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Faith and Fractures: Decolonizing Trauma Studies in Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim*

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Dr. (Sr) Judy Gomez

This study critiques the dominant Eurocentric trauma theories by situating Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim* within a decolonized framework that foregrounds postwar Bangladesh's cultural and historical specificities. The novel explores the interplay of faith, secularism, and societal healing in the aftermath of the 1971 Liberation War, revealing diverse approaches to resilience and moral identity through the contrasting perspectives of Sohail and Maya. By analysing the radicalization of Sohail and the socialist activism of Maya, the paper examines how religion and modernity shape individual and collective responses to trauma. This research highlights the inadequacy of Eurocentric frameworks in addressing non-Western experiences of war trauma and advocates for the inclusion of spiritual and communal dimensions in trauma theory. Ultimately, the study situates *The Good Muslim* as a profound reflection on the nation's struggle to reconcile the enduring scars of war with the complex dynamics of secularism, religion, and collective memory under the scanner of literary trauma theory.

Keywords: postcolonial trauma, 1971 partition, faith, secularism, Tahmima Anam

Introduction

Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim* (2011) captures the most underrepresented trauma of the post-partition Bangladesh society, unlike many novels that glorify greatly the sacrifice, courage,

adventures, and legacies of the war. The novel *The Good Muslim* is a sequel to *A Golden Age* (2009) which glorifies the heroic role of Rehana, a mother of two children in wartime. *The Good Muslim* (2011) persistently investigates the silenced torments underlying the construction of postcolonial Bangladesh, set against the backdrop of burgeoning national and religious conflicts. In the novel *The Good Muslim* the events are narrated asynchronously as the narrative holds the story that is simultaneously shifting between the 1970s and 1980s with the special focal point on the years 1972 and 1984. The story is told in fragments mainly to demonstrate the narrative's complexity to signify the intriguing subject matter itself. Valerie Miner praises *The Good Muslim* in the Los Angeles Times as a timely drama about the unpredictable effects of religious zealotry and political violence and a keen examination of survival and forgiveness. The author of *The Good Muslim* conjures the images of the lesser-known world of wound, disruption, uncertainty, and emptiness parallel to the newly found nation Bangladesh. Sohail and Maya, the major characters in the novel, differ in the recuperation process, which parallels the developing nation and serves as the highlight of this investigation. The author reflects on the contradictory notions of healing while showcasing the resilience and recuperative power of a postcolonial nation within a globalized framework.

In *The Good Muslim*, Anam revisits the Haque family which is distorted and traumatized by the war. The narrative oscillates forth and back simultaneously which itself is restless, fragmented, and unconventional. Through the voice of Maya Haque, Anam captures the aftermath of liberated Bangladesh. Though there is a victory for the country's struggle, the lives of the people are turned upside down. Maya works at the Rehabilitation Centre for Women in the remote villages of Bangladesh, performing abortions to the young women who were sexually assaulted by the Pakistani soldiers during wartime. Sohail, the young freedom fighter becomes deeply affected after the tragedy of war and Rehana, his mother comforts him by handing down the *Quran* to lessen his inner turmoil. The character of Sohail reminds Septimus Warren Smith from Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, who is a young guerilla fighter (*Mukti Bahini*) in the 1971 war and who cannot escape

and tame the madness in his head. On his way home after the war, Sohail accidentally kills an old man in fervour who calls him *beta*. The terrible visions of this ill past keep his sanity at check and distress him until he tames the voices in his head by reciting the verses in The Holy Book.

The living presence of trauma and emotional intensity is the shared experience that every character undergoes silently. Each of these characters seeks a way to get out of this continuous traumatic experience. Sohail has accomplished this by accepting his past and surrendering him to the Book (Quran) that comforts and accommodates him without questions or judgments. Maya works in these medical camps without mental or emotional recess and confines her within the walls of the camps to ignore the social reality. The Haque's neighbor Mrs. Chowdhury's daughter Silvi has turned into a Fundamentalist of Islam before Sohail. Silvi's husband Sabeer dies in the war and she remarries Sohail. Silvi dies of jaundice leaving Sohail's six-year-old son Zaid in the hands of Rehana, Sohail's mother. Maya returns to Dhaka from the medical camp after hearing about the death of Silvi. Maya becomes horrified at identifying Sohail as a fundamentalist of Islam and displaced from the activities of university and social meetings. She dismisses her brother's inclination towards religion, as it reminds the Pakistan army's use of religion to legitimize the war.

