. Thus, it is easy to think of stagewise child language development. Although a certain stage can differ from child to child, the sequence of stage appears to be the same for all children who acquire same language (Moskowitz, 1978).

Usually stages of language acquisition are mainly formed on the basis of a progression that gradually sprouts out by semantically and perceptually identifying the language. According to Wood, children at a very early age (around from 3 to 6 months) start to use the language to fulfill their needs (Wood, 2010). This very early period of speech production is called the prelinguistic or pre- speech stage. At this stage, a child learns to control the sounds he produces and tries to put them together in vocal play; but they are only sound manipulations not proper words. Cooing, crying, burping and laughter are the vocalizations made at this level of the child to

express feelings. After these, children start stringing the sounds together and through babbling gradually the child develops to produce single words or holophrases (a single word to express the whole semantic function).

At around the age of one year and half (18 months) toddlers produce two-word combinations (proto sentences). With the use of previously learned vocabularies and new words, children produce their very early sentences. At this stage vocabulary develops faster. One of the major features of this word combination stage is the omission of 'function words,' such as articles, auxiliary verbs, inflections, prepositions, and the copula 'is' (Brown, 1973). These sentences are the combinations of a noun or a verb with a modifier. This helps the child produce sentences like-declarative, interrogative, imperative or negative.

The last level of utterance included in this category is the earliest form of sentence use. As discussed in the former segment, we can see that the pre-sentence use of a child already takes the form of word combinations. At this stage sentences increase in length, but still, small connective words like 'and' or 'the' are left out and bigger words are simplified. Thus this stage is also named-'telegraphic stage', as the language used here seem to take the form of a telegram, containing just enough information to make sense.

2.2 Different Areas of Language Development

During the stages of language development a few vital linguistic abilities like, phonological, morphological, semantic, syntactic and morphosyntactic fields grow in children. Though these areas have individual characteristics as well as developmental rates; they are interrelated and influence child's language acquisition with equal importance.

According to Clark (2001), word is the major domain of morphological acquisition, where inflectional affixes are added to words or stems to form new words; in addition, some meanings are assigned to each one of them. Between twelve months to twenty months of age, children usually begin to say their first words, and systematic morphological modulations of these words occur within the first year of interaction (Clark, 2001). As they move towards complex, meaningful expression of their meanings, they include grammatical manifestations such as inflections (prefixes, suffixes), prepositions, postpositions and clitics. For example, on nouns they start adding morphemes to make distinctions such as gender, number, and case;

verbs, markers are added for aspect, tense, gender, number, and person. Although children appear to begin with inflections as modulations of the word meaning, at the end of the day attention is required to both lexical meaning and syntax, as they need to learn which words belong to which paradigms that use regular or irregular plurals (Clark, 2001).

The objective of this research is to identify the three above mentioned 'developmental errors' in children and it is primarily related to children's 'morphological' progression and semantics is very much influential on children's morphological development. In the following segment the above mentioned three specific types of language errors that are made subconsciously by the children during the morphological acquisition stage will be discussed with reference to collected data.

3. Developmental Errors

It has been mentioned above that the three types of errors which occur during the early language development stages are-overgeneralizations, overextensions and underextensions. These are common all over the world in all the children who are following natural pace in first language acquisition; only the rate might vary. During this research it was observed that these errors are common as I had heard children making them before. But now, as a research issue, I tried to observe and analyze the phenomenon in a systematic way and contextually. It was feasible for me to collect the data in their natural settings only as the context was known and understood to me. Thus, I could collect sufficient data and present them in the form of the following findings.

3.1. Overgeneralizations/ Overregularizations

Human languages are unique in that they offer speakers the possibility to produce new meanings, (e.g., combining words, making novel sentences). During this productive period, young children continue to use a term past the field of its particular connotation; this habit of language formation is called 'overgeneralization'. Overregularization is defined as the "application of a principle of regular change to a word that changes irregularly" (Marcus et al., 1992). For example, using the word 'tooths', 'mouses'. The error is frequently seen in children after they have acquired the language rules; because children apply learnt rules to irregular words.

Usually, overregularization rule is applied to grammatical categories

like tense (verb forms) and numbers. These two categories are discussed in linguistics under inflectional morphology. During the data collection period, I found the following forms that are overregularized; it is worth mentioning that informant children used both Bengali and English irregularized mistakes as a few of them studied in English medium schools too.

C:/amar nakgula bæt^ha/ (I have pain on my ‘noses’)

C:/amrao ieccilam oder Sat^he/ (we were also going with them, mistake in the past continuous form of ‘go’ in Bengali).

C:/mai ticer tude helped me Sud/ (My teacher today helped me put on my shoes; putting on shoes is mentioned as ‘shoed’ here.)

C:/amar dui muk^hei betha/ (the child hurt her lips, so she wanted to express the pain on both of her lips).

On the basis of the above examples, it is possible to say that overregularization is usually found in complete utterances or in sentences. When children begin to use sentences like adults, they go through this process of overregularization. And such errors are clearly recognizable in sentences rather than in individual words. But children in their holophrastic and word combination stage show noticeable number of overgeneralized linguistic items. Like-

- mouse-mouses, tooth-tooths, foot-foots,
- children-childrens
- /gan geccילו/(singing song).
- /tumi khabo/ (the verb ‘eat’ in first person form but the pronoun ‘you’ in third person)
- /briStigula porc^he/(many rains raining) etc.

Another interesting feature is like making past form of words that are already in past forms, like ‘slepted’, ‘ated’ etc. These are exceptional use of overgeneralizations as children here already know the past forms of ‘eat’ and ‘sleep’.

Moreover, children also made past tense and plural forms of Bengali words using English past tense and number formation rules. For example,

/ma rannar jonno khuntis kineche (khunti is a utensil made of metal to

stirr curries/food. Mother bought more than one of this utensil, so the child made plural forms).

/amar payer angul_s bQtha korc^he/ (my toes are in pain).

Children made plural of the Bengali word 'angul' with English plural marker 's' as they had momentary gap of the word form). Use of English plurals in Bengali words are not only examples of overgeneralizations, they are also patterns that results from filling up 'lexical gaps' ('lexical gap' in this sense is the term used to describe the absence of a word in a particular language where it is present in another) in early language development. Momentary gap is a part of lexical gap where a child cannot remember the intended word form instantly. Children here tried to complete the sentence or express the complete meaning with the words they already know even if it results in code switching.

The process of overgeneralization of words can be summarized as the combination of preexisting activation from earlier retrievals and activation prompted by the assessed item's resemblance to instances of the target category. Thus, overgeneralization can be summarized as a common mechanism of activation and retrieval. This may explain not only momentary delays in the accurate selection of words, but other types of naming errors traditionally thought to reflect differences in children's knowledge of words. Most important thing is, error like overregularization occurs usually after children finish learning regular language rules.

3.2 Overextensions

There has been considerable empirical and theoretical interest in the topic of 'overextension' in children's early use of words. Over extension is the use of a word for a broader range of referents than is conventional in adult usage (Bloom 1973, Clark 1973). Over extension often occurs in children when they are initially acquiring and developing the first language; for instance, referring to all four-legged animals as 'doggie', all liquid items as 'water' ('mum' by Bengali children) are examples of overextensions. Gradually children refine their overextended usage to conform to conventional adult language. Overextension would occur while children are learning the language.

3.2.1 Types of overextension

Overextensions were classified into three different types (Rescorla, 1980)-

- a) categorical overinclusions
- b) analogical overextension and
- c) predicate statements.

a) Categorical overinclusions

It is also known as Semantic feature hypothesis. Words indicating 'relationships' covers the largest number of categorical overinclusion. Words with generalization -across sex (/d5ad5u/ for all elderly persons),

-across age (/beibi/ for children), and

-across family boundaries (/aNkel/ for men generally, /apu/ for all girls).

Animals and vehicles were categorized with many categorical overinclusions;

-/gari/ for all cars including train also,

-/gou/ or /goru/ for domestic animals

-/kap/ to all water holders like mug, glass etc.

Children sometimes even categorized cold objects as hot. A participant child held a bowl of ice cream, felt the cold, and told to his mother-/uf g om, g om/ (Urgh! it is hot).

In general, categorical overextension can be referred to as extension of one member of a category to all members of the same category.

b) Analogical overextensions

Analogical overextensions involve inferring a similarity between a word's standard referent and its labeled referent in the absence of any actual relationship (Rescorla,1980). For example, calling all white round objects 'egg'.

When a child comments on an analogy between a word's usual referent and the categorized referent without having any conventional relationship among them, the child is said to be analogically overextending the item. Generally, the inferred analogy is perceptual in character. Like, referring

to /tip tip/ as the sound of rain, identifying noodle as /Sut5a/ (thread) etc. There are two more types of analogy –

- functional analogy: /t lowar/= taking an ice cream stick and calling it a /t lowar/ (sword, while playing) and
- affective analogy: /bQt^ha/= referring to sharp prohibited objects like ‘knives’ as /bQt^ha/ (pain).

Some children seemed to involve genuine perceptual errors, others seemed to be more clearly analogical in character, e.g., child selected an ‘Orange’ and called it /k mla b l/ ‘Orange ball’.

c) Predicate Statement

An overextension is classified as a predicate statement when the child tries to convey some information about the relationship between an immediate referent and some absent person, object, property, or state, rather than labelling the referent itself (Rescorla, 1980).

If statements are classified, predicate statements will be ‘relational utterances’ as categorical and analogical overextensions are typologically classificatory. Leopold (1939) characterized such utterances as ‘transfers of reference’, indicating that they are different from but nevertheless related to referential extensions. Like, if the child is asked to get the doll, she might look at an empty place on top of a shelf indicating that the doll is usually kept there and saying /put5ul nai/ (Doll is missing).

Possessive use of ‘people words’ is a major type of predicate statements. Like pointing at a rocking chair and calling it /d5ad5u/ (grandfather), putting on a pair of high heeled sandals and calling it /mamma/ (mother). Some more predicate statements include ‘make believe’; like-

- closing the eyes and lying down pretending to be sleeping,
- making ‘choo choo’ type sounds to mean drinking something,
- moving eyes rapidly on newspaper or a book to indicate reading etc.

Some predicate statements reveal the child’s anticipations about how events are organized in time, like saying ‘key’ when the mother is about to unlock a door but she has not taken out the keys yet.

Some more examples of over-extensions produced by the participant children are presented below-

C:/d5ad5u baïar theke ekta b l enec^he/= (Grandfather brought a ball from the bazar; actually, it was a pumpkin.)

C:/orenï kalarer b l/= (His father brought 'Orange' for him.)

C:/piN briSti hocce/= (It's raining Pink.)

C:/piN c kket d55ao/= (Give me pink chocolate.)

C:/hamba/= (Call of a cow, showing Zebra from an animal book and calling it a Cow.)

C: /mam/ = (Baby talk for the word water, the child calls all drinks 'mum' including juice and water.)

This process of meaning extension is visible in children since the age of 12 months to 2 years (sometimes up to 2.5 years also). Overextension is a cognitive process resulting from contextual reasoning and figuring out a solution. It is done by young children when they lack in producing or presenting new vocabulary or more specifically names of things.

3.3 Underextensions:

Underextension can be taken as the opposite process of overextension that takes place during the morphological acquisition period of a child's first language acquisition period. It occurs when a child acquires a particular word for a particular object but later fails to extend its use to other objects of the same category (Fernandez, 2011). The child uses that word in a constrained and idiosyncratic way. For example, a child may learn the word fruit in connection with an apple but fail to extend its meaning to other types of fruits.

In comparison to overextension, underextension is less common or may be less noticeable. According to Harris (1993), children make two different types of underextensions in their early word learning stage.

They are-

- a) Context bound
- b) Context flexible

a) Context Bound Underextension

In this situation children simply identify one particular event in the context of which it is appropriate to use that word, but do not realize its more abstract coverage. Like, a participant child called /b l/ 'ball' only to indicate the specific green ball he owns; but in other cases, mother has to tell him that those are also balls of different sizes and colours. They even do not identify the picture of a ball as a 'ball' at this developmental stage. This also happens when children talk about their family pet 'cat', 'dog' or 'car'.

b) Context flexible underextensions:

Restricting a word to a particular referent instead of a particular situation is known as context flexible underextension (Harris, 1993). This kind of underextension is not context-bound and suggests that children use words in a genuinely [implicational](#) way. Harris mentions examples of this type of underextension from her own research, such as the use of the word 'clock' only to refer to 'wall clocks' and 'light' only to refer to 'ceiling lights' with a shade.

I have seen the participant children saying 'fan' only to refer to the bedside 'stand fan' because that room did not have another fan and 'bag' for a particular coloured 'school bag' only. And using 'no' only when pushing away a drink.

Research more commonly addresses the underextension of nouns, but this can also be applied to verbs and modifiers, like numbers (Fernandez, 2011). For example, a child underextended the verb '/jawa/' (to go) only with reference to the father going outside of the house but to no one else's. Few more uses of underextension are like-

C:/ekta pani d5ao/= (Give me 'one water'.)

C:/ekta d5ud5u d5ao/= (Give me 'one milk').

C:/oi ie d5ui ta kap/= (There are two cups), actually there were more than four cups. The child somehow focused on the number 'two' only and used it to count anything. In the same way she said '/d5uita biskit/' (two biscuits) and '/d5uita bQt^ha/' (two pains) etc.

Researchers have speculated that the reason why underextension develops or why prolonged underextension exists is probably due to

parents' involuntary contribution (White,1982). Underextension occurs if the parents do not suggest all the illustrations of a category of objects, particularly in cases of unusual word situations while talking to the children. Thus, contextual clues are very much significant for attaching meaning in this stage. An adult might need to observe what the child is doing in order to determine the meaning of the utterance or follow the child's gaze or indication in order to define the exact meaning of the utterance. Likewise, to make sense of the adult's speech, a child in this stage requires to use the context also.

As with overgeneralization and overextension, underextension seems to decline as children grow and their vocabulary and grasp on the rules of a language grow along with them. That is, as children grow, they tend to learn the general uses of a term and apply them appropriately in a more general manner than in a selective manner.

4. Conclusion

Children, on the whole, choose too broad a category, overextending the adult meaning; alternatively, they may choose a category that is too narrow, limiting the adult meaning. Overgeneralization occurs when children set the boundaries wrongly in their early word use. Children may pick out incorrect category by mismatching the conventional meaning of the word. The goal of this study of the three major relationships between child and adult meanings, namely overgeneralizations, overextensions, and underextensions, is to show what can happen when children try to learn word meanings in their first language developmental stage. This method is supposed to shed light on the nature of children's early conceptual categories and how they come to associate these categories with words in their first language.

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ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (ECO) AS A REGIONAL ORGANIZATION: ROLE, HURDLES AND PROSPECTS

AKM Iftekharul Islam*

Abstract

In world politics, regionalism and regional organization have become important elements. Regional organizations, as opposed to international organizations, are created by independent states based on their geopolitical, geographical proximity, economic, or political ties in order to promote socio-economic development and regional integrity. Using a qualitative methodology and secondary data sources, this research attempts to shed light on the fundamental justifications for the creation of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) as a regional organization; its economic and socio-cultural practices; interstate rivalry among its members; divisions, and difficulties; ECO's role and prospects in the current political unpredictability of the world; solutions to current problems and techniques for fostering regionalism in ECO, and the organization's prospects for the future. Additionally, it assesses ECO's regional integration considering integration theory and shows whether ECO has been effective in fostering regional cohesion. In light of this, this paper contends that the ECO region has not received enough attention from the vast majority of academics despite having enormous human and natural resource potential and it also implies that in the long run, the ECO region might provide the EU, ASEAN, and other developing countries with a steady supply of energy markets that in turn can play a positive role for the development of the region. The ECO region may also represent a sizable market for the export of technology and equipment by a number of sophisticated economies. The paper concludes the BRI project and the Indo-Pacific Strategy have greatly raised the ECO's geostrategic significance.

Introduction

The organization known as the Regional Cooperation Development (RCD) has been succeeded by the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). The RCD was a multigovernmental entity that was established on July 21, 1964. Its three member countries were Iran, Pakistan, and

* Associate Professor, Department of Islamic History & Culture, University of Dhaka

Turkey. The RCD essentially fell apart and was eventually disbanded due to its inability to provide a format practical for increasing commercial opportunities; the political unrest in Iran; and, later, its involvement in the war with Iraq (Moonakal, 2020). However, in 1985, seven new members from Central Asia, South Asia, and the Caucasus emerged as ECO along with the previous three members of RCD, which marked the end of the RCD. In the course of history, the ECO's geopolitical significance has been present and moved through a variety of phases. In fact, the nature and scope of international politics in the 21st century are completely different from what they were in the 20th century. The international political landscape has become more challenging and anarchic so as has the regional political landscape (Belmonte et al., 2021). In point of fact, the established international order, as well as the politics of the entire world, have been subjected to profound shifts in the past few decades. There are many other factors that have contributed to these one-of-a-kind shifts. For instance, the increasing advancement of science and technology, the advent of non-conventional security threats such as transnational organized crime, climate change, ethnic strife, and so on, the rise of China, the shrinking tendency of US hegemony, the global energy crisis, the beginnings of multipolar world order, globalization and its multifaceted repercussions on nation states, the appearance of new regional economic and military initiatives such as Indo-Pacific Strategies (IPS) and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and so on (Srikanth, 2014 and Zhao, 2019) significantly restructured and influenced the patterns and scopes of world politics during the latter half of the 20th century. Moreover, the turn of the century has created unprecedented dynamics, trends, and challenges in politics at both the global and regional levels (Haynes et al., 2013). There has been a recent rise in the importance of new economic and security alliances, such as QUAD, AUKUS, and IORA, in the process of establishing the order that governs global trade, security, and the economy (Roychoudhury, 2021). These recent developments have brought about a myriad of opportunities and challenges for various regional organizations, such as the ECO. In light of this, there is an urgent need to reevaluate how nations that are members of the ECO may develop their sense of regional identity and make the most of opportunities presented by the current state of global ferment.

Objectives of the Study

Based on the introduction, the prime objective of this study is to

evaluate ECO as a regional organization. The aims and objectives of this study also include:

- Analyzing ECO's regional integration on the premise of integration theory;
- Explaining how successful or unsuccessful the ECO has been in promoting regional cohesion in the region;
- Evaluating how the members of ECO may make the best use of opportunities presented by the current state of global unrest.

Research Question

An in-depth analysis of this research attempt presents some questions those need to be answered. The research questions of this study therefore will be-

1. What were the founding objectives of primarily RCD and then ECO?
2. How far is ECO successful as a regional organization?
3. What are the prospects and problems of ECO?

This research tries to get started on a methodical investigation of these research questions.

Methodology

This article employs secondary sources as its primary means of data collecting in order to highlight the arguments surrounding the research issues. In this regard, the paper is qualitative in its overall approach. In this study, a wide range of sources, including books, research articles, academic papers, government policy documents, conference papers, archives, websites, newspapers, and numerous academic journals, were subjected to in-depth analysis and evaluation. This approach is quite helpful for a variety of reasons. In the beginning, this research has determined the knowledge gap that exists between the many available pieces of literature, which are quite substantial. After that, it makes an effort to begin a methodical investigation of its research problem after conducting an extensive evaluation of the secondary data. These secondary data, therefore, provide the contemporary context of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), inter-state competition within ECO, and other relevant issues affecting the activities of ECO.