The Government of the newly formed country exerts an equal amount of help to reduce the traumatic experience of its people. They named the women who were raped by the Pakistan soldiers as '*Birangona*' (War heroines), the unmarried mothers, and the nation paid the same reverence to them that of the dead male soldiers of Bangladesh. The novel proceeds by intertwining their lives together to recover their sense of self. All the characters tarnished in their wartime memories seek redemption from their past. Anam's idea of bringing in the radicalization of Islam in Bangladesh as the outcome of the war trauma is clearly stated through Sohail's character. The consequence of religion does not only end in the personal sphere to address trauma but also has its effect on the public sphere of politics. But the use of religion in the public sphere distorts the social cohesion

of the Bangladeshi state which is against the cause of the Liberation War. Thus, the use of religion in the personal sphere is sometimes abdicated by the political sphere too. Religion acts as a buoy to speak to the sufferings and victimhood in the case of characters like Sohail. Thus, religious identity plays a role in personal, political, and international identity. Anam's realistic approach to the trauma representation of the 1971 partition in Bangladesh, does not employ Western secular notions. The increase of poststructuralism and postmodernism modes of narrative in the Western framework avoids the concept of religion, because of their affiliation towards secularism. This postcolonial literary trauma novel deliberately displays the religiously informed life of its citizens.

Methodology: Revisions in Trauma Theory to Accommodate the Traumas of Postcolony

Trauma studies collaborate multiple approaches such as poststructuralist criticism, new historicism, and cultural materialism to frame its critical analytical methodology. This approach brings in the realistic mode of criticism in the present day with an ethical pretext of much-criticized textual criticism. While analysing a postcolonial text, trauma studies predominantly serve as the best and most sustaining criticism to engage with, by bringing in the ethical significance to this critical practice. Cathy Caruth in her founding texts *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Experience and Narrative and History* (1996) and *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) on trauma studies calls for recognizing trauma as a cross-cultural ethical engagement, "trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures" (Caruth, 1995, p. 11). Her idea promotes the commitment to bridge the gap between disparate historical communities. Stef Craps and Gert Beulens question the commitment of trauma studies toward the ethical effectiveness of the theory framed by Caruth and the early trauma theorists. "Instead of promoting solidarity between different cultures, trauma studies risk producing the very opposite effect as a result of this one-sided focus: by ignoring non–Western traumatic events" (Craps and Beulens, 2008, p. 2). The notion of Craps and Beulens' essay titled *Introduction: Postcolonial Trauma Novels* in 2008 gave rise to the need to acknowledge the traumatic experience in the non-Western module

which differs from the pre-existing framework of trauma representation. The differences mainly occur due to the cultural setting and situation of trauma in its treatment.

The reconfiguration of trauma studies by scholars such as Stef Craps, Gert Beulens, Laura Brown, Micheal Rothberg, Irene Visser, and many more invigorate the field by understanding the specificity and the representation of postcolonial trauma in a text to enable its wider applicability. Furthermore, to signify the influence of trauma in culture, postcolonial critics lately suggest and identify postcolonialism as a "theorizing colonization in terms of infliction of a collective trauma and reconceptualizing post-colonialism as a post-traumatic cultural formation" (Craps and Beulens, 2008, p. 1). They point out that the major stumbling block of trauma theory is its failure to recognize the sufferings of non-Western others and to the prescribed notions on a modern aesthetic outlook of trauma representations in literature as aporetic in dictum and fragmented in the narrative. Banerjee (2022) highlights the over-importance given to the notion of language's failure in representing trauma, "Western trauma theorists privilege the high modernist aesthetic of fragmentation, non-linearity, and anti-narrative as the only mode for trauma narratives." (Banerjee, 2022, p. 675). Roger Luckhurst raises a major point concerning the theory's lack of perception of politics and calls it a "Shocking failure" to "address atrocity, genocide and war" (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 213). This invokes new avenues to frame the relationship between postcolonial literary studies and trauma theory. Stef Craps and Gert Beulens address the 'depoliticizing' and 'dehistoricizing' characteristics of trauma theory as the major obstacle and also note it as the limiting factor to its wide applicability (Visser, 2011, p. 261). This reconfiguration of trauma studies especially aids in assessing one of the recurring themes in colonial traumas such as political violence, genocide, and segregation. Postcolonial trauma studies ignore the Western dominant model of psychologization of social suffering and privilege the social nature of trauma over depoliticization. Thus, trauma studies advance by the knowledge of social context combining psychoanalysis, sociology, philosophy, and history. Rothberg finds the Holocaust as a completed past and has a definitive period of history

compared to postcolonial studies as the colonial trauma persists into the present. His suggestion to advance the trauma theory is to rethink trauma from "individual, temporal, linguistic" to "collective, spatial, material" (Rothberg, 2008, p. 228) which breaks away from the hold of early trauma theory developed by Caruth, Felman, Laub, and Others.

Another significant revision needed was in the methods addressing melancholia, which incorporates numerous critical ideologies to display non-Western experiences of trauma. The Western trauma theorists' notions display melancholia as a weakness and crippling effect of the traumatic event continued in its aftermath and this injection is the defining attribute of the posttraumatic stage. However postcolonial trauma novels differ in the concept of working through victimization by incorporating the themes of social activism, recuperation, and resilience visibly. The Eurocentric lens of melancholia disrupts and obscures the resilient feature of the postcolonial trauma narrative. *Studies in the Novel* (2008) a critical work in the field of postcolonial trauma studies highlights the issues in viewing melancholia represented in the postcolonial or non-western text through a Western mode of trauma theory. This denotes the problem in shifting the trauma theory from a Western to a non-Western perspective, and a need for a movement from individual to collective. The transition from the larger social entities (general angst of the hour) to individual trauma, a particular transition enabled by critics focuses on the condition that enabled traumatic abuse in the individual psyche. In this way, the transition is more helpful and effective in the understanding and application of trauma theory in non-Western trauma texts. The trauma theory sees melancholia as an injection which as Craps terms "pathological and negative" cannot be seen and maintained in this injection in a postcolonial text. Hence, these injunctions do not fit in the narrative of postcolonial text, as they display "to make visible the creative and political" (Craps, 2008, p. 127). Irene Visser put forward the largely side-stepped area of the postcolonial novel, when it comes to critical reading, regarding its emphasis on the representation of the belief system of the indigenous in healing the trauma of the native. She agrees with the idea of Rothberg by expressing, "The re-routing of the secular orientation of literary theory accords with the long-

standing call for a diversification of postcolonial modes of reading trauma" (Rothberg, 2008, p. 234). The novel chosen for study can be read as the postcolonial trauma narrative as it reflects and refracts the collective trauma of postwar Bangladesh through the intimate lens of familial rupture, spiritual divergence, and political disillusionment. By approaching the novel as a cultural text, this reading seeks to locate it within the broader constellation of national identity formation, evolving religious ideologies, and the complexities of post-independence disillusionment. Such an interpretive framework allows for a nuanced consideration of the ways in which literature may engage with the ethical and epistemological challenges of witnessing, remembering, and navigating the enduring legacies of postcolonial trauma.

Interplay of Faith, Religion, and Secularism in Postwar Bangladesh

Anam portrays two distinct modes of healing through Sohail and Maya, reflecting the Bangladeshi nation's struggle for recovery. Rehanna introduces the Holy Book to Sohail to shield him from the war's lingering effects. Sohail finds solace in the Book and tries to explain his faith to Maya, but she dismisses it as shell shock. Longing for her understanding, Sohail eventually realizes she cannot share his burden and retreats, severing familial ties. Chaity Das has rightly said in her book *In the Land of Buried Tongues* that Maya is a reflection of Western secularism (Das, 2017, p. 302) until her recognition of Sohail's change at a great personal loss. For Sohail, the Book offers comfort and answers that help him make sense of his pain. "The Book believes he is good. He begins to read." (Anam, 2016, p. 125). Later, Sohail declares his love for the Book and multiplies his visits to the mosque, and begins to wear a cap. Sohail becomes a contrasting personality in the aftermath of the war, a young boy who reads Ghalib, D. H. Lawrence, Neruda, Rilke, and Tagore, lives only in the sacred words of the Holy Book now. The language becomes a visible carrier of trauma when interpretated both literally and symbolically, the loss of his personal voice that only mediates religious scriptures narratives. The mystique around Sohail reaches to a great extent when he saves Rehanna at the hospital when she was almost dead because of cancer, through his devotion to the Book, Sohail is recast—not as a bearer of destruction, but as a vessel of healing.