Region, Regionalism and Regionness

The problem of defining regions is a complex one. In the context of international affairs, a region is typically defined as a territorial zone that contains some elements in common. Academics contend that a region is characterized by a multitude of realities, including the spatial proximity of its states, their socio-economic similarity, the homogeneity of their political and governmental structures, their religious beliefs and values, their interrelatedness across numerous levels, and the expression of a general perception in a variety of phenomena among them. In addition to the physical or purely natural regions, there are also political regions, economic regions and transnational region (Knox et al., 2016).

Regionalism is a more complex term that extends beyond the boundaries of both a region and its regional characteristics. According to Robert Longley (2021), the term 'regionalism' refers to the establishment of ideological and socio-economic frameworks that rely heavily on the loyalty of a distinct region wherein individuals of a uniform category express their shared identity and traditions. As a political ideology, regionalism places a heavy emphasis on the consolidation of political and economic power and the attainment of self-determination for the people of the region (Meadwell, 1991). To put it another way, its primary objective is to attain substantial political and economic autonomy in a manner that encourages policy integration, sustained economic growth, the advancement of free trade, and the underpinning of collaboration in a variety of different fields of state affairs (Libman, 2007).

In order to establish a sense of regional identity and contribute to the formation of a sense of unity, regionalism plays a role in the formation of inter-subjective meanings of regional culture, politics, and other material things. It also helps to create interstate relationships among a collection of states, facilitates the identification of the commonality of their interests, and works to successfully handle challenges and threats that endanger regional peace and security. Some notable examples of regional arrangements are the European Union (EU), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Association of South East Asian Nation (ASEAN), the African Union (AU), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Arab League (AL) etc.

On the other hand, the idea of regionness is more all-encompassing than the concept of region itself. Hettne and Söderbaum (2000) provided a

definition of regionness in which it was claimed that the diverse effects that unfold during the process of regionalization of a particular geographical region are considered to be part of the definition of regionness. To them, the concept of regionness can be understood in parallelly with the concept of “stateness” and “nationness” (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2000). According to their perspective, it is the process of elevating a region from the status of a receptive object to that of an active subject. In its most basic form, the concept of regionness refers to the act of artificially creating a region, completing the process of regionalization, bringing together the concerns of the region on a variety of different levels, and thereby enhancing the togetherness and exclusiveness of the region. There are varying degrees of regional authenticity (Hettne, 2003). According to Hettne and Soderbaum (2000), these layers consist of a regional space, a trans-local structure, an international society, a regional commune, and a regionally organized polity.

From RCD to ECO

According to integration theory, integration in an organization can take place on many levels and in many dimensions, such as economic, social, and policy integration. These are all examples of integration (Weiss, 1999). Integration is unquestionably a process that occurs at the macro level and raises the degree to which members of an association are dependent upon one another (Keohane and Nye, 1975). On the other hand, the functional approach in international politics is an additional technique to foster regional integration among countries that are at odds with one another. This method contends that cooperation should initially be initiated on low-level or micro-level topics such as sports and cultural activities at the very beginning of the process (Hass, 2008). According to this strategy, it is anticipated that this kind of low-level cooperation may, in the future, throw open new doors for higher-level cooperation. In the following discussion, it will be made clear how integration has increased the interdependence among the members of ECO and how it benefits the organization to achieve substantial results in a variety of areas of socio-economic development. In addition, it will be made clear how integration has increased the interdependence among the members of ECO.

Before examining the establishment of ECO due to a spillover effect, it is necessary to take a closer look at its precursor organization, the Istanbul Pact, also known as the RCD. On July 21, 1964, the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), was formally established. Iran, Pakistan, and

Turkey are its founding members, and it was formed as a multigovernmental platform with the goal of fostering socioeconomic and commercial growth in the three nations (Yeşilbursa, 2009). The establishment of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in the year 1955 is mainly credited as being the impetus behind the development of the RCD. The Bagdad Pact's successor, the CENTO, was primarily established as a military alliance in accordance with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in order to fulfill a defense-related mandate (Zonis, 1990 and Jasse, 1991). In the beginning, CENTO served as the common basis upon which the three members of RCD, along with Iraq, the United Kingdom, and the United States, could collaborate in order to accomplish their goals. The primary objective of the establishment of CENTO was to establish a barrier and compete with the policies of the Soviet Union, which was the dominant power in the region at the time (Yeşilbursa, 2020). Despite the fact that this platform was never successful, it did provide Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey with a single platform from which they could work on and discuss issues that were affecting the area in a similar fashion. RCD members share a strong religious, geographical, cultural, political, and historical bond and legacy is portrayed as a positive feature of this organization (Hashmi, 1979). These connections paved the way for more engagement and cooperation on common ground in the region, and they opened the door to both of those possibilities.

The inability of CENTO to effectively promote commercial opportunities and the acceleration of regional development served as the fundamental impetus for the establishment of a new cooperative framework. Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan did not have a forum that was efficient in promoting regional prosperity; hence, achieving this objective was the primary objective of the RCD (Faheem and Xingang, 2021). In the beginning, this organization demonstrated its potential and made some progress, such as lowering postal rates, establishing a payment union for trade among the nations, establishing a regional cultural institution, abolishing the visa system among the member nations to promote tourism, and launching a shipping service. However, RCD did not last long and the organization collapsed in 1979 after fifteen years of its foundation.

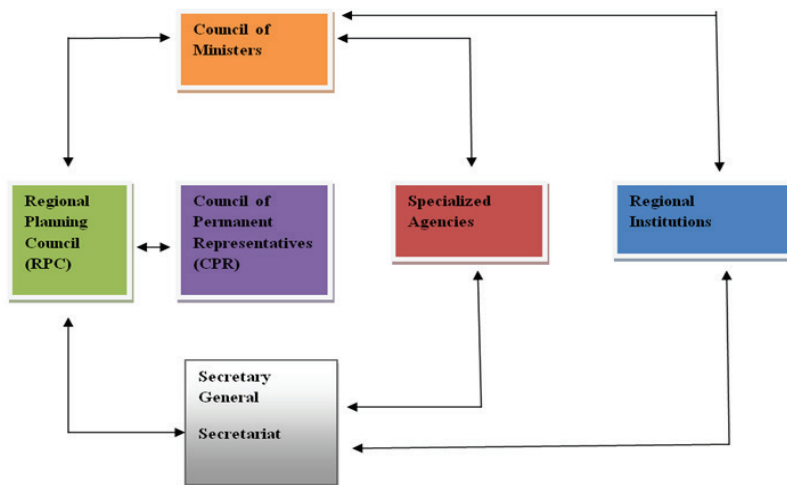
RCD's demise was not a dramatic occurrence; rather, its fractures occurred gradually over time. Nonetheless, several causes of RCD failure are described below. In addition to a large number of shared characteristics, members of the RCD had a number of divergent foreign

policy stances (Bahae and Saremi, 2002). Firstly, Tehran and Ankara contracted with Islamabad over the recognition of Israel, whilst Islamabad was incompatible with Tehran and Ankara regarding their cordial relations with China. Secondly, the member countries' foreign policy shifts and political regime instabilities have weakened their connections over time (Chawla, 2017). In February 1979, the Iranian Revolution was the third and most fundamental cause. This event drastically altered the geostrategic options and interests in the region, and consequently sparked the regional unrest (Chawla, 2017). Regional trade was impeded as a result of the global economic sanctions imposed by the United States on Iran's trade with major NATO allies, such as Turkey, following the Iranian revolution. The invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq conflict in the 1980s were the final blows that destabilized the region's political and geostrategic landscape and halted the organization's progress (Chawla, 2017). In 1979, following the Iranian Revolution, the CENTO and RCD were both dissolved. Its failure to offer a framework for promoting regional trade among its member states was also a major factor in its demise (Moonakal, 2020).

In this context and nearly six years later, there was a desire to revitalize the organization in a fresh way, including a new name and structure (Chawla, 2017). In 1977, member states of the erstwhile RCD, Iran, Turkey and Pakistan signed the Izmir Pact, paving the way for the creation of the ECO. Later, formally 1985 saw the establishment of ECO from the ashes of RCD. Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan joined the organization in 1992 and the succeeding years of the Soviet Union's dissolution. As a result, ECO experienced a significant economic uptick and extended its operations into numerous new domains. Instigating the formation of ECO as a regional and international platform were the attainment of member countries' development objectives and the promotion of trade and economic possibilities (Chawla, 2017). In other words, the objectives of ECO grew to encompass three domains: economic, cultural, and scientific (Chawla, 2017).

Other objectives of the ECO include economic growth, improvement of living standards, promotion of socio-cultural consonance, collaboration in science and technology, growth of inter-regional trade, cooperation in infrastructure, transport, and communication sectors, and development of agriculture, energy, and human resources, among others (Chawla, 2017). As a strategically significant region that provides access to Europe,

Central Asia, South Asia, and vast marine access, this region lacks meaningful strides on a diverse range of international issues. In addition, this region lacks a robust domestic market, excellent economic efficiency, and competence in the utilization of untapped prospects in the scientific, infrastructural, human, and mineral extraction domains. For this region to overcome this hurdle, ECO must evolve into the dominant organization. The ECO's legal framework was established by the 1977 Treaty of Izmir. This pact set the groundwork for the ECO's aim, which primarily grew into the fields of preferential trade measures, the progression of the energy industry, and enhancement of the transportation systems (Chawla, 2017). The Council of Ministers (COM) is the main policy and decision making body which is comprised of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of member states. The Secretariat initiates, coordinates and monitors the implementation of ECO activities. The Organizational structure of ECO is as follows:



Source: Devised by the author based on information of ECO Secretariat, Tehran

Other important components of the ECO structure are its four sectoral directorates (Akram, 2008). These are:

- i. Directorate of Industry and Agriculture
- ii. Directorate of Trade and Commerce
- iii. Directorate of Energy, Minerals and Environment
- iv. Directorate of Transport and Communication

The member states have signed the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), the Transit Trade Agreement (TTA), and the Transit Transport Framework Agree-

ment (TTFA) (Chawla, 2017). In addition, the ECO established a number of specialized agencies, linked groups, and regional institutions to facilitate regional collaboration. ECO established, for instance, the Trade and Development Bank, the Seed Association, and the Regional Coordination Center for Food Security in Istanbul; the Cultural Institute, the Regional Center for Risk Management of Natural Disasters, and the College of Insurance in Tehran; the Science Foundation, the Reinsurance Company, and the Postal Staff College in Pakistan; the Educational Institute in Kazakhstan; the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Afghanistan; and the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (Subsidiary and Affiliated Bodies, 2022).

There were other all-inclusive summits that aided in the planning, collaboration, and consolidation of ECO's future endeavors. In March of 2017, the Heads of State or Government of ECO member states gathered in Islamabad to strategize for future enhancements to the organization's objectives. ECO's evolution was aided in a variety of ways by the development of solid organizational structures over time. ECO functions are carried out by its different institutions and bodies, such as the Secretariat, the Council of Ministers (COM), the Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR), the Regional Planning Council (RPC), expert and working groups, etc. (Organs, 2022). In addition, under the UN Charter, ECO is now an ad hoc body. As a result, ECO has emerged, altered, and developed into a significant regional organization.

Economic Activities of ECO

a) Intra-regional Economic Activities

Since the beginning of the ECO, significant resources and efforts have been invested in strengthening intra-regional commercial operations through a variety of channels. In order to derive the most advantage possible from the organization, its member nations have set up a variety of subsidiary and connected agencies, organizations, and businesses. The creation of these subsidiary and associated organizations has been motivated by the need to expedite commercial and economic interactions between the organization's member states (Najafi Alamdarlo, 2016). ECO's commercial activity mostly grew to revolve around 12 separate fields over time. They are things like commerce, investments, transportation, telecommunications, energy, minerals, the environment, agriculture, industry, tourism, human resources, and the development of sustainable communities. They are best understood in relation to three primary spheres: the economic, the scientific, and the cultural. In 2003, ECO countries came together to sign the ECOTA agreement, which aims to encourage inter-regional trade and investment

(Javaid and Siahmardy, 2017). However, other than in the energy sector, it did not make any substantial advances in these other areas. In addition, members of the ECO signed the ECO Commerce Promotion Agreement (TPA) in 2009 with the intention of increasing intra-regional trade and establishing a common market (Javaid and Siahmardy, 2017). In addition, despite the fact that all member states signed the Ashgabat Agreement on improving transportation in order to strengthen regional economic ties with the Central Asian Nations, significant progress has not been made in the transportation sectors. This is even though the goal of the agreement was to improve transportation (Javaid and Siahmardy, 2017). As a direct result of this agreement, both the Europe-Caucasus-Asia Transport Corridor (TRACRCA) and the North-South Transport Corridor have been established.

To enhance ECO economic activities, the member nations have signed the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA), the Transit Trade Agreement (TTA), and the Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA) (Chawla, 2017). Despite the poor level of multilateral trade amongst ECO members, bilateral trade appears to be on the rise for the foreseeable future. In the year 2020 alone, bilateral trade between Turkey and Iran accounted for \$3.30 billion in U.S. dollars (Farzi et al., 2021). The export of 1.16 billion US dollars' worth of commodities from Iran to Turkey in 2020 represented the highest level in the preceding twenty-five years. Pakistan's bilateral commerce with Iran and Afghanistan continues to be suboptimal. As of 2018, Pakistan's trade balance with Afghanistan increased while its trade balance with Iran decreased.

PAKISTAN'S BILATERAL TRADE AS OF 2018			
	Imports (Mn US\$)	Exports (Mn US\$)	Trade Balance (Mn US\$)
India	1,928.47	383.05	- 1,545.42
Afghanistan	508.36	1,347.93	839.57
Iran	373.97	22.77	- 351.20

Table 01: Pakistan's Bilateral Trade with its neighbors.

Source: (Business Council, 2022)

However, both Iran and Pakistan agreed to expand their bilateral trade to US\$ 5 billion by 2023 (Khan, 2021). ECO-Vision 2025 was endorsed during the 13th Summit in 2017, with the intention of further strengthening commercial connections.

b) Inter-regional Economic Activities

Over the past two and a half decades, ECO's commercial activities with other important global and regional organizations have exploded. ECO's global trade volume reached approximately US\$ 648 billion in 2015 and US\$ 661 billion in 2016, which is still below the organization's trading potential (Trade Figures, 2022). ECO's global trade volume in 2017 reached US\$ 733 billion, a 9.8 percent increase compared to 2016's trade volume (Trade Statistics, 2022).

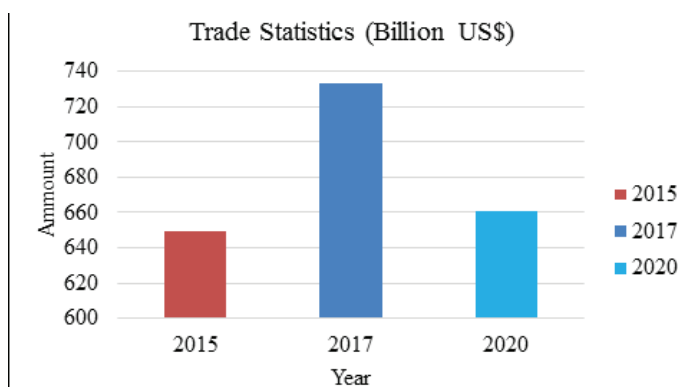


Figure 01: Trade Volume of ECO.

Source: (Javaid and Siahmardy, 2020).

Due to expanded economic interactions with other regional bodies and governments, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in ECO skyrocketed from 2000 to 2015, about 11-fold (Javaid and Siahmardy, 2020).

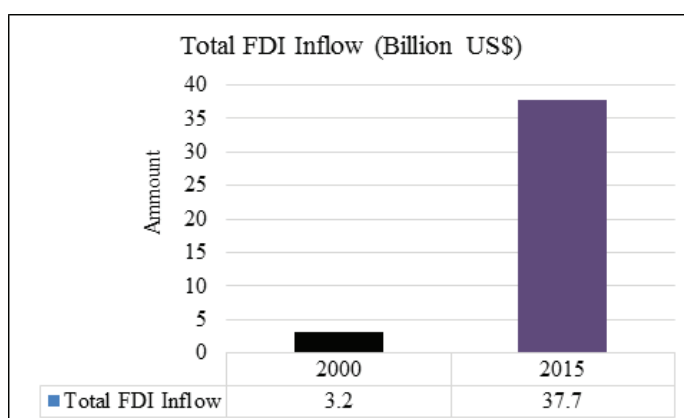


Figure 02: The amount of total FDI inflow in ECO region.

Source: (Javaid and Siahmardy, 2020).

Regarding foreign trade, ECO is one of the main importers of EU's machinery, healthcare and electrical devices, mechanical components, clothing and garment accessories (Trade Figures, 2022). On the other hand, the majority of ECO's exports to the EU consist of oil, gas, and other petrochemical products. Regarding ASEAN, ECO exports primarily mineral fuels, oil, and bituminous substance, while its imports include seafood and crustaceans as well as other aquatic invertebrates (Trade Figures, 2022). In 2020, ECO's exports to EU totaled US\$ 102.8 billion and imports totaled US\$ 93.7 billion, representing 35.4% of ECO's total exports and 25.2% of total imports, respectively (Trade Figures, 2022). During the same period, ECO's exports to ASEAN totaled 3.67 billion US dollars. ECO also worked with World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank and many others international organizations.

Socio-Cultural Activities of ECO

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) has not yet made any significant achievements in terms of the participation and promotion of socio-cultural activities (Hafeznia et al., 2012). To improve the well-being of local residents and their standard of living was one of the primary motivations behind the establishment of the ECO in the first place. The successful implementation of cross-cultural cooperation has enabled member nations to collaborate on the sharing of culture, the interchange of values, and the creation of a positive image more effectively through socio-cultural activities within the area (Mujahid, 2015). In order to work toward this objective, ECO formed a cultural institute with the purpose of promoting mutual comprehension and ensuring the continued viability of the diverse cultural traditions practiced by its members. However, there is a significant amount of work that needs to be done in order to encourage cooperation and collaboration among member states in the fields of socioeconomic difficulties through the use of policy mechanisms that are multifaceted and supportive (Mujahid, 2015). To combat various socio-economic and cultural challenges, such as migration, anti-drug initiatives, quality education, health problems, and poverty alleviation through engaged participation of locals in the region, it is therefore essential to have active participation from member states.

Among the nations of the ECO, social welfare activities such as expenditure on health care are much lower than in other countries; as a result, governments in these countries need to pay sufficient attention

for its progressive improvement (Samadi and Rad, 2013). The growth of healthcare pays off since it produces healthier workers who are more productive in the job than those who are not healthy (Bolin et al., 2003). Although health expenditures continue to rise in many ECO members states, such as Iran, which saw an increase in spending from US\$ 80 in 1995 to US\$ 247 in 2005 in terms of per capita income, the general status of the health care system has not improved to the degree that was anticipated (Samadi and Rad, 2013).

Problems of ECO

The smooth operation of ECO is being adversely affected by massive obstacles. The renewal of RCD as the ECO in 1985 and its subsequent enlargement in 1992 with the northern CARs did not make the ECO a successful organization (Akram, 2008). The analysis that follows identifies a number of the most significant obstacles to ECO's growth and development. First, the ECO region lacks a robust free trade framework to accelerate its economic growth and accomplish its basic goals. There are certain instances of preferential trade between some of ECO's member states, including as preferential trade between Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, but there is no complete free trade framework inside the organization. This deficiency has a significant impact on ECO's ability to expand and maximize its potential. Despite few evidences of economic cooperation, no customs union among the states has transpired yet which casts a shadow of doubt on its chances of success only as an economic bloc (Akram, 2008). Second, the cost of conducting business and intra-regional commerce in the ECO is comparatively greater than in the majority of other regional organizations. Additionally, rising and complex structural and non-structural trade barriers, like as tariffs and customs charges, undermine ECO's ability to accomplish the necessary economic growth in the region. Thirdly, this region's transportation and communication systems have fallen significantly behind. Seven out of ten of its member states are landlocked, and they do not have access to the ports of Turkey, Iran, or Pakistan via road or rail. Fourthly, Central Asian nations, despite being rich in gas, oil, and other minerals, were unable to use their resources and contribute to the increase in ECO exports. In terms of scientific and technical innovation and availability, the ECO region lags well behind. Even though it is endowed with abundant natural resources, such as gas and oil, and has vast importing opportunities in neighboring EU, China, and India, a lack of adequate technical, scientific, and technological capacities

has impeded its ability to extract these resources and thus accelerate economic growth. Fifth, the ECO's capacity to develop the region into a powerful trading block is being hindered by a variety of factors, including its restrictive industrial policies, heterogeneous foreign and domestic policies, inadequate capital, and ineffective governance (Koolae, 2007). The number of persons in the ECO region who were undernourished in 2015 amounted at 53 million, which is equivalent to 12 percent of the overall population of the ECO region (Productivity, 2022). In addition to this, the economic progress and purchasing power of ECO members are among the lowest of any category (Bahae and Saremi, 2002). Another significant issue that plagues ECO nations is the fact that they are the birthplace of a significant portion of the world's terrorists. In addition, the political system in many nations, including Pakistan, is deeply mired in bribery and corruption. The United States has imposed severe sanctions on Iran's commercial activity. As a result, Iran's participation in international trade is significantly lower than that of other nations in the ECO. The foreign interest in the region's resources often runs counter to the interest of the region. In essence, the ECO is surrounded by a variety of challenges, and in order to properly resolve them, it needs to work closely with the countries that are a part of it.

Potentials and Opportunities for the ECO in the Context of the Current Global Situation

It is undeniable that the Economic Cooperation Organization's standing in the eyes of the international community is rapidly improving, which is especially noteworthy in light of the current political unrest that can be seen all over the world. Although the ECO's strong organisational structure may be subject to scrutiny (Gordon, 2021). Three main topics are discussed in this section: the Ukrainian War of 2022, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS).

(a) The Ukrainian War of 2022

The beginning of the conflict in Ukraine has resulted in a significant increase in the cost of energy everywhere since it has caused a disruption in oil production and supply to Europe. For Europe to be able to maintain its manufacturing and industrial operations, it is critically dependent on Russia to continue supplying it with oil and gas. In addition to this, there is an increasing demand for energy produced in Russia from countries of the

world other than Europe, particularly China, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and other developing nations (Accenture, 2022). The price of gasoline and crude oil in Europe has increased by about fifty percent, and experts predict that the trend will continue in the years to come. It is not possible to find a rapid solution to the problem that the conflict in Ukraine has caused in the supply of oil and gas across Europe and more generally across the world. The reasons behind this include time constraints to increase the production capacity of alternative sources such as renewable or nuclear energy; the lack of adequate liquified natural gas (LNG) from OPEC; and the associated problems with using coal that could hinder many countries' global environmental commitment to de-carbonization. All of these factors contribute to the situation (Accenture, 2022). Russia is the main supplier of petroleum oil and natural gas to Europe, and Europe's largest imported products include crude oil (61.8% of the EU's total imports) and natural gas (24.9% of the EU's total imports). Russia is also the top supplier of natural gas to Europe (Eurostat, 2022). The daily demand for crude oil around the globe surged by more than one million barrels beginning in 2021 (Accenture, 2022).

Oil, natural gas and solid fossil fuel imports of EU in 2020		
Serial no.	Country name	Amount (% of total import)
1	Russia	29%
2	USA	9%
3	Norway	8%
4	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	7%
5	Kazakhstan and Nigeria	6%

Table 02: Oil, natural gas and solid fossil fuel imports of EU in 2020.

Source: (Eurostat, 2022).

In addition, one analysis reveals that the European Union's (EU's) economic reliance on imports for the fulfillment of its energy requirements reached 58 percent (more than half) in the year 2020. (Eurostat, 2022). In light of this, countries that are part of the ECO could constitute a good alternative for Europe and other developing nations in terms of satisfying their requirements for energy, particularly in terms of the supply of oil and gas.

Oil Reserve& Production by OEC country (2021)		
Country Name	Oil Reserve (Billion Barrels)	Production (Barrels Per Day)
Iran	208.60	2,566,000
Kazakhstan	30.00	1,937,000
Turkmenistan	0.60	186,000
Uzbekistan	0.59	4,400
Pakistan	0.54	83,000
Turky	0.37	67,000
Tajikistan	0.01	300
Kyrgyzstan	0.001	700
Total	240.71	4,844,400

Table 03: Total Oil Reserve & Production by OEC country (2021).

Source: 1. Oil Reserve (Global Economy, 2022)
2. Production (World Population Review, 2022)

In this context, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) might provide Europe and other developing nations in Asia with the cheapest and fastest supply of oil due to the small distance between them. ECO will be able to create a wonderful relationship with Europe if it continues to progress through these means since Europe's advanced machinery, technology, and scientific advances can substantially feed the necessary demand for ECO's technological shortfalls.

(b) Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is an ambitious program initiated by China, is another big event that is coming to deliver huge benefits for the ECO region. As of March 2022, between 140 and 147 countries have signed memorandums of understanding with China to become part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It is said that the BRI is the world's largest project in terms of spending, and it already includes more than 70 countries from around the world (Wang, 2022). Researchers, academicians, and policymakers have all come to the same conclusion: if BRI is properly implemented, it has the potential to radically alter the conventional strategic balance of the area. During his state visit to Kazakhstan in 2013, the President of China, Xi Jinping, made the announcement of this significant endeavor (China Daily, 2013).

Establishing a ‘Silk Road Economic Belt’ and a ‘Maritime Silk Road’ are both components of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has two dimensions.



Figure 03: Road and Maritime connectivity under BRI with Central Asian nations.

Source: (China.org.cn, 2022)

The entirety of the ECO area is at the heart of the BRI initiative. For example, it’s been suggested that the Silk Road Economic Belt will create a transcontinental passageway that will link China with South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Russia, and Europe. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has several primary objectives, the most important of which are to strengthen policy coordination, increase investment, encourage the growth of infrastructure, construct ports, roads, railroads, and airports, and strengthen telecommunications networks. Because the members of ECO are participating in this effort, and because China is actively working to change the power balance in both the region and the world through the promotion and implementation of this project, ECO countries stand to gain a significant amount from it. To put it another way, member states of the ECO might be eligible for sizeable financial assistance to help them address the infrastructure and communication gaps that have long hampered their collective advancement. In addition, all of the member nations are included in China’s two economic corridors as participants. It is anticipated that all 381 districts of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan will be linked to all 2048 sub-provisional units in China via the China-Central Asia-West

Asia Corridor (Gill et al., 2019). Through Pakistan's Gawdar port and Iran's Chabahar port, this corridor will provide these landlocked central Asian countries with access to port facilities that are connected to the fastest transit network. It is believed that the successful implementation of this corridor will provide countries in Central Asia with the possibility to reach the global market with greater levels of domestic production. On the other hand, it is anticipated that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will contribute at least 1.5 percent to the growth of Pakistan's GDP. Furthermore, it will open a new door for the fastest oil supplies from the countries in Central Asia.

(c) Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS)

The great power rivalry active in the region is an additional crucial aspect of securing strategic leverage. China rose to prominence on the international stage in the 21st century. Chinese economic and military expansion pose a persistent threat to the region's strategic and tactical interests, particularly those of the United States, as well as those of the SAARC and ASEAN regions (Lardy, 2003). In reaction to China's expanding influence in the Indo-Pacific region, the United States and its allies devised the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) to protect their interests in the area (Farhi and Maggiori, 2019). India, on the other hand, is attempting to become a regional force alongside China (Wani, 2020). Controlling the maritime lanes along the coasts of the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Arab Sea, the Gulf region, and the Red Sea region is currently their primary objective of IPS (Paskal, 2021). China, on the other hand, is building its road and maritime networks along the coasts of these seas, namely near the ports of Pakistan, Turkey, and Iran (Khan, 2013). As a result, this has caused instability in the ECO region. Under these conditions, ECO nations can gradually and strategically strengthen their ties with China and Europe, as they might offer a massive oil and gas market and provide the region with robust connectivity and technology (Li, 2016). In essence, the member states of ECO have many opportunities to seize within the current unstable global order. Nonetheless, only cautious and calculated action can result in significant success for the region's development.

Analysis

The commencement of ECO did not signal meaningful progress toward its basic aims. Despite the ECO's potential to integrate, none

of the ECO states are each other's major trading partners (Akram, 2008). However, it did recently achieve significant progress in areas such as trade and investment, regional connectivity, and to promote a single market for products and services in the region. Despite all of the obstacles, the ECO has a lot of potential to develop into a powerful and vibrant regional organization like the EU and ASEAN. There are a great number of compelling reasons to have faith in ECO's optimistic outlook for the future. To begin, the year 2022 has been designated as the 'Year of Strengthening Connectivity' with the intention of fostering a strong political will to improve transport connectivity in the region. This is a crucial step in the process of creating economic integration at the regional level and securing competence. This project intends to enhance transportation infrastructures, establish uninterrupted cross-border transit, digitalize interstate trade, improve communication networks, and improve connection with prosperous regional organizations all over the world (ECO, 2022).

Second, the world is facing a crisis in terms of adequate and affordable supplies of oil and gas. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has made it abundantly evident how severe the global energy crisis may become if a significant conventional supplier of oil and gas (such as Russia) were to stop its customary delivery for a set amount of time (Hutter and Weber, 2022). Under these conditions, the ECO region has the potential to become a significant destination for oil and gas imports for the rest of the world. The ECO might tighten its ties with the EU in order to supply the EU with a substantial quantity of oil and gas in order to fulfill the EU's increasing need for energy. Third, the growing engagement of China, which brings with it enormous economic incentives like as connectivity associated to the BRI, has the potential to amplify the regional integration of the ECO (Hoh, 2019). In addition, if the anticipated infrastructural link is carried out in the appropriate manner, this economic bloc would be able to achieve brisk trade across the regions (Vakulchuk and Overland, 2019). It is possible that the expansion of port facilities and the linkage of Central Asian countries to these ports (Chabahar and Gawadar) could result in an increase in the volume of trade and investment in the region. Fourth, every single member of ECO has made a concerted effort to enhance the quality of life and social welfare of the people they serve on a constant basis (Ravangard et al., 2014). These kinds of activities might make a substantial dent in the region's problems with poverty and unemployment. In addition, the

region may benefit from the multi-pronged strategic efforts that ECO has developed to protect the environment and limit environmental damage.

To further explain, the ECO's members have already negotiated a number of agreements to eradicate terrorism, militancy, smuggling, and the drug trade in the area (Nazir, 2010). Additionally, a deliberate effort has been made to reduce tensions between countries by finding amicable solutions through dialogue. The result of all these activities taken together offers ECO some exciting potential and role to play in the region.

Recommendations and Methods to boost Regionness in the ECO

Interstate rivalry is another crucial aspect of the regional organization like ECO. This is the main problem to emerge a region for this organization. Such rivalry whether apparent or hidden, often leads to the stagnation and inefficiency in the organization (Hashi, 2020). There is rivalry between Iran and Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. There must be some effective efforts to resolve interstate rivalries, whether bilateral or multilateral, among the member states through diplomacy and discussion. Besides, effective mechanisms can be developed to eradicate sense of hostility among the parties in order to improve the peace and security of the region. For regionalism to flourish, both a distinct regional identity and strong links within the region itself are key prerequisites. Despite the fact that the ECO is home to a significant portion of the world's oil and gas reserves, as well as a significant portion of the world's production of tangible goods and supply of low-cost labor, this forum has not yet received sufficient attention from policymakers and investors all over the world (Javaid and Siahmardy, 2017). Very few countries can claim to have substantial economic ties with the participants in this conference. However, there are many different things that can be done in order to foster regional integrity and relationships. For instance, in order to deepen the sense of regionness present in ECO, extensive common physical and institutional processes are required. For this purpose, there is a need to boost trade and investment inside the region as well as across regions, taking into account the potential for commerce in the area. It might be easier to accomplish this objective if we made better use of both human and natural resources (Chawla, 2017). On the other hand, improved political will and support must be maintained in order to continue improving regional connections, information and communications technology, and energy infrastructure. Fostering regional connection and infrastructure development will unquestionably contribute

significantly to the region's overall industrialization and trade liberalization efforts. Adjusting regional policies to better align with domestic policy is one more essential step to take (Javaid and Siahmardy, 2017). In addition, the coordination of macroeconomic and financial policies, the exchange of technologies, the removal of trade barriers, and an increase in the domestic capacity of governance are all potential ways that ECO's regional integration could be sped up and made more robust.

Other aspects of improving the sense of regionalism include promoting and exchanging cultural activities within the region. For example, SAFF games held in the SAARC region still continue to foster a sense of regional identity in the South Asian region (Shaheen, 2013). All of the member states can be brought together on one platform via exchanging educational activities, research, artistic creations, literary works, cultural festivals, common visa facilities, culinary creations, and musical works. Working together against common concerns such as terrorism, transnational organized crime, and climate change can also be an engaging method for boosting regionalism in the ECO (Cordier, 1996). In addition, one of the most important things that can be done to build a more strong sense of regional identity in the ECO region is to forge partnerships in the areas of agricultural and healthcare development (Marat, 2008). As a result, member states have a responsibility to take the initiative in promoting collaboration and, consequently, increasing the sense of regionalism within ECO.

Conclusion

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) has possibility to evolve into a platform for both economic progress and interstate competitiveness in the south-western region of Asia. However, the members in the area have so far shown a range of competing interests, which has hindered the organization's capacity to advance its development. In spite of this, in recent years, numerous coordinated and multi-pronged efforts have been made to foster tangible improvement in a variety of domains, including but not limited to: combating terrorism, reducing poverty and unemployment, fostering tangible improvement in the areas of trade and investment, facilitating policy coordination, boosting industrialization, fostering tangible improvement in the areas of trade and investment. In essence, both the stakes and the challenges involved in achieving these objectives are high. Due to this, in order for the ECO to flourish as a

meaningful region, its members must work closely together and overcome political difficulties.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE IN THE HISTORY AND FORMATION OF IDENTITY IN BANGLADESH

Sudip Chakroborthy*

Abstract:

Theatre activities play an important role in the history as well as the daily lives of Bangladesh, and have contributed crucially towards both national and other senses of identity. The study shall now briefly address the notable performances and theatrical traditions that have interacted with Bangalee, the Bangladeshi nation and nationalism since the British colonial era.

There are ambivalent, paradoxical, and complementary genealogies to be traced, all of which have “imagined” or “narrated” or “performed” in the nation in multiple ways. Whether as part of a postcolonial project in the reconstruction of the “collective imagination” or, on the other hand, as the creation of a new aesthetic, mirroring an emergent intercultural heterogeneity, or proposing intervention for social transformation, Bangladeshi performance has formed part of a vivid tableau of complex, shifting live spectacle in Bangladesh. This study will examine theatre and performance in Bangladesh both from the point of view of artistic practice, and as an agent for change.

Keywords: *theatre, performance, identity, Bangladesh.*

Introduction

Theatre movements in Bangladesh have provided a vibrant response to the colonial era (1757-1947), the Pakistan era (1947-1971), the *Muktijuddho* era (March-December 1971) and sovereign Bangladesh, that included the newly independent and war-torn Bangladesh (1972-1975), the military and quasi-military regime (1975-1990), and post-military “democratic” governments era (1991-2018).** I now use this historical

* Assistant Professor, Theatre and Performance Studies, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

** *Muktijuddho*: Bangladesh War of Independence in 1971. I shall use the native term *Muktijuddho* throughout my thesis.

timeline in order to map the theatre practices that were taking place during each period. This history of Bangladeshi theatre is important in order for the study of identity and plurality in Bangladesh to situate a Practice Research and to demonstrate how Bangladeshi art draws from a long and rich heritage to which the artists of Bangladesh are indebted.

Theatre During the Colonial Era (1757-1947)

Two examples are central to examining theatre activities in colonised Bangla: Dinbandhu Mitra's *Nil Darpan* (The Mirror of Indigo) and Mukunda Das's *Swadeshi Jatra* (the performance related to anticolonial *Swadeshi Movement* in Bangla region). The former was the first play performed in Dhaka in 1861. "Dinbandhu Mitra", as Ahmed argues, "may claim to have inaugurated modernism in Bengali theatre". It was a "bourgeois drama in the European romanticist style", blending a realist story with formal experimentation (2016a, p. 272). Bangladeshi Theatre scholar Syed Jamil Ahmed's study shows that *Nil Darpan* "initiated a heated public debate all over Bengal regarding the intolerable oppression of the indigo planters and marked the beginning of postcolonial resistance in Bengali theatre" (*ibid*). The latter, *Swadeshi Jatra* performances, was based on themes "such as colonial exploitation, patriotism, anti-colonial struggle, feudal and caste-based oppression" in early twentieth century Bengal (Ahmed, 2016c, p. 14), to protest the 1905 Bangla Partition which I detailed in Chapter One. It took part in the first Bangalee nationalist movement, which mainly involved "an economic strategy aimed at removing the British Empire from power and improving economic conditions in India. [...] Strategies of the Swadeshi movement involved boycotting British products and the revival of domestic-made products and production techniques. [...] It was the most successful of the pre-Gandhian movements" (Absar, 2014, p. 442). These plays, that showed an agrarian community, clearly criticised the colonial appropriation of land and land rights.

In response to the political movement behind the creative activities of Bangalee people and their theatre industry, the British administration implemented *The Dramatic Performances Act, 1876*, which was "an Act for the better control of public performances" of a play, pantomime, and any other public drama. Postcolonial Indian theatre scholar Rustom Bharucha states that it was, "expedient to empower the Government to prohibit public dramatic performances which are scandalous, defamatory, seditious or obscene" (1993, pp. 21-23). The key aim of the Act was to

keep the Bangalee activists in check.***

Theatre After Independence from British Colonial Rule (1947-1971)

Kolkata was the centre of the Bangalee urban elite theatre after Partition in 1947. The city was the centre of economic and political activity during the nineteenth century in India. However, after Partition, Dhaka gained significance as the urban cultural centre in the eastern part of the region.

According to Ahmed, “Bangladesh became deeply entangled with cultural nationalism” when Munier Choudhury’s *Kabar (The Grave)* was performed in Dhaka Central Jail on 21 February 1953 (2016a, p. 274). Influenced by the theme of US playwright Irwin Shaw’s *Bury the Dead*, Chowdhury’s *Kabar* was directed by Sree Foni Chakrabarty and performed by the political prisoners for a group of spectators in the prison. The audience were all held together by their common identity as members of Communist Party and had come together to commemorate the crisis of 21 February 1952, which was the first major protest against Pakistani rule of East Pakistan, now Bangladesh (Majumder, 2018b; Ahmed, 2016d; Biswas, 1988).