> Sohail lifted a plastic container of water, poured a small measure into a glass. Water from the Well of Zamzam. He lifted his mother's head and raised the glass to her mouth, tipping it slowly through the slight part in her lips. The drops that spilled on to her chin he did not wipe away. The men continued to recite. Dr Sattar brushed his eyes with a handkerchief. (Anam, 2016, p. 205)

Moreover, Manav Ratti in *The Postsecular Imagination*, draw attention to western secularism, "ideas of modernity, progress, civilization, and the othering of religions that are different from Christianity" consequently non-Christian belief systems, especially Islam, are the religious other, seen as intolerant and irrational" (Ratti, 2013, p. 28). Maya cannot believe it, yet she understands that her mother has been cured. There was no other way to describe it. Dr. Sattar had confirmed that the chemotherapy had worked, and Rehana was now in remission. She had drunk the Zamzam water, and the cancer seemed to have fled from her body, like birds scattering from a tree when a shot is fired. Sohail was the shot. Tahmima Anam introduces Zamzam water as a symbolic element in Rehana's recovery, an idea that appears illogical or unrealistic to Maya. However, the inclusion of this element exemplifies a defining feature of postcolonial novels—the multiplicity of voices and the coexistence of contradictory or conflicting perspectives. Visser states that "due to the influence of postmodernist theories and poststructuralist antagonism towards religion as grand narrative" (Visser, 2015, p. 17).

Sohail's turn to Islamic fundamentalism underscores the absence of moral and psychological support from the government, which failed to address the traumatic experiences of war veterans. Their suffering was trivialized under dismissive phrases like these things happen in war, leaving them to cope with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) without proper care or acknowledgment. Fanon aptly observes that a wounded political system cannot transform either the nation or its people from the grip of apocalyptic politics. In postcolonial trauma theory, material recovery is emphasized as crucial for healing the affect-laden psyche by addressing systemic social obstructions. This marks a departure from traditional trauma theory, which, as developed by Freud, prioritizes the victim's linguistic expression of

trauma over addressing its root causes. Critics like Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub highlight the use of dialogue between the victim as the subject and the listener as the knowledgeable expert, Craps suggests that this empathetic framework can hinder self-reflection and obscure complicity in systemic oppression. Because these therapeutic models often prioritize immaterial recovery, this narrow focus on the psyche overlooks the broader, more tangible process of systemic transformation needed for true healing. Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, stresses the need for recovery at both the individual and systemic levels in post-traumatic conditions. He distinguishes between Material recovery is a significant step in healing the affect-mediated psyche through the identification of social obstruction. This sought a major difference in the decolonized outlook of trauma theory were placing significance on material recovery over immaterial recovery. Because earlier trauma theory developed by Freud highlights victim's linguistic gain of the traumatic event over rectifying the actual causing agent of the trauma. Critics like Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub for example analyse the relationship of the victim as subject and listener as the knowledgeable expert and the empathy removes the process of self-reflection and their complication in oppression. material recovery, which involves transforming the political structures that perpetuate trauma, and immaterial recovery, which focuses on individual psychological healing. "There will be an authentic desalination only to the degree to which the things in the most materialistic meaning of the world, will have been restored in their proper places" (Fanon, 1952, p. 11-12). Unlike Sohail, whose language retreats into religious formalism and suppresses personal emotion, Maya's relationship with language evolves as a means of reclaiming agency and confronting trauma. In the novel's opening pages, when Rehana urges Maya to speak, Maya's words "rose up," but she consciously withholds them, refusing to give her pain the form of spoken vulnerability. This silence, however, is not permanent. Maya later finds her voice through political journalism, choosing the public medium of the newspaper column to articulate her grief and rage—not to seek pity or maternal comfort, but to demand justice. Her writings on events like Nazia's public lashing become acts of bearing witness, using language not only to process

trauma but also to challenge the silence surrounding gendered violence in post-war Bangladesh. In this, Maya's use of voice becomes an ethical act, turning personal suffering into collective critique.