One might say that during this period there was both theatre protesting against Pakistan rule, and also other forms of performance, notably street protests and other cultural manifestations. In 1947, students in East Pakistan held meetings and demonstrations – themselves a kind of performance – and formed the Language Action Committee. As a result, in 1948, the governor-general of Pakistan addressed a large audience in Dhaka and announced that the Bangla language could be used in East Pakistan, but that “the state language of Pakistan [would] be Urdu and no other language. Anyone who tries to mislead people is really the enemy of Pakistan. [...] Without one state language no nation can remain solidly together and function” (Schendel, 2013, p. 111). Looking back to the pre-independence period performing arts scene, particularly from 1947 to 1971, Ramendu Majumder, a Bangladeshi theatre-maker actively involved in Bangla language-based theatre practice since 1960s, examines the political environment of that period. In a public lecture, Majumder (2015) stated that, “[t]he theatre, music, dance and other elements of [Bengali](#)

*** Surprisingly, after the Partition in 1947, the Act was not repealed in independent India and Pakistan, although it is no longer enforced in the way it was under British colonial rule. Instead, most of the states of the two respective countries have introduced their own amended versions with certain modifications.

culture were not only discouraged but, in many cases, prohibited also in the name of religion by the then Pakistani rulers and their sycophants.” After a series of movements and demonstrations, protestors confronted armed police. Many were injured and nine people were killed on 21 February 1952. In this context, the performance of *Kabar* in jail in 1953 carried a political importance. Therefore, both formal theatrical performance, and street performance in the form of demonstrations, were mobilised during this period, in the interests of political emancipation.

Ahmed (2011a) provides an extensive study of the history and development of language-based cultural identity and Islamic religious identity in Bangladesh since the Pakistan period. He suggests that while during the colonial period there were three spheres of influence – British, Hindu and Muslim – now, “there were two: one defined by religion based in the ‘Pakistani’ camp upholding Islamic and feudal values, and the other defined by language based in the ‘Bengali’ camp upholding the Bengali language and liberal democratic-humanistic values.” His study illustrates that outside Dhaka, areas were upholding the “religious-based trend”. This trend praised Islamic history via the performance of historical plays about the Muslim rulers of the Middle East, India and Bangla, and the independence struggle of Pakistan. On the other hand, Dhaka University-based productions mainly belonged to the “language-based nationalists’ trend” (Ahmed, 2011a). It must be noted, however, that no evidence demonstrates that the *Adivasi* were present in the pre-Independence Bangladeshi theatrical performances.**** Therefore, it was clear from the start, on examining theatrical performance, that the choice was between Muslim or Bangla-language dominance, or both, but that plurality and diversity were not evidently embraced in this brief period before the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country.

Theatre as Resistance During the Muktiyuddho (March-December 1971)

The independence struggle for Bangladesh greatly influenced theatre-makers and their performances. According to Majumder (2015), theatre became a vibrant art form in the country during this period. Indeed, one could almost go so far as to say that the *Muktiyuddho* “served as a treasury of never-ending wealth for Bangladeshi playwrights”. The themes of many

**** *Adivasi*/ “আদিবাসী”: indigenous; I use the term *Adivasi* throughout this study.

plays were based on the history as well as the impact of the liberation war. The history and the impact of the *Muktijuddho* were the themes of many plays since the independence of the country. “The sense of resistance was portrayed in plays which dealt with the subjects of fundamentalism, communalism, and social injustice.” “Theatre is”, Majumder explains further, “a strong weapon to fight against all these odds in our society. It is indeed a matter of pride that our theatre makers are socially committed and use their creativity in order to move towards a society free from all injustice and oppression” (2015). For example, when the country was in turmoil in 1971, with people were being brutally killed and tortured every day, the politically-committed theatre-makers incessantly performed their creative resistance in order to mark their emerging identity.

Ahmed’s study reveals three wartime plays: *Biplobi Bangladesh* (*Revolutionary Bangladesh*), *Pratham Jatra* (*The First Journey*) and *Agacha* (*The Weeds*). *Biplobi Bangladesh* was written by Khairul Bashar, and “portrays a war-torn image of the country”, described in graphic detail. “*Pratham Jatra* was written by Narawan Biswas, shows a middleclass Bengali family, having fled from war-torn East Pakistan, passing their days in economic hardship in a refugee camp in India after their Indian relatives refused to shelter them”. *Agacha*, a rod puppet performance, was a series of improvised skits featuring the victory of the *Muktijuddho* in 1971 (2006a, p. 70).

Many of the spontaneous performances of that period are unfortunately not documented. Their scripts or tangible evidence of their existence are either lost, or not preserved. However, they remain in the memory of those who saw and wrote about them, notably the theatre scholar Ahmed, on whose writings this study leans heavily (Bharucha, 1993). In addition, some evidence of the then emerging patriotic themes of Bangla plays have documented in this study, notably Bidyut Kar’s *Bikkhubdho Bangla* (*Agitated Bangla*), performed on 24 March 1971. A group of young theatre-makers performed in a village named Raykail in the Sylhet region (Goswami, 2021). In addition, two open-air theatre productions named *Ebarer Songram* (*This Revolutionary War*) and *Swadhinotar Songram* (*The War of Independence*) written by Momtazuddin Ahmed, were staged in Chittagong in March 1971 (Uddin, 2013, pp. 132-145). Another example is provided by the fact that, right after the war began, a group of young Bangalee writers, singers, theatre-makers and recital artists joined *Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra* (the Independent Bangla Radio Centre)

based in Kolkata. With the help of the Indian Government, the artists regularly presented stories, songs and news, which was broadcasted all over Bangladesh during the *Muktijuddho* in 1971. According to artist-activist Kamal Lohani, Kalyan Mitra's *Jollader Dorbar (Court of Executioners)* was one of the popular radio drama series at that time (Lohani, 2021). Such theatre-maker-initiated movements are extremely important for an understanding of the challenges as well as other contemporary struggles of the soon-to-be-born nation, but have been long forgotten. The interviews and archival research, have been able to unearth these examples of the thriving resistant, activist theatre scene at the time.

Newly-Independent and War-Torn Bangladesh (1972-1975)

Notable plays include *Jay Din Faguno Din (Gone are the Spring Days)* by Milon Choudhury and *Subachan Nirbasone (Words in Exile)* and *Ekhon Duhsamay (Bad Times Now)* by Abdullah Al Mamun (Heera, 2018). The theatrical productions during this era mainly addressed the mixed feelings of frustration, deprivation, the black market and famine, which were condensed into the representation of the newly-independent, war-torn Bangladesh.

In the Post-Independence era, the theatre was one of the most high-spirited and effective forms of artistic expression in Bangladesh. Many non-profit and non-professional theatre groups were created all over the country, shaped by the Kolkata-based Group Theatre Movement. The regular staging of plays became a new phenomenon in the cultural life of Bangladesh. According to Ahmed, “[s]uch organizations, which produce plays entirely in Bengali, and which emphasize collective egalitarianism against the dominance of celebrity performers, began to emerge in the country in 1972, [...]” (2016a, p. 272).

In an analysis of the post-Independence theatre movement of Bangladesh, South Asian theatre scholar Bishnupriya Dutta observes the national aspirations, identity, and the euphoria of Independence, which was explored by playwrights when the movement spread across the country. Dutta states, “[a] wide range of plays was produced from the early 1970s to the early 1980s reflecting politically sensitive issues related to the liberation war. [...] By the mid-1970s, other groups had come into being and taken on nationalist themes” (2007, p. 45). The post-independence period was one of nationalist pride in the newly established Bangladesh, and also disappointment in the economic failure and the traumatic aftermath of the war.

The Military and Quasi-Military era (1975-1990)

On 19 November 1980, in reaction to the Bangladeshi military regime's political failure, to economic grief, socio-economic deprivation, restoration of the Islamic force and rising religious fundamentalism, a group of theatre makers formed Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation. They successfully spread their vision of a secular, plural Bangladesh across urban settings in the country through their non-profit theatre movement.

The dictatorial regime in Bangladesh was amply represented in theatre all around the country. Indeed, the expression *natak hok gono-manuser hatiar* ("Let the theatre be people's means of protest") indicates the importance of theatre as activism during this period.**** For instance, street theatre was a vibrant expression for 1980s theatre-makers in Bangladesh.***** Street plays performed in urban settings, which boldly expressed artists' ideological and political opinions against the military and quasi-military regimes. In 1980s, along with university students and political activists, theatre artists came out into the streets, joined the demonstrations, played an active role through performing numerous satirical, farcical and comedy plays based on the contemporary situation, and identified themselves as activists rather than the entertainment artists. This continued until a popular uprising and return to parliamentary democracy in 1990.

With the euphoria slowly receding during the 1980s as the autocratic and dictatorial rule increased, "a feeling of disillusionment gave way to a critical attitude that sought to explore in theatrical terms the political, philosophical, and psychological issues left shelved during the years of nationalist struggle when other problems had priority", as Dutta's study reveals (2007, p. 45). In addition, her study shows that plays by Bertolt Brecht were staged during this period. Close readings of the political subtext of the staging reveals that they provided astute reflections and interpretations of contemporary Bangladesh.

There were two other significant mass performance manifestations evidenced during this period: *Mukta Natak (Liberated Theatre Movement)*

**** *natak hok gono-manuser hatiar*: "নাটক হোক গণমানুষের হাতিয়ার"; translated from Bangla by Farah Naz.

***** *Poth-natak morcha* (Street Theatre Front) founded during the anti-dictatorship movement in the 1980s. *Bangladesh Poth-natak parisad* (Bangladesh Street Theatre Council), founded in 1992, is the largest theatre organisation in Bangladesh.

and *Gram Theatre Movement (Village Theatre Movement)*.***** *Mukta Natak Movement* was an initiative of the Marxist theatre-maker, Mamunur Rashid, along with his theatre troupe Aranyak Natya Dal in 1984. “Mukta Natak performed political activism which was basically inspired by a vision of social change based class struggle” (Ahmed, 2014, p. 153). *Gram Theatre Movement* was initiated by Selim Al Deen, a Bangladeshi playwright, in cooperation with the theatre group Dhaka Theatre. The central aim of this group was to sustain the *Bangla natya* – Bangla theatre – and its diverse forms of expression, in rural areas of the country. This initiative is still active and regularly generates many programmes. Indeed, Ahmed demonstrate that the early 1990s carry significance for Bangladeshi theatre, since during this period urban theatre-makers were “deeply engaged with a ‘theatre of the roots’ in shaping a design aesthetics [...]”. In other words, *Bangla natya* performance traditions and styles were championed in the urban theatre practice (2016a, p. 276).

It is to be noted that urban theatre in Bangladesh is dominated by the proscenium arch auditorium, and even the National Theatre’s main stage is a proscenium-arch playhouse. “Nevertheless,” states Ahmed, “the fact that the complex also offers two studios with the provision for flexible staging, shows that the post-colony of Bangladesh is confidently moving away from colonial-imperial heritage” (*ibid*). Thus, there are performance spaces today that can accommodate *Bangla natya* as it is traditionally staged, in the round.

Ritual Performance in Bangladesh

Waz mahfil and *kirtan* are religious performances, which are also considered to be artistic performance, much like theatre. Performance scholar Richard Schechner argues that it is difficult to separate “art” from “ritual”. By presenting the example of two US church services, he considers that “religious services with music, singing, dancing, preaching, speaking in tongues, and healing”, are also a form of performance (2002a, p. 26). At a *kirtan* - a Bangladeshi Hindu or Buddhist ritual, participants go into a trance, to the dance, music and song. Radha Krishna’s love and separation are narrated, and the qualities of the Hindu deities and their deeds are recounted, along with the Buddha’s life stories. Study shows that

***** *Mukta Natak Movement* / “মুক্ত নাটক আন্দোলন”: *Liberated Theatre Movement*; *Gram Theatre Movement*/ “গ্রাম থিয়েটার আন্দোলন”: *Village Theatre Movement* (Ahmed, 2014).

before the Partition in 1947, both Bangalee Hindus *and* Muslims attended *kirtans*. Moreover, the national poet of Bangladesh, Kazi Nazrul Islam, himself a Muslim, wrote a number of acclaimed *kirtans* (Sayeed, 2021).

Another religious ritual in Bangladesh is *waz mahfil*. In the case of this ritual, as Ahmed observes, lay devotees gather to listen to an Islamic scholar elucidating one or more religious issues believed to be of importance. Often held in the evening, sometimes running through the entire night, the *waz mahfil* is a very popular form of religious education. By asking questions and seeking responses, the scholar constantly encourages his audience to participate in the discussion. “Therefore, when led by a skilful speaker, a *waz mahfil* may mesmerise the participants, arousing the deepest devotional fervor” (Ahmed 2006b, p. 73). Schechner states, “[i]ndeed, more than a few people attend religious services as much for aesthetic pleasure and social interaction as for reasons of belief” (2002a, p. 26). This is certainly the case for these two religious rituals in Bangladesh, which cross the dividing line between religious practice, and theatrical art form.

The Post-military “Democratic” Era (1991-today)

After the overthrow of the military regime in 1990, many proscenium, experimental and street theatre productions were staged on the themes of rising sectarianism, the free market economy and industrial development. Group theatres are non-profit repertory companies, where members volunteer their time in the evenings, weekends, and holidays to produce theatre productions with professional competence. The groups regularly perform their plays in rented theatre halls and sometimes on the festival circuit. Majumder asserts, “theatre in Bangladesh is a theatre of love, theatre of passion” (2012, p. 3). Majumder (2015) finds the following major trends in contemporary Bangladesh theatre: plays based on the Independence movement, social satires, protest and resistance, reinterpretation of myths, narrative tradition, and translation and adaptation.

Today, the Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation is a network of over 400 non-profit city/town-based groups of theatre makers (BGTF, 2019), “who are mostly middle-class students and professionals belonging to the media, advertising agencies and other private services” (Ahmed, 2016a, p. 272), which afford them salaries in order to sustain their theatrical activities. Ahmed’s study shows, the groups bring professionalism to the

work that they produce and are run by the “voluntary contributions of its members, box-office receipts, revenue accrued from advertisements published in souvenir [programmes], and occasional sponsorship from national and multinational industrial and trading companies” (*ibid*). He adds, “[o]ccasionally a few directors, designers and performers are paid, but it is not enough to produce a body of full-time theatre practitioners” (*ibid*). Contemporary Bangladeshi group theatre activities are described in Majumder states elsewhere:

Bangladesh does not have a professional theatre as far as earning a living from the theatre is concerned. In such a social and economic context, one cannot afford to earn one’s living only from theatre performances. However, there are a number of artists who earn their living from television plays regularly put on air on many television channels in the country. (2012, p. 1)

However, many non-governmental organisations are active in their use of theatre techniques, including Theatre for Development, Theatre in Education, and Therapeutic/ Psycho Theatre. These are used especially in rural areas in Bangladesh by Proshika, Ain O Salish Kendra, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, Transparency International Bangladesh, Save the Children, Help Age, Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts to name a few, for the purposes of improving health, wellbeing, education and livelihoods.

It is also important to mention the development of theatre academia and the state of research in the country. Extensive examinations of *Bangla natya* include Deen (1996), and Ahmed (1995 and 2000). These consider the seventy-plus genres of the theatre tradition that still exist in rural areas of the country (Ahmed, 2006b). Among these traditional theatre practices, “nearly fifty are rooted in the various religious beliefs and faiths of the people; the rest are absolutely secular in nature” (Majumder, 2015). Deen is the founder of the Drama and Dramatics Department at Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh, and a pioneer in researching the traditional and folk theatre of Bangladesh that originated a thousand years ago. His major study is entitled *Maddyajuger Bangla Natya – Medieval Bangla Theatre* – and was published by the Bangla Academy in 1996. Deen has also published many other Bangla-language books and scholarly articles. Ahmed, for his part, is the founder of the Department of Theatre and Music at the University of Dhaka, and is a noted researcher and theatre-maker. His Bangla-language *Hajar Bacar: Bangladesher Natak O NatyaKala* – a

critical appreciation and history of Bangla Theatre dating back a thousand years – was published by The Bangladesh Academy of Fine and Performing Arts in 1995, and his other major publications include *Acinpakhi Infinity: Indigenous Theatre of Bangladesh* in 2000.

In spite of this critical and academic attention, over the years most forms of traditional/folk theatre have been in decline and “some are at the point of extinction” (Majumder, 2015). In order to attempt to combat this, at present, six “public universities in Bangladesh offer BA and MA programmes in theatre and performance studies. Most of the students who graduate from these universities are unable to sustain themselves by working full-time in theatre” (Ahmed, 2016a, p. 272), but at least they have gained knowledge of local and ancient performance traditions, in the hope that they will be preserved in embodied memory.

The Socio-Political Role of Theatre in Present-Day Bangladesh

Since 2000, I have been actively participating in academic, amateur, semi-professional and non-governmental theatre activities in urban settings, and I have remarked that the era of “diversification” and plurality that dominates theatre practice in the twenty-first century, is constantly confronted with the *Bhoyer Songskriti* (“climate of fear”), where citizens in Bangladesh are terrified of sectarian violence (Riaz, 2018, p. 11). Riaz claims that *Bhoyer Songskriti* is introduced, developed, and normalised in society by producing and reproducing fear. It is such an environment of fear, intimidation and force that exercises power in Bangladeshi society. It is not always necessary to enforce fear through physical force or violence, since the perception of force and violence is enough to create an ambience, or “climate”, of fear (pp. 11-13).

With specific reference to theatre, artists face strong resistance from intolerant political circles, as well as religious fundamentalists. From his lived experience, Majumder (2018a) explicitly states, “[i]n rural Bangladesh age-old Jatra, a popular folk theatre, has been replaced by religious gatherings where sermons are given and where dance, music, and theatre are not permitted, according to Islam. Instead, reactionary idea are preached.”***** Majumder (2018a) notes that, “religion is also being

***** Jatra/ “যাত্রা”: a traditional Bangla theatre genre, which originates in Hindu ritualistic performance depicting Krishna.

Similar instances can be found in African performance scholar Osita Okagbue’s study, where he demonstrates the struggle for cultural dominance between indigenous

abused by many political parties, and now, fundamentalism reigns over reason”, resulting in the fact that in many areas, especially rural regions, it is almost impossible to perform theatre.

The secular forces are losing their influence on society. When it comes to freedom of expression regarding religion or politics writers feel insecure about expressing their thoughts. Self-censorship is the norm today. In such a context, it is unsafe for a theatre group to perform a play which could raise questions and debates in some sensitive areas (Majumder, 2018a).

With my Practice Research, this study sought ways to explore and challenge contemporary issues and experiences. The responses I received from the Dhaka-based on-stage and off-stage performers, via a series of informal text messages and voice calls, and from one theatre director’s personal interview, provided invaluable insights for me about how theatre-makers feel intimidated and fearful. During a student movement in Dhaka in 2018, two performers I have worked with in the past – a renowned film-television-theatre artist and an emerging theatre and dance artist – explained why they declined to stage their performance-as-protest.***** The former directly answered, “[n]o, I cannot perform”, while the latter, ignored the request. Later, in the comparative safety of a friendly and private moment both revealed that they say that they did not wish to take part in protest performance because one supports the ruling party, and another feels forced to support it. Moreover, both are the recipients of the Government’s Ministry of Culture fund, and therefore they fear being excluded from the ruling party’s “list of favourites”, and therefore losing their funding.