Majid. A (2018) focuses on the role of place in trauma theory, "*The Good Muslim's* setting of the post-Sheikh Mujib era captures the emergence of religious extremism as a response to the secular ideologies of the war… Anam addresses the emotional effects of such extremism" (Majid & Jalaluddin, 2018, p. 31). The plot blatantly mirrors the nation's wounded political system and their recovery through Sohail, after the formation of independent Bangladesh. The neocolonial regime of the newly elected members of the state reflects Fanon's concept of Pitfalls of National Consciousness. There were multiple deaths followed by the assassination of Mujib, Tajuddin, and Khaled Mosharraf. The modifications to the country's constitution during the rule of Dictator Ershad prove the implications of the use of religion in the public sphere. After the 1947 partition, under the regime of West Pakistan, Islam is the state religion of Bangladesh. After twenty-five years, on the 1971 liberation of Bangladesh, Mujib declared Bangladesh as a secular nation. In 1988 under the rule of Ershad, the nation declared the state religion as Islamic. In 2005, a change in the fifth amendment took place in parliament which declared Bangladesh as an Islamic and secular nation. The political disorder internalizes the posttraumatic condition of the state and its subject.

Maya differs from Sohail and also rejects her brother's inclination towards religion. Maya in women's rehabilitation centre has counselled and aborted babies of the women and young girls assaulted by the Pakistan army in the concentration camps immediately after the war in Dhaka. Later, she becomes a village doctor in Rajshahi and actively participates in eradicating superstitions surrounding women's pregnancy and health. It is her way of remission from the traumatic memories of war; she delivers the babies of these women in the village as an act of tallying all the abortions she performed during the war. On her return to Dhaka, to take care of her mother recently diagnosed with cancer. During her stay, she finds the newspaper agency of Shafaat and soon becomes a column writer in the newspaper. She writes about corruption and against the Dictator's

rule in Bangladesh, and heavily comments on the Dictator's infusion of Islam into the society to gain political cohesion from Pakistan. She relentlessly moves forward to diminish passivity. She wonders of her friends who put their memories away and delve into their daily life and wiped the imprints of blood from their hands. Veena Das highlights how the everyday activities of ordinary life descend into the being of the present traumatic subject and help anchor trauma in ongoing life. The methodological part of continuing the events from the ordinary life after an extraordinary event. Veena Das puts how life carries itself forward with the help of ordinary work rather than a superfluous or grand event,

> I see everyday life as a kind of achievement, not just as part of habit. I also believe that there is a certain kind of heroic model of resistance, a romance of resistance. And the kind of work that needs to be done to maintain the everyday, and the ways in which the ordinary and the extraordinary are braided together in our ordinary lives are theoretically much more difficult to understand (DiFruscia, 2010, p. 137)

Sohail and Maya scarred by war, try to tame their mind from the terrible visions of the past, unlike Sohail who submits himself to the dogma of religion, and unquestionable faith, Maya wants to uphold the reason for which the Liberation War was fought. Maya works toward the prominent feature of the material recovery; she always ensures to question the validity and integrity of the political system of the country. Maya's style of acting out and working through contribute a positive progression in the function of the postcolonial trauma narrative.

But Anam's aspect of this recuperative narrative moves beyond the bifurcation between Sohail and Maya by providing a situational consciousness of coexistence between faith and secularism. As Sohail becomes extremely religious, it strains his relationship with his family members and leads him to ignore his son, Zaid. Maya instills the spirit of secularism with humanism and actively helps people in both private and public spheres. Though the title suggests that Sohail is a good Muslim, Anam presents Maya's world as a competing secular vision against Sohail's absolute faith. Even in the aftermath of the

war, Maya continues her fight to uphold the values of the liberation struggle. She rebukes Sohail for seeking refuge in religion as a means to achieve salvation from his guilt and terror. This ethical partiality dissipates when she loses Zaid, Sohail's son, in the river Jamuna. She also feels the urge to be salvaged from the past: "She sees too, in herself, the need for such a rescue, such a buoy, such a truth…that religion, its open fragrance…an essential need, hers as much as his…she will not become one of those people and allow it to change the meter of who they are" (Anam, 2016, p. 126). Maya learns a poignant lesson at great cost upon the death of Zaid in the waters of Jamuna while attempting to rescue him from madrasa. Maya feels the weight of her grief for the first time, buckling under it, returning to that day and seeing herself taking the boat and losing the boy every time she opens her eyes. At this moment, the worlds of Sohail and Maya collide and confront each other. Sohail offers forgiveness to Maya and accepts her apology for not saving his son. He tells her that only God can choose the hour of man's death, and she does not want to be forgiven in a way that absolves their shared responsibility. In this very moment, Maya utters, "I believe you" (Anam, 2016, p. 288). Sohail's dialogue throughout the novel underscores his gradual loss of personal voice and withdrawal from secular, emotional discourse. His speech, particularly when offering forgiveness, is marked by a rigid, doctrinal tone that reflects his submission to religious ideology rather than personal conviction. The emotional depth of his experiences—particularly wartime trauma—is suppressed beneath the formalized, ritualistic language of faith, which serves less as a means of healing and more as a mechanism of silencing. And here, in her mind, every time she closes her eyes and sees the image of the Sohail he has become, knowing that… they never share a joke or a book (there can be only One, there can be only One), her heart will break. But she recognizes the wound in his history, the irreparable wound because she has one too. His wound is her wound. Knowing this, she realizes she can no longer wish him differently (Anam, 2016, p. 293).