Therefore, before this research project even started, it was victim to forms of censorship, or self-censorship, since artists were reluctant to be involved either because they were on different partisan sides, or else

religious and cultural practices such as *Bori* and Islam in present-day Northern Nigeria (2008, pp. 270-271, Okagbue’s italics).

***** Sunday 27 July 2018. A speeding bus killed two school children in the capital city Dhaka. The Dhaka streets were filled with young protesters chanting “We want justice” and demanding improved road safety. For eight days, the young students protested with processions, sit-ins, slogans, songs, by controlling road traffic and inspecting driving licenses. C. R. Abrar, a Bangladeshi researcher and academic, writes, “[t]he teenagers’ protest touched the hearts of millions. Mothers brought in snacks and bottled water for them. [...] By the fourth day of the protest, ordinary people—parents, guardians, and admirers—joined the rallies” (2018). The “road safety” movement formed not to bring down the present government, but to raise questions and demand accountability.

because they were fearful of intimidation or even violence, if they were seen to oppose dominant politics and religion.

In an informal discussion with me in 2019 in London, theatre activist C stated, “we, the artists, and cultural activists, support the Awami League.***** Therefore, we cannot perform anything that goes against the party because we do not want to create a negative public impression of the Awami League to the people” (2018, my translation). The Awami League has a visible and vibrant connection with theatre-makers and artists. When the Awami League formed a government for the first time in the post-military era (1996-2001), under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, on 30 January 2001 it withdrew the colonial *Dramatic Performances Act 1876*, which had controlled theatre, through a Bill in the National Parliament, setting a unique example in post-colonial South Asia. Furthermore, the Awami League created a separate Ministry for Cultural Affairs in 2014 and amplified its funding for the performing arts and fine arts for the first time after independence (though the amount of budget allocated for this ministry is less than one percent of the total budget of the country). But while C, whom I interviewed, expressed their support for the Awami League, they then stated, on the other hand that, ideally, artists should be non-partisan. “So, you can say, we are compromising our art” (2018, my translation). C is a theatre-maker who protested the rape and murder of a young civilian girl in an army cantonment of Bangladesh with his street theatre production of 2016. Nevertheless, C explained that, after the overthrow of the military government, theatre gradually lost its characteristics of resistance against injustice and prejudice in Bangladesh. For the main part, theatre today avoids political or religious controversy, owing to the “climate of fear”. Moreover, as soon the theatre receives government funding, its inherent character of resistance tends to disappear, since it remains in fear of having its funding cut. Government-commissioned, or government-funded theatre productions are mostly centred around the *Muktijuddho*, and by implication support the Awami League, which was behind the struggle for independence in 1971. Some funded works are focused on the remaking of traditional folk performances. However, funded theatre productions do not tend to raise questions about the current political context, or challenge the ruling party’s policy.

In 2019, Bangladeshi theatre literally became a site of conflict when

***** C is used to anonymise the interviewee.

cultural and political activists protested about the fact that two plays were taken off stage. As part of their protest, the activists occupied the lounge of the National Theatre in Dhaka. The productions were *Jibon O Rajnoitik Bastobota (Life and Political Reality)* by Shahidul Jahir, directed by Syed Jamil Ahmed, and produced by the Spordha repertory, and *Stalin* by Kamal Uddin Nilu, a noted Bangladeshi theatre director and designer based in Norway. The latter was produced by the Centre for Asian Theatre repertory. Both plays were accused of the distortion of history. Both of these productions encountered opposition because they were seen to criticise, whether directly or indirectly, the ruling party and their allies.

These events afforded me an opportunity to explore the socio-political role of theatre and how governmental approaches affect the role of theatre in society. Theatre scholar Nadine Holdsworth states, “[t]heatre at a basic level is intrinsically connected to nation because it enhances ‘national’ life by providing a space for shared civil discourse” (2010, p. 7), where anyone and everyone can equally discuss and debate, agree or disagree. As the examples this study have provided in this section demonstrate, this is not currently possible in Bangladesh. However, this study has found a way, to express ideas of plurality, hybridity and cosmopolitanism.

Theatre Destabilising the Narration of Nationalism

The study seeks to destabilise these monolithic and homogenous conceptualisations of nation, and to embrace the diversity and plurality that are the reality of contemporary Bangladesh. Holdsworth argues, “people have constructed group formations to distinguish ‘us’ from ‘them’, whether territorial, linguistic or around bloodlines or religion, for example” (2010, p. 9). Today “nation” is the most powerful marker of this identity and belonging in Bangladesh, but this study pursues to challenge this with theatrical practice.

In recent years, campaigns for national identity or ideas about which ethnic group has the “right” to dominate the nation, are the sources of the most bitter and bloody conflicts, as this thesis has amply demonstrated. However, the nationalist narrative has been destabilised by various theatre productions that revolve around the lives and struggles of the country’s indigenous and marginalised communities, who have not been recognised in the nationalist narrative. These include *Aikti Marma Rupkotha (A*

Marma Fairy Tale), based on the daily life and rituals of the Marma community by Selim Al Deen ; *Mimangchina (A Colourful Flag of The Mandi Elite's Crematorium)*, a story that relates the socio-politics and impact of globalisation on the life of a young woman who belongs to the Mandi community by Afsar Ahmed; *Birsa Kabya (The Song of Birsa)*, that presented the war of the Mundas people that was waged against British colonisers by Masum Reza; *Rarang (The Distant Drum)*, which showed the struggle of the Saontal people and their war against British colonisers and their local collaborators by Mamunur Rashid; *Paital (The Rhythm of Footsteps and Mulluk (The Motherland)*, which featured the unheard stories of oppression, exploitation and discrimination that the tea plantation workers have been facing since the inception of British colonial India by Tofazzal Liton and Bakar Bokul, respectively.

In 2013, during the creation of a play named *Chaka (The Wheel)*, written by Selim Al Deen, which I directed for MA students in the Theatre Department at the University of Dhaka, the on- and off- stage performers conducted an investigation in a village in Rajshahi (the northern part of Bangladesh). The aim was to know more about one of the central characters of the play, a real-life figure who belongs to the Saontal *Adivasi* community. The students learnt about the ongoing violence and intimidation of the Saontal community in Rajshahi. In an unstructured discussion, the Saontal activists I, J and M informed the students that since British colonial rule, the Saontals have been forced to leave their home, land, and religion.***** Many Saontal community members converted to Christianity and Islam. At one point, the Saontal activists revealed the perpetrators behind this domination to be the local police administration, the local politician-backed Bangalee-Muslim community, and Christian missionary. During a walk to a Saontals prayer hall, H, a Saontals man, suddenly stopped and indicated a paddy field, saying, “all you see was ours, but is no more. We are here but nowhere. There is no justice or laws for Saontals in Bangladesh” (2013, my translation).***** H took a long pause. Then he said, “people come, sit and talk to us, and listen to our struggle and at the end of their work they go back to the city. There are very few people who speak for us and stand for us” (*ibid*, my translation). The MA students’ aim, therefore, was to carry the voices of these indigenous people back to the urban centre, and to articulate and stage them. Not denying the fact that our visit to the Saontal

***** I, J and M are used to anonymise the interviewees.
 ***** H is used to anonymise the interviewee.

village was for artistic purposes, it still shaped the public performance of *Chaka* as a piece of resistance to dominant society, that sought to destabilise the narration of nationalism. This, and other activist theatre groups in Bangladesh today focus on representing contemporary issues such as public life, property, security, dignity, and resistance as a means by which to destabilise assertions made by the ruling party, political elite, and religious nationalists. For example, Jahangirnagar University Theatre performed a devised production named *Chakravyuh (Battle Formation)* on the street in order to protest against the joint action of the ruling party's student wing and the police force on the student movement which was demanding road safety in 2018; Nagarnat Theatre in Sylhet performed *Bhumi-Putro (The Son of The Land)* written by Arup Baul against the aggression of the ruling party's followers to the Saontal community in Gaibandha District in 2017; *Shikaree (Hunter)*, written by Mannan Heera, was a vibrant street theatre production that protested against the rape and murder of a young college student and a local theatre activist in an army cantonment in Cumilla District in 2016; *Ami Malaun Bolchhi (I Who Speak, am Malaun)* an itinerant performance piece devised by the theatre students of Dhaka University, was performed in response to the violence against the Hindu community following a manipulated Facebook post in 2015; Bottala theatre company regularly perform *Jotu-Griha (Home of Lac Dye)*, that addresses the injustice, intimidation and sexual harassment in the garment industry; finally, *Dokkhina Sundari (The Beauty of the South)*, a play based on Bangla pantheism, was performed in the National Theatre of Scotland's Tin Forest International Theatre Festival as part of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games cultural programme in 2014. The play was written by Shahman Moishan, directed by myself and performed by theatrEX Bangladesh. It was created in reaction to the official decision to building a power plant in the Sundarbans territory, which is considered to be the "green wall" of Bangladesh's coastal area and the world's largest mangrove forest.

It is clear that theatre and performance have been inextricably intertwined with Bangalee and Bangladeshi identity for over a century, and that resistance to repression and homogeneous nationalism has provided a major impetus for theatrical creation.

Conclusion

I conclude this article by referencing a personal interview that I conducted in 2014 with Tim Butchard, Secretary of the Charles Wallace Bangladesh Trust (CWBT). As recipient of the CWBT artist residency, I was asked why I introduce myself as a *natya-karmi* (theatre activist) rather than a *natya-shilpi* (theatre artist).***** My answer was that theatre in Bangladesh today is created not for profit, but as part of a social movement. However, Bangladeshi theatre-maker Avijit Sengupta articulates, “the concept *andolon* (activism) is disappearing from view for Group Theatre nowadays. Instead, there’s a focus on *chorcha* (artistic practice)” (2007, p. 171, my translation). Recently, the Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation’s influential leaders advised its member organisations “to foster” their member-artists’ identity as *mancha-shilpi* (stage artists) instead of *natya-karmi*, or theatre activists. Meanwhile, state-scripted nationalism is continually and explicitly performed in daily life in Bangladesh.

Inspired by the political engagement of young theatre-makers and encouraged by it, Charlotte Higgins, the theatre reviewer for *The Guardian*, writes, “[t]here is a young generation of theatre artists for whom art and politics, or art and activism, have cohered”, thus, “[t]heatre is politics, in its blood and bones” (2015). Higgins continues, “[n]o art that is made can avoid reflecting its time and the particular political, social and economic circumstances of its making. Theatre, however, is the art form that does this most easily and consciously” (*ibid*).

In spite of the threats and fear that the theatre makers have encountered in Bangladesh, feel that they will continue to find ways to make their art activist.

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***** The interview took place in Dhaka. As a recipient of the CWBT Artist Residency award in 2014, I spent eight weeks in London exchanging skills and ideas with Chickenshed Theatre.

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CRITICAL TERRORISM STUDIES: A BRIEF STUDY

Md. Didarul Islam*

Abstract:

This article focuses on the general understanding and stand points of the Critical Terrorism School which emerged with a view to understanding terrorism from a different perspective partially denying the traditional concepts and explanations of the Orthodox Terrorism Schools. This article attempts to critically examine the arguments of the Critical Terrorism Schools and the feasibility of their key arguments. In addition, a key discussion has focused on the debate whether state should be categorised as terrorist. In this article, it has been argued that state should not be categorised as terrorist and crimes committed by states should be studied as state violence. But this study corresponds to the position of the school to discuss terrorism from a critical lens. Finally, a set of interventions have been proposed for bridging the gaps between the Orthodox and Critical Terrorism Schools.

Key words: terrorism, critical, violence, state, orthodox,

Introduction

Critical Terrorism studies (CTS) is a new discipline of academic study of terrorism (Jackson, 2008a) that aims at introducing critical study of terrorism and counterterrorism from multi-disciplinary perspectives. CTS, according to Jackson (2009, p.3) is a ‘critical orientation’, a ‘sceptical attitude’, a ‘challenge’ against the Orthodox Terrorism Studies (OTS). This article mainly attempts to evaluate the contribution of the CTS in the academic study of terrorism. It is evident that CTS have brought some new dynamics in this terrorism study especially from ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives. Their core centre of study seems to be focused on the inclusion of ‘state’ in the definition of terrorism rather than studying state violence separately in the traditional framework. They ruminate state as more destructive than non-state terrorism what Jackson (2008, pp. 377-78) calls the “ghost” of state terror. In this article, it has been said that Critical Terrorism Studies do not need a

* Assistant Professor, Department of World Religions and Culture, University of Dhaka

new academic discipline separated from the orthodox one. But this article thinks that the presence of critical dimensions in terrorism study brought by the CTS scholars will be immensely obliging for the entire circle. This paper maintains that 'state' cannot be a 'terrorist' for numerous reasons, but people who run the state can be. If 'state' is categorised under the definition of terrorism based on the characteristics of terrorist violence, then state will lose hegemony over public and state will lose the moral legitimacy to uphold law and order. Besides examining the arguments of CTS in terms of state terrorism, dilemmas of defining terrorism, their ontological, epistemological and methodological arguments will also be evaluated. This paper answers two research questions. Firstly, to what extent CTS has brought new light in the discussion of terrorism studies in compare to OTS. Secondly, how CTS has been trying to concentrate on state terrorism.

Methodology

Methodology of any study follows the objectives and nature of any particular research (Creswell 2014, Bryman 2012). Since this research is focused on a relatively new approach of study, Critical Terrorism School, therefore this research has attempted to employ a method that best suits to unearth different aspects of CTS for the wider reader. Since this research was designed solely on secondary data, a careful design was necessary, otherwise the research could have been ended as a failure (Blaikie 2014). Unlike statistical data analysis, this article has been written based on qualitative research approaches, literature review in particular. Because this genre of research requires critical analysis instead of mathematical or statistical data calculation. For the completion of research, data have been collected from various secondary sources like books, journal articles and internet sources. No primary source such as elite interview was used in this study for the researcher's convenience and minimising risks associated with interviewing individuals on terrorism studies. This research has been designed based on flexible research design so that the scope of the research gets a convenient position to understand the desired modes of research

Conceptual Framework

What constitutes terrorism and what are its traits, what are the common questions asked in terrorism studies. To illuminate diverse ideas linked to it, thousands of academic literature has been produced over the years. But

still, there is no mutually agreed definition of terrorism in either academic literature or policy circle. This is why, developing an exclusive conceptual framework is difficult. This difficulty has opened the scope for the CTS scholars where they have stepped up to defy the traditional discourse of terrorism studies. Martini writes (2021, p. 3): “as a kind of political violence that is discursively constructed as such through processes of interpretation. This construction is historically, socially, and politically contingent – and thus highly dependent on discourses and the knowledge created about it.” According to Martini, terrorism is not something of its own, instead it’s constructed by powers. In line with such construction, it can be said that such hegemony, construction, power and discourse paves the long-time traditional debate in terrorism studies- one man’s terrorist another man’s freedom fighter. So, at the centre of terrorism studies, there lies problems and it depends on who and how the knowledge on terrorism is produced.

The study of Onuf (2009) is a work that can be consulted. Onuf (2009) contends that terrorism is something that we ascribe that phenomenon. Terrorism is produced and reproduced through our language, power and discourses. Onuf (2009) is also cited often in the seminal study of Martini (2021, p. 5) as: “This means not only that terrorism cannot be stated *a priori*, but also that diverse meanings attributed to political violence would make different actors’ behaviours possible. Importantly, this understanding does not reject the reality of violence, but it focuses on the politically, historically, and socially contingent interpretations of political violence. Here, among others, Onuf underlined the critical role language and discourses play in the construction of threats and, for example, in constructing political violence as terrorism (Onuf 2013; 2009).

One of the key agendas of CTS is to draw an exclusive definition of terrorism as they blame Orthodox Terrorism Studies (OTS) for failing to develop a unanimous definition. According to Jackson, one of the reasons behind the development of CTS is absence of unanimous definition of terrorism (Jackson, 2008b). Defining terrorism exclusively is problematic and there is no consensus regarding the definition of terrorism (Jackson 2009, Silk 2004,). It is problematic because of three reasons. Firstly, different terrorist organizations have different aims. For instance, aim of LTTE is not identical to ISIS. Secondly, there is a debate over the components and strategy of terrorist violence that what are the main components that will designate a certain action as terrorist violence.

Finally, a certain act of violence is viewed from its own perspectives as either terrorism or violence or patriotism. This makes the contextual study more difficult.

Richard Jackson (2009, p.11) focused on four main problems in defining terrorism. Firstly, just war concept is one of the key reasons that creates a problem to define who a terrorist is. For instance, many of the Palestinians don't think that attack on Israel is a terrorist act. Secondly, there is a misconception that terrorism always wants publicity. CTS argue that terrorist activities have target audience. It is not publicity. Thirdly, there is a customary idea that terrorism is a violence that is caused to randomly chosen victims. Finally, there is a misconception that an act can be categorised under terrorism if it is done by non-state agencies what they call illegitimate political violence.

Wilkinson (2012, p. 15) opines that terrorism should be viewed from multi-dimensional perspectives. That is why a typological analysis is required rather than 'one size fits all' trend. Based on boundary, terrorism can be of two kinds, domestic and international. For instance, Hijbut Tahrir is a local terrorist organization in Bangladesh while Al Qaida is an international terrorist organization (Islam and Siddika 2020). On the other hand, based on political orientation, terrorism can be of four kinds; ethno-separatist terrorism (IRA), ideological terrorism (Hijbut Tahrir in Bangladesh), religio-political terrorism (ISIS) and single issue terrorism (LTTE). In this respect, CTS are quite contradictory. In one hand, they want a solution of defining terrorism exclusively. On the other hand, they believe in contextual analysis of terrorism which cannot give an exclusive definition of terrorism. But over the years, CTS has also become flexible to some extent in augmenting any rigid claims. Instead they are introducing more research based on facts nowadays.

So, conceptually I understand terrorism as a form of political violence that threatens the national and global peace as non-exclusive act. Terrorism is not mutually exclusive and highly context specific. The hegemony of the state and the hegemony of the international system defines who is a terrorist. This definition has a self-contradiction- allowing a traditional space and critical space to merge together. My definition of terrorism says that state has the sovereign power who is a terrorist and from international perspective, I understand the UN has the power to define terrorism. But at the same time, I also understand that states or even the UN defines

terrorism sometimes arbitrary. Thus my definition (not exclusive) of terrorism stands as: “ Terrorism is a form of political violence and legal crime that threatens the national and global peace and violates states’ or the UN’s binding laws”.

Findings: The findings of this research have been presented below based on the available literary arguments.

Problems of defining terrorism:

There is also a debate on which component will constitute a terror incident. According to Victor Walter (1969, as cited in Blakley 2010, p.13), terrorism has three major features; violence directed at a victim, violence will induce terror and fear in the witness and the violent actor expects that the witness will change their behaviour. These features emphasise on the merit of action, not the actor exclusively. On the other hand, Blackley (2010, p. 15) seemed to be more biased in defining terrorism as he mentioned violent activities need to be committed by state or state agents. Their standpoint is largely dependent on inclusion of state in the category of terrorism. He proposed four elements of for being a terrorist act.

- a. Deliberate act of violence against individuals that state has the duty to protect or a threat of fear that already exists through prior activities
- b. The act must be perpetrated on behalf of state or with state apparatus like paramilitaries or security agents
- c. To induce extreme fear in the public
- d. The target audience is forced to consider their behaviour

Walter Laqueur (2003, p. 238) identified terrorism as “the systematic use of murder, injury, and destruction, or the threat of such acts, aimed at achieving political ends.” His concept of political aim is also supported by Hoffman (2006). In addition, considering five features of terrorism including political aim, violence, far reaching psychological repercussions, ideological motive and non-state actors’ penetration Hoffman (2006) defined terrorism as “the deliberate creation of exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change (Hoffman, 2006, p. 40).

Thus, Hoffman conceives terrorism as solely non-state actions. But his ideological-driven terrorism concept raises the question of state repression

based on any ideology. For instance, if any political party, driven by a specific ideology conducts massive violence, then will this be brought under the definition of terrorism? In this case, Hoffman did not answer whether all these five features are mandatory for claiming a violence as terrorism. Moreover, if ideological debate comes to in front against state, where will the political party be placed? This ideological debate over terrorism caused by political parties keeps a new dimension of further research.

Based on the above characteristics, it can be said that it is not possible to define 'terrorism' exclusively. Critical Terrorism Studies brings a major agenda regarding the actors of terrorism. It cannot be denied that state sometimes uses its 'legitimate' force on the public for political gain. However, if state is included in the definition of terrorism according to the general characteristics, then every state is a terrorist state in a historical process. Every state had to adopt in its entire historical advancement what CTS call "terrorist" strategies. Thus, the primary claim to develop CTS in absence of a definition of the CTS academics seem to be less logical. Meanwhile they accuse OTS for not being self-critical that triggered a new way of terrorism study. Horgan & Boyle refuted this stating that OTS academics have been critical to themselves in many respects ranging from ontological positions to placing state violence in terrorism studies. They have been trying to find multiple ways to reduce conflicts within the own scholarship arena and to solve the problems (Horgan and Boyle, p.53).

Ontological, Epistemological and Methodological arguments of the Critical Terrorism School:

CTS accuse OTS of not being self-critical in ontological, epistemological and methodological grounds. Horgan & Boyle refuted this stating that OTS academics have been critical to themselves in many respects ranging from ontological positions to placing state violence in terrorism studies. They have been trying to find multiple ways to reduce conflicts within the own scholarship arena and to solve the problems (Horgan and Boyle, p.53). Considering terrorism as a 'social fact' (Jackson, 2009, p. 3), CTS bring few ontological, epistemological and methodological arguments where they differ with the Orthodox Terrorism studies (Bunyavechewin, 2010, p.5).

Bunyavechewin (2010, p.5) described this ontological approach of

CTS as social constructivism arguing that there are differences in viewing a social fact as it is seen from various contexts. This difference determines how to view a social phenomenon. Thus, a societal construction determines who a terrorist is. CTS bring at least two strong arguments from ontological stand point.

Firstly, CTS deny deliberate labelling of 'terrorist' based on western orientation. Being a contextual aspect, some violence what the western people deliberately describe as terrorism are the result of social construction. For instance, Nelson Mandela was a terrorist in his early days according to the then South African government. On the contrary, he was a humanitarian leader to many people of the world including the West (Jackson, 2009, p.5). Secondly, based on the Welsh critical school of security studies, CTS argue that human security is prior to state security. As human being is the centre of the state mechanism, therefore state must prioritize human security. If state becomes a threat to its people, the state must be brought under the category of terrorism (Jackson 2009, p. 6).

In response to the Welsh school model, it can be argued that security comes first for people instead of state because people constitute state. If the security of people is under threat, the security of state automatically becomes weak. But it is not true that OTS academics are not concerned about people's security. At the same time, state does not mean only the government. The Welsh model seems to be considering government as state. Government is only an element of state.

In case of epistemological debates (Jackson, 2009, p.6), on one hand, CTS argue that knowledge can be used as political instrument by the elites especially the Western elites to continue their hegemony. Thus, 'terrorism' is an attributive term that requires more contextual analysis rather than blindly following the orthodox dichotomy of terrorism studies. On the other hand, CTS bring state violence in the definition of terrorism. If certain types of violence is caused by either state actor or non-state actor, these types of violence should be brought under the category of terrorism. State should not be exempted for Weberian model of state legitimacy over all.

From methodological perspectives, CTS focus on two main aspects; transparency of the researcher and methodological pluralism (Jackson, 2009, pp. 8-9). According to the advocates of CTS, orthodox terrorism researchers are biased with the western constructed mentality and arbitrary definition of terrorism. Researchers should be very careful about 'subjective'

and ‘objective’ analysis without any biasness. On the other hand, orthodox researchers do not conduct participatory research interviewing the accused ‘terrorists’. They mainly rely on the secondary source of terrorism studies. In this case, CTS advocate for a methodological pluralism where terrorism should be studied from multidimensional points including anthropological, historical, sociological, economic and psychological study.

To some extent it is true that OTS are in many cases reluctant to conduct a research on terrorism by interviewing the terrorists. There are different practical issues behind this. Firstly, it is not so easy to access to the terrorists. Secondly, interviewing a terrorist might increase the chance of risk of the researcher’s life. Considering these practical threats, a new dimension can be considered. Researchers can introduce their primary research interviewing the terrorists who have been arrested or in jail. On the other hand, it is not acceptable when CTS generally designate all OTS academics and researchers as ‘biased’. Different academics have different attitude and focus on terrorism studies. If the ‘contextual’ thesis of Jackson (2008a) is considered, then it needs to be admitted that to define terrorism is a relative thing and the lack of unanimous definition cannot be called as ‘non-transparent’.

Can state be ‘terrorist’?

As stated earlier that CTS mainly try to include state violence in the definition of Terrorism. Martin (2003) argued that the emergence of state sponsored terrorism has a loose connection with state terrorism. In this case terrorist groups get state support to function terror activities. This assistance can be of ideological, financial, military and operational (Martin, 2003, p. 91 as cited in Jackson, 2008, p. 381). Jackson (2008) criticised the silence of the traditional terrorism scholars when states are engaged in far destructive violence and western (the US, Germany, Great Britain, Denmark and Portugal) involvement in terrorism during colonial period (Jackson, 2008a, p. 385). Byman (2005) also categorised state’s passive attitude or tolerance towards terrorist organizations as state terrorism. A blind eye to a terrorist organization by the state can give any terror group huge velocity in their work (Byman, 2005, p. III in Jackson, 2008a, p. 381). They have tried to develop theories and arguments mainly from four points of view regarding state terrorism: *etymological argument, actor based definition debate, state legitimacy and theory of different aims-structure*. In the following sections, a conscious attempt has been made to analyse those points critically.

Etymological argument

From an etymological stand point, Stohl (2010, p. 43) argued that the term 'terror' was first used to denote counter violence by France during French revolution. This was used to describe the action of the Nazi government in Germany by the Nuremberg prosecutions and repressive actions of Stalin on the counter revolutionaries after the Bolshevik revolution. Thus, from an etymological ground, state can be terrorist.

In bringing etymological argument, CTS academics pay less attention to contextual analysis which is their own strategy. Firstly, since the formal institutionalization of the terrorism studies in late 1960s and early 1970s, academics used to keep state violence or oppression aside from their definition of terrorism. Secondly, every term has contextual meaning and represents different perspectives. But this does not mean that OTS academics are not aware of state violence or state repression.

Actor based definition debate

Goodin (2006) suggests that terrorism caused by either state or non-state actors is a moral wrong that instrumentalised suffering, fear, betrayal of duty towards fellow citizens (2006, p.102). Jackson (2008a) criticised actor-based definition of terrorism describing it as 'intellectually untenable' and 'absurd'. Firstly, he argued that none can be excluded from the category of terrorism who create similar kind of violence. Justifying factor is not the actor, rather the act is itself justifying factor. State can induce terror bombing or other violence like extensive torture by security agencies to terrify people and to bring a change in the political behaviour of the opposition and the civilians. Jackson categorised the doctrine of 'shock and own' in case of strategic bombing like Israel's 2006 bombing in South Lebanon NATO's bombing on the civilians during Kosovo campaign in 1999 (Jackson, 2008a, pp. 383-84).

Secondly, exclusion of state from the definition of terrorism gives the western power a long historical political advantage not accusing the western involvement in the historical violence including conspiracy against government, supporting coup, helping to plot destabilize government, giving money to extremist groups and historical tyranny of the state over public (Jackson, 2008a, p. 387).

Here, CTS advocates are mistaken in the sense that exclusion of state from the definition of terrorism does not imply that OTS are reluctant

about state violence and they support western involvement in violence in the world. The study of Lutz (2015) confirms that political violence induced or perpetrated by state has been studied by OTS scholars for over the decades. Lutz (2015) argued that everything evil is not terrorism and equating state repression or illegal activities can hardly be called state terrorism.

State legitimacy theory

According to Jackson et al (2010, p.3), if a state engages in a similar strategy followed by non-state terrorists then these must be brought under the definition of terrorism. CTS argued that an example like Lockerby bombing where state plotted to bomb the civilians or the Lavon affair (putting series of bombs in public places) cannot be exempted from the definition of terrorism. Though state has legitimacy, this legitimacy does not mean that state will cause violence to the civilians indiscriminately.

From two grounds, the stand-point of Jackson et al (2010) can be refuted. Firstly, state has monopoly of power and supremacy over everything. Hoffman (1998, p. 34 as cited in Blackley, 2010, p.12) argued that the violence created by the state and non-state actors has ‘fundamental qualitative difference’. According to him, state has historical legitimacy of rule and accepted norms to outlaw specific targets and terrorists violated these laws. Blackley (2010, p.12) argued that though the condition where according to international laws, states belong to legitimate authority to use violence (*jus ad bellum*), not in every case their act is justifiable by legitimacy (*jus in bello*). Laqueur (2003, p.237) also writes: ‘The very existence of state is based on its monopoly of power. If it were different, states would not have the right, nor be in a position, to maintain that minimum of order on which all civilised lives rests’.

Secondly, if state violence is studied under terrorism, who will possess the moral and legal authority to formulate law against terrorism? If we have prior stand point that a ‘state’ is a ‘terrorist state’, the legitimacy of the state will be questioned.

Theory of different aims and nature

To the Orthodox academics of terrorism studies, state violence is different in nature to the nature of terrorists because victims are not chosen randomly which is a strategy of the terrorists. Walter Laqueur (2003) writes: “There are differences in motives, function and effect between

oppression by the state (or society or religion) and political terrorism. To equate them, to obliterate them is to spread confusion” (p.140). He argued that the study of terrorism will be impossible if state repression is labelled as terrorism where US policy or Hitler or Stalin will be in same category.

One of the aims of terrorism is achieving political gain. Jackson et al. (2010, p. 1) blamed Mao, Stalin and many authoritarians in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Argentina, Somalia, Uganda causing millions of lives for their political gains what they described as state terrorism. They argued that the number of victims caused by state apparatus is much more than the victims caused by non-state actors. Even the ongoing global war on terrorism has caused higher number of casualties because of indiscriminate counter terrorism strategy by the western countries (Goodin, 2006, pp.69-73). To some extent, it can be visible that state violence has similar aim and nature to the non-state terrorism in terms of achieving political gains. But fundamentally the nature and aim of state violence are different from the non-state terrorism.

Conclusion and recommendations

In this article, it has been argued that CTS have contributed in the academic study of terrorism significantly by developing an easy framework for studying terrorism. They accuse OTS academics for being reluctant towards state violence or repression . But OTS scholars have long history of studying state violence and they study this violence in different categories like repression, human rights violation, crime against humanity. This analytical standpoint is also supported by international law regarding the states’ behaviour towards citizen and inter-state relation among the states. It is evident that in many cases, state violates international laws engaging in crime like human rights violation. State sometimes engages in proxy wars and helps the labelled ‘terrorists’. This behaviour of the state must require rigorous study. But this does not necessarily mean that it must be studied under the category of terrorism, but the urge of the CTS will keep the states alarmed. OTS argues that if state is brought under the definition of terrorism, this will bring the end of the legitimate supremacy of state over everything. State violence has significant difference in their aims, methodology and nature. Based on this research, a few recommendations can be proposed for study of state violence and to bridge the gaps between the Critical Terrorism School and the Orthodox Terrorism School. Firstly, state should not be reluctant over the violence caused by the state agencies.

The state must bring the perpetrators under trial. If the government itself is engaged in such crimes, the judiciary should play a role. These crimes should be studied as ‘state violence’. But when it will be matter of individual, then state can sue him/her for terrorism irrespective of his nature- be that person a security service personal or a military personal. Secondly, the Critical Terrorism School academics should understand that if the legitimacy of the state itself is brought under question, then the state will lose the moral legitimacy of punishing the state perpetrators as well. The situation will be more complicated. Thirdly, OTS scholars must incorporate critical lens to study terrorism so that governments or military governments are not given extra leverage (though they have a long history of studying such issues). Finally, academics from both groups should arrange a series of talks among them so that they can conclude regarding the academic study of terrorism for the betterment of the world. But all words both written or verbal will keep impact if and only if we incorporate policy actors who make policy on terrorism, counterterrorism and security.

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Declaration: This paper was initially written as part of the author's MA at the University of Leeds in 2017. A revised and updated version has been submitted to this journal for publication.

THE ROLE OF ISLAM AND SIKHISM IN CHECKING RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Md. Mohshin Reza*

Abstract

In recent times, the biggest obstacle to ensuring the security and dignity of human beings is the rise of religious intolerance. The problem needs a broad explanation. There have been several reasons behind the increase in this problem. This study explores misconceptions and lack of knowledge about different religions as one of the principal reasons for the rise of religious intolerance. Misconceptions about secularism and pluralism also accelerate the problem. The present researcher considers that violations of human rights and lack of religious freedom are the root causes of the rise of intolerance and religious extremism. Religious norms and values, and the objective study of different religious faiths play a significant role in establishing a peaceful society. The present research tries to find out the notion of Islam and Sikhism, in resisting religious intolerance on the one hand and establishing communal harmony on the other. Human beings do not live only for material necessities. There is a strong need for the spiritual nourishment of every human being. In this perspective, religions convey the universal messages of peace, security, tolerance and the protection of human rights and dignity among all, irrespective of class, race, and caste. The current paper deals with liberal approaches of Islam and Sikhism that encompass the spirit of brotherhood, catholicity, equality, pluralism, tolerance, and peaceful co-existence among the followers of different faiths.

Keywords: *Religion, religious freedom, religious intolerance, Islam, Sikhism, brotherhood, equality, human dignity, pluralism, rights, secularism.*

Introduction

The world today, is facing challenges and becoming victims of persecution for decades because of political and religious insurgencies. Establishing equal rights among the people of diverse communities has

* Assistant Professor, Department of World Religions and Culture, University of Dhaka

become a big challenge in today's society. The current paper tries to unfold how the misconceptions and lack of interfaith knowledge increase the tendency of religious intolerance. In this regard, the purpose of the present study is to highlight the all-embracing teachings of Islam and Sikhism that uphold religious freedom and contribute to preventing religion-based intolerance and violence.

Islam and Sikhism, two monotheistic religions, aim at establishing unity of humankind through the concept of mutual respect and universal love and brotherhood. Islam has laid down numerous injunctions and prohibitions for ensuring human rights and dignity as part of an eternal and prosperous way of life. Sikhism also has shown many examples of religious pluralism and equality of all human races. It gives special priority to human rights and religious freedom for the people of all communities.

Individuals have fears and doubts about religious injunctions resulting from the degradation of human character and ignorance about different religions. This paper deals with the concept of liberalism and religious freedom in the light of Islam and Sikhism. It also analyzes the scope to which the rights and dignity of religious minorities are well-preserved in the theories and practices of these two religious faiths.

Background of the Study

All the religions of the world teach human beings to love each other, preach the messages of peace for the betterment of all humankind. Religious teachings reduce sufferings of human beings. In the history of human civilization, diverse religious faiths have been playing significant roles in uniting people and enabling them to live in peace and harmony. At the same time, shedding blood in the name of religion is also an undeniable reality. The world today is being torn by conflicts and corruption in the name of religion. Humanity is under threat due to worldly desires and the egoistic nature of human beings. Bigotry and distrust prevail among the people of different communities. Individuals need to be tolerant towards the followers of other faiths to keep society free from all these inhuman deeds. In this regard, both Islam and Sikhism have a universal outlook that inculcates the spirit of brotherhood, catholicity, equality, tolerance, and religious freedom.

In the past, societies were comparatively uniform in nature based on religion, race, or ethnicity. Today's world has become a global village with

the unprecedented development of technology, science, and transportation systems. These have improved situations and the media have contributed to increasing the human feelings of multiplicity in views and values systems. However, it is undeniable that societies composed of different ideologies, cultures, and religions are more prone to differences and conflicts. Despite this, human society is now facing the reality of diversity, especially religious and cultural diversity.

Many oppressions and dictatorships have taken place in the name of religion. At present, religion is being used to seize power in some countries of the world. However, the question is: is religion the only tool of dictatorship in the world? Hitler, Mao Tse-tung, Franco, Malan, and many other heads of the state did not rule in the name of religion, but they were the pioneers of the authoritarian government. In the twenty-first century, human society is mostly free from the domination of religion, but authoritarian regimes have evolved in many countries during this period. Misconceptions and lack of proper knowledge about different religious injunctions regarding human rights and dignity have turned society into a more unstable situation. The education system is also responsible for the rise of intolerance. Interfaith learning is not included in the education system of many countries of the world and is not encouraged at any level of education. As a result, being ignorant about other faiths, people are often intolerant of the followers belonging to different views and religions.

Methodological Approach

The present research has followed the qualitative method in describing, explaining, and analyzing the collected data. In this qualitative research, secondary sources have been used to collect relevant data and information regarding the research problem. This research has used secondary data mainly from the English translations and interpretations of Qur'an, Hadith, Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and previous works relevant to this field. In order to develop the conceptual framework of the research, various verses of the Holy Scriptures have been explained and analyzed in depth. The current paper generates the idea of how the teachings of Islam and Sikhism play a role in checking religion-based intolerance. In this regard, the present paper explores several components of Islam and Sikhism that contribute to ensuring communal harmony in society. A detailed explanation of this problem is needed. The current paper has followed the discourse analysis of different related books, journals, and online-based research articles to

attain cognitive knowledge about this problem.

Understanding Religion and Religious Intolerance

Religion is one of the most powerful regulators in the social control system. It is an inevitable aspect of social life because religious beliefs, practices, values, and injunctions motivate human activities (Alam, 2018; McGuire, 1997). To practice religion in a peaceful environment is considered one of the fundamental rights of human beings. The term 'Religion' derives from a Latin term 'Religare' where 'Re' denotes 'again' and 'Ligare' means 'bond'. So, Religare or Religion means 'bond again'. This definition contains the message of brotherhood and unity among the people of different societies and cultures. Religion enriches human life through its moral and practical injunctions. Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes said that "religion is the human adjustment to the realities of existence in life-enriching ways" (Swidler & Mojzes, 2000, p. 5). All the religions convey the messages of justice, equality, and morality that make individuals ideal humans. That is why the present researcher defines religion as a set of beliefs and practices combining some rules, regulations and prohibitions through which a man can lead a moral life. Religious intolerance is now a global problem. Intolerance does not mean the particular type of discrimination or violations of religious freedom, it refers to human attitudes that prompt such type of violations. "Intolerance refers to conduct manifesting hatred or prejudice based on religion or belief as well as to a state of mind, underlies descriptions of various human rights violations" (Sullivan, 1988, p. 505).

Role of Islam

Islam is a complete code of life that encompasses mutual respect, universal love and brotherhood. It is committed to establishing a happy and prosperous society. Islam has laid down numerous injunctions and prohibitions for securing human rights and dignity as part of an eternal and comprehensive way of life. The Qur'an is the essence of tolerance, interfaith communion, and religious freedom. "Of the three monotheistic religions developed by the Semites, Philip Khuri Hitti observes, "the Islam of the Koran is the most characteristic and comes nearer the Judaism of the Old Testament than does the Christianity of the New Testament. It has such close affinities with both..." (Hitti, 1970; Haider, 2013). To promote religious freedom, Islam suggests treating others with sensitivity and

kindheartedness irrespective of religion, caste, or colour. Islam teaches individuals to be more compassionate to each other. It fosters the utmost self-restraint and also stimulates man to abstain from hatred and violence.

There should be no compulsion in religion (The Holy Qur'an: 2:256). Islam emphasizes individual freedom in matters of religion. Compulsion is not compatible with religion. Religion depends upon faith and will, and these should not be imposed on individuals by force. The Qur'an also says: "We know of best what they say; say, and you (O Muhammad SAW) are not a tyrant over them (to force them to Belief)" (The Holy Qur'an: 50:47). The concept of religious tolerance is intimately related to the spirit of Islam. Islam proclaims that the residing subjects and the temporary visitors have a guarantee regarding their safety and the liberty of their conscience (Hamidullah, 1992). It has shown a liberal attitude towards establishing a friendly relation among the followers of different faiths. It suggested a respectful and dignified attitude towards individuals even 1450 years ago. Islam prescribes, "And certainly We gave to the children of Adam excellence and dignity, and We gave them a means of transportation on land and in the sea" (The Holy Qur'an: 17: 70). This view has given special features and uniqueness to human rights in Islam.

Islam guarantees the rights and dignity of non-Muslims. All kinds of political, economic, social, and intellectual rights exist in the Islamic view of human rights. Similarly, all these rights are applicable to all Muslims and non-Muslims, irrespective of race, color, and language. Islam emphasizes on respect and forgiveness towards non-Muslims. The Qur'an says: "Say (O Muhammad) to the believers to forgive those who do not believe in the days of Allah (His recompense), that Allah may recompense individuals for what they have earned" (The Holy Qur'an: 45:14). Islam has given several directions in ensuring the rights and dignity of non-Muslims. The victims of social, religious, political, economic, and of any other persecutions have always found refuge and shelter in the land of Islam. The Qur'an declares: "And if any one of the pagans seeks thy asylum (O Muhammad), then give him asylum...and then convey him to his place of safety..." (The Holy Qur'an: 9:6).

Islam asserts the principles of the unity of humankind. Since the Almighty Creator is one and since the whole mankind is one, the divine messages that have been revealed from time to time to guide people on the right path must also be universal and the same (Sayem, 2008). The

Qur'an says, "Mankind was one community, and Allah sent Prophets with glad tidings and warnings, and with them, He sent the scriptures..." (The Holy Qur'an: 2:213). Allah has sent messengers to every nation. "...And there never was a nation, but a warner had passed among them" (The Holy Qur'an 35:24). Islam also guarantees the adherents of diverse faiths the free exercise of their rites and rituals. "For every nation, We have ordained religious ceremonies... which they must follow" (The Holy Qur'an: 22:67).

Islam introduced a community of believers based on the unity of God that was inspired by the concept of brotherhood and social integrity (Zaman, 1970). The most significant and far-reaching reform of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was to establish a peaceful society by eliminating inequality among the followers of different communities. Discrimination based on racial origin, social status, or economic affiliation is strictly forbidden. Allah prescribes the Islamic concept of universal brotherhood: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other" (The Holy Qur'an: 49:13). This verse signifies that since the whole human race has ultimately come from the same source, we need to know each other. The Qur'an also says: "Say (O Muslims), we believe in Allah and that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to Abraham, Ismael and Isaac, and Jacob and his tribes, and that which has been given to Moses and Jesus, and that which has been given to the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them" (The Holy Qur'an: 2:136). Thus Muslims believe not only in Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) but also in all other prophets. Such Qur'anic instructions can be the model for resisting discrimination in the name of religion.

All-embracing teaching of Islam is the commandment that a Muslim should collaborate even with the enemy in a state of war! The Qur'an states, "...and let not the hatred of a people who have stopped your going to the inviolable mosque (The Holy *Kaaba*) incite you to transgress; but help ye one another unto charity and piety" (The Holy Qur'an 5:2). Islam prescribes, mutual help and respect should not be limited to Muslims only but should apply equally to the entire humanity regardless of religion or caste. The persecution on non-Muslims has been harshly criticized in the *Hadith*. Saying of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) reported by Abu Dawud is: "Whoever oppresses the non-Muslim subjects, shall find me to be the advocate on the day of the resurrection against the oppressing Muslims" (Hamidullah, 1992, p. 206).

Anti-racist messages of Islam still resonate today from the 7th century CE. The Charter of Medina is widely considered to be the first written constitution in the world. Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) mentioned the standpoint of Islam centering religious freedom and minority rights in the Charter: “The Jews, Christians, pagans, and Muslims of Medina are all citizens of one country and all have equal civil rights. Everyone will practice his own religion. No one can interfere in the practice of the religion of others” (Islam D. M., 2005). After the conquest of Makkah, Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) used to work with the people from all tribes. During that time, Muslims developed friendly relations with Christians and Jews. Muhammad (p.b.u.h) himself made agreements with several Christian tribes to guarantee their security and free exercise of religion along with their traditional rituals (Arnold, 1913). Hazrat Muhammad (p.b.u.h) criticized the prevailing communalism based on the superiority of different castes, tribes, or religions. In his Farewell Hajj speech, Muhammad (p.b.u.h) opposed discrimination based on language and racism and declared the right to equality of all humankind:

“All human beings are descended from Adam and Eve. There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, or of a non-Arab over an Arab, and no superiority of a white person over a black person or of a black person over a white person, except based on personal piety and righteousness” (Rahman M. M., 2016, p. 146).

Harmony is a universal and undisputed principle of Islam based on which social welfare is primarily dependent. Humanist philosophy is a vital aspect of Islam. The motto of Islam is to uphold peace and harmony between religion and human life (Rahman S. , 1956). It is said in the *Sahih Al Bukhari* as cited in Haider (2013) that “the meaning of peace with human beings is- leading one’s life in such a manner so that it does not become the cause of ruin to peace of any other human being” (p. 164). Islam advocates catholicity and tranquility among all people regardless of caste, creed, gender, colour, and language. In this way, it emphasizes both the spiritual as well as the material well-being of human beings.

Role of Sikhism

Sikhism has a universal outlook that inculcates the spirit of brotherhood, catholicity, equality, tolerance, and peaceful co-existence among the followers of different faiths. It is a religion with the spirit of solid humanism.

Sikhism prescribes that every human being should be entitled to equal political, social, and religious rights. Humanism appreciates ethical norms, reason, and justice for the interest of all humankind. Religious freedom is a vital right for every living being. Sikhism promulgates religious freedom, and it never emphasizes conversion to Sikhism. It suggests individuals to be better human beings following their religious ideology properly.

Nanak (1469-1538 CE.), the founder of Sikhism, was born in Punjab, a region of northwest India. During that period, Punjab was a place of diverse cultures, and many foreign traders and officials had regular visits there. As a result, Guru Nanak was familiar with diverse cultures and personalities from different religious and cultural backgrounds. He was born in a Hindu family, but from the very beginning of his childhood, Nanak was keen to know the religious and cultural values of other communities. In his youth, he made himself well-known with the popular customs of both Islam and Hinduism. That is why he gained a general knowledge of the Qur'an and Brahmanical Shastras (Center, 1990). In addition, before Nanak from the tenth century CE., India was dominated by the Muslim Mughal rulers, but it is still now a country of Hindu majority. Because of having remarkable differences between Hinduism and Islam, the followers of these two religions were often hostile and frequently involved in violence. Some pioneer figures had sincere attempts to unite the believers of Hinduism and Islam into a common understanding. In this aspect, Kabir, a renowned Muslim saint, was one of the best reformers and was very familiar with his Hindu neighbors (Hopfe, 1991). Nanak was a later contemporary of Kabir and was influenced by the ideology of Kabir. In addition, because of the mixed culture of the region, Nanak's childhood teacher was a Muslim, and undoubtedly he was influenced (Ibid., 1991). The world today remembers Guru Nanak for his preaching of the essential unity of Islam and Hinduism. He also played a significant role in resolving the Hindu-Muslim conflict in India.

Sikhism has shown the highest importance on the equality of humankind. Guru Nanak rejected the caste system, slavery, economic and political exploitation and firmly stood for equality of the human race (Sidhu, 2006). It was the main attempt of all Sikh Gurus to understand all that One Supreme Creator dwells in the heart of all. Sikhism asserts: "Everyone looks up to You. You dwell in every heart true. One and all are equal in Your eyes" (Guru Granth Sahib: p. 97). Guru Nanak himself introduced every dress, every kind of diet, all ways that lead not only to one God but also to one humankind (Singh D. G., 1988). Sikhism has a

universal appeal, and its philosophy is for the welfare of all regardless of caste or religion. That is why one unique aspect of the daily prayer of a Sikh is to seek for *Sarbat Da Bhala* (Goodness or betterment for all) (Dhillon, 2005). It is reported again in the Sikh Holy Scripture: “God is no body’s father’s property, He enjoys Himself in all hearts” (The Guru Granth Sahib: p. 658). So, it should not be discriminated against God’s creations. To reduce discrimination and disunity among the adherents of different castes and nations, Guru Nanak founded two effective institutions -*Sangat* and *Pangat*. These two concepts represent the true essence of the Sikh ideology of pluralism and religious freedom. *Sangat* is the congregation of people from different castes and faiths, and *Pangat* signifies sitting together in the same row. In *Sangat*, people from all communities sit together as equals to sing the praise of the Lord, their Common Father addressing Him by all names with equal love. In *Pangat*, to share their feelings of brotherhood, they take food together in *Guru-Ka-Langar* (Common Kitchen), irrespective of any caste, creed, or religion. To serve the purpose of these two institutions, on every Friday, Sikh Gurdwara is open for the people of all communities. These institutions always play a vital role in uniting people of different religious communities.

Sikhism always respects the religious sentiment of the followers belong to other faiths. Guru Nanak suggests the Muslim to be a good Muslim, the Hindu to be a good Hindu, who is a good Muslim his Namaz (prayer) and Roza (Fasting) is pure or who is a good Hindu his Puja (prayer) and sacrifice is pure, his quest for God is genuine, then he is a good Sikh too, and then his writings may be included in the Sikh Holy Scripture (Dhillon, 2005). Such a revolutionary idea has put the position of Sikhism on a firm foundation in preventing religion-based intolerance.

Sikhism does not care about the supremacy of any particular worship place of the respective religion. That is why Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th and last Guru of Sikhism, states:

“The temple and the mosque are the same, the Hindu Worship and the Muslim prayer are the same, all men are the same; it is through erroneous judgment they appear different...all men have the same eyes, the same ears, the same body, the same build. A compound of earth, air, fire, and water...let no man, even by mistake, suppose there is a difference” (Islam K.N., 2017, p. 6; Khan, 1967, p. 227).

Sikh Scripture, Guru Granth Sahib Ji, is one of the best living examples

of liberalism. It is free from bias and animosity. The Scripture was written by 36 distinguished writers of different castes and religious faiths. Besides the writings of six Sikh Gurus, Guru Granth Sahib includes the hymns of 23 Hindu Bhaktas and 7 Muslim Sufis from several parts of India (Singh D. , 2010). To demonstrate the idea of religious pluralism, it contains verses of Dhana, a farmer from Rajasthan; Sadhna, a butcher from Sindh; Sain a barber from Rewa; Ravidas, a cobbler from Benares; Namdev, a calico printer from Maharashtra; Jaidev, a Brahman from Bengal and Farid and Kabir who were Muslims (Sidhu, 2006). In order to introduce a harmonious society, such kind unthinkable and sagacious outlook of Sikhism is immensely praiseworthy.

Sikhism profoundly respects the leaders and Holy Scriptures of other faiths. The foundation stone of the Harimander (Golden Temple) is said to have been laid by Mian Mir (1550-1635 CE.), a renowned Muslim Qadiri Sheikh of Lahore. He had a good relationship with Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Hargobind. Mughal Emperor Akbar had a good relationship with Guru Amar Das (Dhillon, 2005). Moreover, Guru Nanak had boundless love and respect for Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (p.b.u.h). It is said in the *Janam Sakhi* of Bhai Bala as cited in (Islam, 2017) that Guru Nanak says: “*dikha noor Muhammadi, dikha nabi rasool. Nanak qudrat dekh ke, khudi ghei sab bhool*” (p. 8). It generally means “I have seen the light of Muhammad (with my mind’s eye). I have seen the prophet and the messenger of God in other words; I have understood his message or imbibed his spirit. After contemplating the glory of God, my ego was completely eliminated” (Ibid., 2017, p. 8). Guru Nanak had profound respect towards the sacred texts of all other religions. He forbade claiming any religious text to be false, rather those who do not contemplate them are false (Islam K. N., 2011).

Sikhism puts especial emphasis on secularism and religious pluralism. In the concept of secularism, Sikhism reports: “All have equal rights in affairs, all are partners, nobody is an outsider” (Guru Granth Sahib: p. 97). Secularism doesn’t mean ‘devoid of religion’ but such a concept where the rights of people belonging to other faiths are duly respected. Secularism from a religious perspective can be defined as an attempt to address all human beings with equality, mutual respect, goodwill, morality, equal opportunity, religious tolerance and openness in administration (Sidhu, 2006).

Fanaticism and the Lack of Interfaith Knowledge

Fanaticism is an attitude that involves a person with excessive and irrational emotions. Fanaticism is one of the biggest problems in today's world. This is not a new problem. It exists in every sector, including politics, religion, and individual ideals. A fanatic is a person who considers a particular ideology as the only truth, especially for religious or political causes. Fanatics perceive that they have to act or infer everything in their own way. Most of them seek to resist their own views and the absolute rightness of their cause at all costs. When they are not able to perceive alternatives in such obdurate intolerance in religious or political beliefs they can lead to the use of violence regardless of the consequences (Whittaker, 2002).

Fanaticism is the motivation for terrorism. It includes ideological dogmas about a compulsion to stir up the political system to a practice proposed by religious values through violence (Arena & Arrigo, 2005). The fanatics think that their ideas and point of view are unquestionable and beyond any doubt. Religious fanatics recognize only the beliefs and values of their own religion and cannot accept or tolerate the differences. They are against any kind of liberal thought. Religious fanaticism is the extreme view regarding personal religious views and the views of others. It is sometimes defined as the unilateral attitude of religion, which simply means there is one truest religion in the world, where other faiths are considered to be null and void. In this perspective, it is to be mentioned that individuals are often reluctant to learn about other's religious faiths. This, in turn, gives rise to misconceptions in individuals about the religions of others. One should understand the meaning of pluralism and the co-existence of different faith-based religions to prevent religious intolerance. Individuals or groups cannot impose any restriction over any particular faith. This is the monolithic view that causes the rise of intolerance and extremism. In this aspect, understanding the proper teachings of different religions can motivate a person to adopt a non-violent policy, and thus a peaceful society may be established.

Concluding Analysis

Religion-based intolerance is destabilizing the entire world specially the South Asian regions. The study propounds salient aspects that dispel misconceptions about Islam and Sikhism centered on the concepts of

religious freedom, liberalism, pluralism, unity of mankind and minority rights, etc. The education system in recent times is responsible for the increase of intolerance and religious extremism. Interfaith knowledge is not included in any level of the education system in most countries of the globe. People are often intolerant against individuals or groups belonging to different views and religions because of being ignorant about other faiths. As a result, fanaticism, prejudices, and misconceptions in the name of religion contribute to the rise of intolerance in society.

All religions teach us mutual respect and tolerance. The teachings of liberalism and communal harmony in Islam and Sikhism can properly be realized by universal messages of the Qur'an and the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) and Guru Nanak were great instances of humanism because irrespective of any caste, creed, and nation based on equal rights and dignity they wanted to establish a peaceful society. Their practice of humanism can be a role model for today's modern society. They used to demolish hatred by love. People in this world now are engaged in hatred, backbiting and hypocrisy. The primary mission of Islam and Sikhism was to remove hatred and hypocrisy from the mind of the people. So, the core teachings of Islam and Sikhism are universal love and brotherhood and the equality of humankind, which are inevitable components for establishing interfaith and intercultural harmony. It has been clarified in this paper that religious values and the objective study of different religions have great importance in establishing communal harmony.

The tendency of religious extremism must be resisted with a firm hand. Provocations and rumors in the name of religions also has to be resisted strictly and vigorously. Government and mass media should play a contractive and significant role in this regard. The print-media and the discipline of religious studies in different institutions should seriously highlight the religious tenets of love, compassion, moderation, and restraint. It goes without saying that this is a vast area of research, and it is implausible to cover all the aspects of Islam and Sikhism that impede rising religious intolerance. Hence, the current study recommends interfaith dialogue as a field of further research, without which it is unlikely to resolute communal discontent.

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PIRATES IN *HAMLET* AND HAMLET AS PIRATE: PIRATE POLITICS IN EARLY-MODERN ENGLAND

Md. Mehedi Karim Simanto*

Introduction

The “pirate” incident in *Hamlet* has long been an enigma to Shakespearean critics. For an incident which did not even take place onstage but was only narrated second-hand in the play, it received a considerable amount of attention from reviewers both classical and modern. Many critics are very critical of the episode. Eissler (1971) considers the pirate incident and Hamlet’s subsequent return to Denmark as “improbable” (p. 173). H.D.F. Kitto (1959/1956) also holds that the meeting with the pirates is nothing but “a lucky chance” (p. 324-326). Likewise, Alan Sinfield (1980) asserts that the pirates are “. . . improbable and . . . unnecessary to the plot” (p. 92). Despite such unfavorable critical remarks, there is no denying that the pirate-incident is integral to the story of *Hamlet*. In fact, it becomes even more so in consideration of the facts that “Shakespeare’s chief source [for *Hamlet*] was the Norse folk tale of Amleth, written down in Latin by the Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus (fl. c.1200) and expanded by the French writer François de Belleforest in his *Histoires tragiques* (7 vols., 1559-80) . . .” (“*Hamlet*,” 2000, p. 179) and that “both [these] texts do include significant references to piracy” (Floyd-Wilson, 2009, p. 6). This is a clear indication that the meeting with the pirates was neither an accidental nor a superfluous incident in *Hamlet*. Floyd-Wilson furthers this viewpoint by trying to establish a link between historical England and Denmark on the ground of their both being linked to piracy:

Although notoriously anachronistic, *Hamlet* makes some effort to historicize the relations between Denmark and England, particularly in Claudius’s claim that Hamlet will travel to England to demand Denmark’s “neglected tribute.” Since the Danish sword has left England’s “cicatrice . . . raw and red,” Claudius assumes the English people will pay him “homage” (4.3.63-65). These references situate *Hamlet* in what later became known as the “Viking Age,” when Denmark regularly extorted payment from England to protect its coasts from Danish pirates—a payment that hardened into the “Danegeld.” (Floyd-Wilson, 2009, p. 5)

* Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka

What is strikingly pertinent above is the desire to “situate” *Hamlet*’s pirate-incident in an age of English-Danish piracy. This can be a clear signal that *Hamlet* indeed was aware of the pirate politics of its time.

This paper argues that prince Hamlet himself was enmeshed in such politics. On the surface level, the prince’s meeting with the pirates is an unexpected but simple and natural happening: the prince ran into some pirates on his way to England and, after some interesting turns of events, had them transport him safely back to Denmark. However, the prince’s tactful handling of such devious men and, despite his brooding and meditative nature, his surprisingly diplomatic maneuvers in dealing with them can signal to a mysterious transformation in Hamlet. This study argues that Hamlet, having interacted and mixed with pirates, rather started to patronize them like the early-modern kings of England who, for the advantage of their kingship, not only promoted piracy but funded and protected those criminals also. This research also examines Hamlet’s post-pirate-incident behavior and finds that Hamlet can be shown to be following the lenient pirate policy of the historic early-modern England. This in turn, as the paper further investigates, can be used to suggest that the post-pirate-incident Hamlet betrays a desire to be the next Danish king who could use the help of the pirates in moments of crisis like the English kings did.

History of Piracy in Early-Modern England and Pirates in *Hamlet*

The English world has long been acquainted with pirates. Stories of pirates plundering and looting ships must have been widespread in Shakespeare’s England as: “. . . in Shakespeare’s day the seas between England and the Continent swarmed with pirate” (Wentersdorf, 1983, p.436). The following account provides a more detailed account on how it was so:

From the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Europe’s shores from the Baltic to the Mediterranean were infested with pirates. The problem was particularly serious in the English Channel. In self-defense, English merchants of the Cinque Ports had banded together in the Middle Ages in a private league, receiving privileges from the Crown, including the right to seize or plunder pirate vessels in retaliation for losses they had suffered. . . . During the Wars of the Roses and later, it became common for pirates-as likely to be British as Baltic, Netherlandish, or Biscayan-to prey upon English shipping along a front from the Humber to the Bristol Channel. . . . And these conditions continued until well into the seventeenth century. (Wentersdorf, 1983, p.437)

This historical insight clarifies that pirates were a familiar phenomenon in early modern England. English monarchy had always had a tough time handling the situation. This situation worsened in the time of King Henry VII with the sea-robbers becoming more and more uncontrollable (Gosse, 1946/1932, pp. 95-103). The magnitude of the problem kept on expanding from the late sixteenth century to the early seventeenth. In Andrews' (1964) words: "[m]any hundreds of men in these years were convicted of piracy [...] thousands more actual pirates were never convicted, for the problem was simply unmanageable" (p. 3).

Interestingly, this "unmanageable" problem was later turned into a *manageable* venture by Queen Elizabeth I. Four hundred pirate ships were active in English Channel during her reign (Rankin, 1969, p. 3), and she rather used them for her own benefit:

Under Elizabeth I, particularly in the period of the Anglo-Spanish war of 1585–1603, the state encouraged reprisal against enemy shipping, tolerating those that perpetrated it as necessary, if somewhat unpalatable, agents of foreign policy. Of course publicly and explicitly piracy was condemned, but once at sea the boundary between licit and illicit maritime activity was difficult to maintain and frequently breached, with at times state authorities demonstrating little appetite for punishing all but the most serious offenders, and the queen profiting from the activities of her men of war by taking a percentage of their spoils. (Jowitt, 2012, p. 3)

This shows how pirates continued to grow in number and power in Elizabethan England. Their unofficial involvement in the Anglo-Spanish war and England's clear approval of their violation against enemy states suggest that pirates were becoming a state-sanctioned crime syndicate. This, thus, signals to the fact that the English monarchy had had a hand in the rise of those criminals.

King James I, however, openly condemned piracy and "was determined to do his utmost to eradicate them" (Earle, 2004, p. 7-8). He took numerous punitive measures against the plunderers, but their number did not decrease. Ironically, the exact opposite happened: ". . . by 1604–1605 the implementation of James' policy to end the war with Spain had led to an influx of unemployed soldiers and sailors, and endemic piracy as a result" (Jowitt, 2012, p. 9). James' failure in creating employment for the newly jobless naval veterans instigated them to become pirates for good: it was the rise of a new age of piracy. Thus, from the fourteenth

century onwards till the late seventeenth, England's pirate-policy had been a convoluted one with the English monarchy and the pirates being both in a conflicting and accommodating position simultaneously.

In such a context, Shakespeare's inclusion of the pirate-scene in *Hamlet*, which was written "... in about 1600 ... but had [been] revised ... by 1602 ..." ("*Hamlet*," 2000, p. 179), can be thought of as an intentional maneuver to comment on the contemporary king-and-the pirates synergy. The writer seems to be consciously juxtaposing the Danish monarchy and the pirates. The following asserts that he indeed was thinking about real life king and the pirates oppositions when he incorporated the pirate episode in *Hamlet*:

Shakespeare was also familiar with historical accounts of pirate activities, such as the capture and murder in 1450 of the Duke of Suffolk, an incident incorporated in *2 Henry VI* (IV.i). Another incident, this time in the Roman era, is recorded in *Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes* (as translated by North, 1579), a work used by Shakespeare in 1599 during the writing of his *Julius Caesar*. . . . [Caesar was taken by some pirates.] After being ransomed and set at liberty, Caesar returned to capture the pirates and then crucified them. Shakespeare, in planning the writing of *Hamlet* only a year or so after his work on *Julius Caesar*, may well have recalled a historical incident of this nature rather than a fictional episode from a romance. (Wentersdorf, 1983, p. 436)

This shows that Shakespeare was indeed inspired by real incidents to juxtapose a prince or a would-be king with marauders like the pirates. To be specific, it might not be an exaggeration to assert that Hamlet's interaction with the pirates functions to reveal Hamlet's desire to be a king

Following the Footstpes of English Kings: Hamlet and the Pirates

Hamlet's meeting with the pirates and the pirates helping him return to Elsinore are very much in touch with historical reality. As Bradley (1992) phrases: "Hamlet's return to Denmark is due partly to his own action, partly to accident" (p. 120). When Claudius ordered Hamlet to go "For England" (4.3.43), Hamlet almost mimicked him "For England?" (4.3.43), and said "Good." (4.3.43). The readers are not given a direct account of what happened to Hamlet on his way to England except from via his letter to Horatio. When Horatio receives the "letters" from some "Seafaring men" (4.6.2), he reads:

HORATIO (*Reads the letter*) ‘Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked

 this, give these fellows some means to the king; they have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour, and in the grapple I boarded them. On the instant they got clear of our ship, so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy, but they knew what they did : I am to do a good turn for them. Let the king have the letters I have sent, and repair thou to me with as much speed as thou wouldest fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb, yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter. These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England. Of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell.

 He that thou knowest thine,

 Hamlet.’ (4.6.11-25)

This is a terse and ambiguous account of Hamlet’s meeting and dealing with the pirates. As Farley-Hills (1999) points, “Hamlet’s meeting with the pirates is presented entirely in narrative in the play, we see nothing of the action on stage . . .” (p. 330-331). The audience simply learns that Hamlet fights the pirates initially; but having been taken prisoner, “. . . by promises induces the pirates to put him ashore in Denmark” (Bradley, 1957/1992, p. 120). It is intriguing to see in Hamlet’s account above how appreciative he is of his captors: they were “warlike” men of “mercy” to him. In exchange of their kind handling of him, Hamlet is to “do a good turn for them.” In Wentersdorf’s (1983) words: “. . . [Hamlet] may well mean that he has agreed to try to obtain an official pardon for them” (p. 438). Hamlet’s easy acceptance of such an agreement with a host of marauders might seem unnatural on the surface level. Judging from the following perspectives, however, his action can appear to be very much in concord with historical reality. Philip Gosse (1946/1932) records fascinating incidents of real life pirates escaping death sentence and getting exonerated because they had connections in the English court. Gosse (1946/1932) documents the incident of a pirate John Nutt of Devonshire who, during James I, had his friend Sir George Calvert, the king’s principal secretary, free him from court trial (pp. 131-134). Another arresting instance Gosse (1946/1932) records of English courtiers helping pirates is the incident of the Killigrew

family pirates of Falmouth where John Killigrew, Queen Elizabeth's Vice Admiral of Cornwall and royal governor of Pendennis Castle, intervened to obtain his mother, a pirate sentenced to death, an official pardon (pp. 107-111). One of the most striking examples, though, is the one of pirate Mainwaring's of Sussex whom king James I -

at the request of many of the leading nobles, consented to grant ... a pardon because 'he [Mainwaring] had committed no great wrong,' on condition that he would arrange with the interested parties for the damage he had inflicted. The negotiations being brought to a successful issue, it is recorded that on the 9th of June, 1616, 'Captain Mainwaring, the sea captain, was pardoned under the Great Seal of England.' At the same time a general pardon was granted to all those who had served undeI him, on condition that they returned to England and gave up the 'trade'. (Manwaring, 1920-1922, I, pp. 30-31)

All these show how it was an open secret that many from the privileged class actually patronized and were themselves involved in piracy. In Hamlet's attitude towards the pirates in the play, there seems nothing adversarial to the pirates he met. On the contrary, he seemed to have befriended them. As Floyd-Wilson remarks:

Hamlet's message to Claudius indicates that he has arrived on Denmark's shore "naked," hinting that he has been stripped of his old belongings and making it likely that he would be dressed in sailing garb (4.7.42). If this is the case, Hamlet's costuming when he announces himself as "the Dane" would be indistinguishable from the pirates who deliver his letters to Horatio in the previous act. (Floyd-Wilson, 2009, p. 11)

Here, Hamlet's becoming "indistinguishable from the pirates" can signify the level of his affiliation and connection with them. In this very manner, like the pirate-friendly royalty of historic England, he consented to do them a favour.

This willingness to aid the sea-robbers was never a purposeless act: neither in the history of England nor in the story of *Hamlet*. In Hamlet's letter above, it is clear that it was the pirates who helped him *first* and not the other way round: the pirates liberated the prince first and then the prince was to do them a favour. Shakespeare's readers might wonder at the implausibility of a bunch of evil-doers trusting and freeing a prince so easily without ransoming him. The answer can be found in the following quotation:

And if English pirates were brought into court, they sometimes escaped punishment through the influence of those who needed their expertise in time of war. Pirates from several Cornish ports aided Edward III in his war against France. (Wentersdorf, 1983, p.437)

The elaboration above shows that it had always been a give and take of support between English royalty and the pirates. English kings needed the expertise of barbarous sea-fighters like the pirates in time of crisis, as Edward III needed them during his war with France. Even outside wars, piracy against enemy states was mostly encouraged in England. Queen Elizabeth herself sponsored Francis Drake's pirate-ventures and knighted him later on after he had looted the Spanish galleons (Elizabeth Jenkins, 1959, pp. 232-35). It is evident, then, that English monarchy has mostly been appreciative of the sea-criminals, especially when it came to the advantage of their kingship. And from the way Hamlet was treating them in the play, he clearly seems to be following the footsteps of historical English kings.

Hamlet's Desire to be A King

In comparison to such surprising historical phenomena and in the light of how Hamlet's handling of the pirates can resemble the actions of actual English kings, can Hamlet's contact and contract with the pirates be regarded as an expression of his desire to be the next Danish king? To find an evidential answer to this question, the classic literary debate on whether Hamlet preplanned his meeting with the pirates or not can be referred to. It was George Miles (1870) who first argued that Hamlet himself engineered his capture at the hands of the pirates and that the meeting with the pirates was not an accidental encounter. Miles founds his argument upon the following statement of Hamlet:

HAMLET [There's letters sealed, and my two schoolfellows,
Whom I will trust as I will adders fanged,
They bear the mandate. They must sweep my way
And marshal me to knavery. Let it work,
For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petar, an't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines
And blow them at the moon. Oh 'tis most sweet
When in one line two crafts directly meet.] (3.4.203-211)

Here, Hamlet, having seen through Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's knavery, is revealing his intention to outfox the duo. Miles (1870) thinks that the words "two crafts" in the last line of the passage is a pun: on the one hand, it can refer to the cleverness of Hamlet affronting that of his foes'; on the other hand, it can signify two vessels meeting one another in the sea. Miles (1870) concluded: "If the word crafts had its present maritime significance in Shakespeare's time, the pun alone is conclusive of a prearranged capture" (As quoted in Wentersdorf, 1983, p. 439). That is, Hamlet himself devised the pirate-incident to defeat his enemies. Farley-Hills (1999) explained this in the following manner:

Hamlet's position is clear: he has lost trust in the friendship of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and suspects they are being used in some way by the principal plotter ('engineer') Claudius, although he does not know exactly how until he opens the letter to the King of England on board ship. He will therefore take countermeasures and destroy their plans by the kind of underhand means ('knavery') they are using against him. Given this reading, it is not unreasonable to interpret the reference to 'two crafts' as a pun by which Hamlet is suggesting covertly (as is his wont) that the preparations for this counterplot are already under way in arranging a meeting of the two craft at sea. (p. 324)

Therefore, Hamlet, by punning, was hinting at a prior treaty with the pirates who would render him their service eventually. This interpretation of Miles, however, was opposed by a number of critics. Critics like W.W. Lawrence, D.J. Snider, Robert Petsch, G.R. Hibbard, and H. Jenkins considered Miles's idea to be absurd and rejected it on the basis of their understanding of the pirate-incident as an act of impulsiveness on the part of Hamlet, a youth mostly characterized by inactiveness and procrastination.**

Intriguingly still, Miles's very argument that Hamlet himself formulated his escape with the help of the pirates could actually aptly position Hamlet in the early-modern history of piracy in Europe. Contrasted with the early-modern pirate-king synergy as discussed in the preceding sections,

** See W. Lawrence, 'Hamlet's Sea Voyage', *PMLA*, 59.1 (1944), 45-70; R. Petsch, 'Hamlet unter den Seerauben', *Englische Studsen*, 36 (1905); *Hamlet*, ed G.R. Hibbard (Oxford and New York, 1994), appendix A; Arden Shakespeare edition of *Hamlet*, ed H. Jenkins (London and New York, 1982)

Hamlet's conscious desire to be a king becomes apparent. When Hamlet, on his way to England, learns about Claudius' "royal knavery" (5.2.19), he "devised a new commission" (5.2.32) and did the following:

HAMLET
 I had my father's signet in my purse,
 Which was the model of that Danish seal ;
 Folded the writ up in the form of th'other,
 Subscribed it, gave't th'impression, placed it safely,
 The changeling never known. Now, the next day
 Was our sea-fight, and what to this was sequent
 Thou know'st already. (5.2.49-55)

The above is expressive of Hamlet's active initiative taking in outmaneuvering his enemies. The first most remarkable point to be noted here is that Hamlet took care to retain his father's seal and used it for his own benefit. This may reveal two things: that he had knowledge about the uses and applications of the imperial devices, and that he had avowed interest in them unlike a prince who is popularly known to be apathetic to worldly matters. The most notable thing above, however, is his peculiar description of the pirate-incident: "Now, the next day / Was our sea-fight". Hamlet, instead of describing it as an assault, ascribes a more heroic vibe to it: he calls it a "sea-fight" and, most noticeably, uses the determiner "our". This can imply that Hamlet was actually positive about the pirate-incident, almost looking at it as a kind of collaborative act between him and the pirates. This may suggest that Hamlet has indeed used the pirates and that he might do the same in the future too. That is why it has been stated:

When the intervention of the pirates is understood as an act willed by Hamlet, an important dynamic of the play comes into clearer focus. Hamlet is essentially a play of plots and counterplots, of intrigue and craftiness. Since human volition is at the very core of the central action, it is right that stratagems and machinations, demonstrating the power of the individual will, occupy a prominent place in the dramatic design. (Stevens, 1975, p. 282)

Stevens supports Miles's viewpoint in believing that a prior connection between Hamlet and the sea-looters existed. As he states above, being engaged in a game of "plots and counterplots," Hamlet willingly sought help from the

criminals. Such an interpretation, as the following exchange between Hamlet and Horatio might disclose, is not improbable. Horatio himself recognizes that Hamlet *played* Guildenstern and Rosencrantz like a king:

HORATIO So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't.

HAMLET Why man, they did make love to this employment.

They are not near my conscience. Their defeat

Does by their own insinuation grow.

'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes 60

Between the pass and fell incensed points

Of mighty opposites.

HORATIO Why, what a king is this! (5.2.48-62)

Hamlet's speech above is marked by arrogance and pride. He considers himself to be as "mighty" as Claudius is as a king; and noticeably, he sounds as sinister and as criminal too. Clearly, the indication here is that Hamlet is not a weak prince anymore but is capable of warring with a king toe to toe. Horatio did not fail to see this transformation of Hamlet: "Why, what a king is this!" He could already see a king in his friend. Perhaps that is why Shephard (1956) says: "The King makes a plan; Hamlet counters in kind" (p. 284). That is, Hamlet is checkmating the evil king in his own game. Such cunning and wickedness become apparent in Hamlet after his encounter with the pirates. As Floyd-Wilson (2009) identifies:

Critics seem to agree that Hamlet returns from his sea-voyage in Act 5 a transformed man, but there is no consensus on why or how he has changed. The soliloquies are gone and Hamlet makes his only public declaration of his status, "This is I, / Hamlet the Dane" (5.1.250-51). The curiosity of this statement is why the prince would be compelled to characterize his royal identity in this way. Indeed, what Hamlet literally asserts is the recuperation of his ethnic identity—a recuperation that may be connected to his adventures at sea. (p. 7)

Thus, Hamlet, having come into contact with the pirates, never remained the same. As aptly pointed out by Floyd-Wilson above, Hamlet's assertion of his "royal identity" is indeed a result of "his adventure at sea." Therefore, Hamlet's desire to be king becomes very clear after his meeting with the pirates.

Conclusion

Therefore, the pirate-incident in *Hamlet* exposes a darker and more

ruthless side of Hamlet, a Hamlet who is capable of coming to terms with cutthroats like the pirates. His changed behavior, as is evident in the last few scenes of the play, can appear to be more menacing when judged in the light of the pirate-politics of early-modern Europe. Particularly, the kings and pirates synergy of the 16th and 17th century England as detailed in this research is of immense importance to the understanding and unraveling of the mystery of Hamlet's character. This paper, thus, establishes a connection between Shakespeare's Hamlet and historical pirates. The result shows that Hamlet, by befriendng the pirates, mirrored the actual evil practices of early-modern English kings. It is as if there was no reason why a prince Hamlet won't imitate them. Therefore, as the research has argued, Hamlet can be considered as an ambitious prince who craves victory over his enemies even at the cost of being in league with men of questionable reputation.

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