To believe that religion can address itself to pain and does not carry any implications beyond the personal sphere is not learning history. Hannah Arendt's thoughts on the banality of evil depict the

large number of people who are either incapable or unwilling to question and become the actors of totalitarianism. Sohail's unquestionable faith is an absolutist claim on religion and it can heal wounds but may not speak to the victims of the war. Maya's character later totally contradicts her earlier secular character after the death of Zaid that cannot practice complete omission of religion. The memorialization of Zaid in Maya's daughter Zubaida and Pia, a wartime rape victim saved by Sohail names her son Sohail transforms the wounded memories of war. The only difference between Sohail and Maya is the role play of skepticism that puts the bridge between absolute faith and secularism, balancing between unknown and logic. Spirituality speaks to all the scarred souls of war but to provide justice needs principles of democracy. Thus, the posttraumatic cultural formation of the Bangladeshi society resides in the religious and the principles of secularism to move forward with resilience. Islam is not a religion to the people of its country but they deem it as the disposition of their location, so it is not a supernatural supposition of life but act as an indispensable ordinary merge into their livelihood.

> By anchoring the moral need to deal with memories of violence as a crucial legacy of the Liberation War, by recognizing the ambiguity between the victim and perpetrator in war, and the powerful claim of religion one those condemned by conscience because/though they have been spared by the law (Sohail) the author also wonders if the 'spectre' of radicalization is not itself partially a consequence of the war of 1971 and its disturbing afterlife rather than only a remnant of the days as undivided Pakistan. (Das, 2017, p. 303)

The two contrasting worlds presented in *The Good Muslim* are the worlds of Sohail and Maya. In the religious world of Sohail, the misdeeds go unnoticed, instances like Rokeya getting pregnant by the man of God and Kathija punishing only Rokeya and Zaid may be harassed by the *Huzoor* in the *madrasa*. Sohail ignores these elements, because of absolute faith in Islam, his world does not even acknowledge the assassination of Mujib Rahman. Whereas Maya seeks redemption in practical help and active socialism through her medical profession and argues for a trial against the war criminals even after the death of Zaid.

> Maya's daughter, Zubaida, five years old, will hold her hand as the speeches continue into the afternoon. Their palms will. grow slippery, but they will cling to one another, their fingers 291 interlaced. 'Ammoo,' she will whisper, 'are they going to hang Ghulam Azam now?' 'Not yet, beta. First, he has to be tried.' (Anam, 2016, p. 291)

Through the personal and societal rifts caused by differing interpretations of what it means to live a good and moral life, so one can question whether the strict adherence to religious principles that Sohail practices equate to moral goodness and does not lead to ethical failings. Maya here answers the critique of traditional religious values which describes religious pious is not the sole way to achieve moral goodness in life, she alternates the path by combining compassion, rationality, and humanitarian practices that leads to moral integrity. Comparing the worlds of Maya and Sohail, the disruption between dogmatic secularism and absolute faith is clearly visible. The concept of working through is not maintained as a weakness or fragile event in this postcolonial text as mentioned in the Western modes of trauma theory. The state of melancholia is seen as the catalyst of transformation in the postcolonial trauma novels. Thus, to gain postcolonial scholarship of the text, the social context of the suffering becomes the point of reference.

Conclusion

The novel alludes to the dual identity of the newly established Bangladesh's constitution, which declares Islam as the state religion while upholding the principles of secularism and promising religious freedom. Anam, through her narrative, acknowledges the heritage of Islam alongside the principles of democracy and secularism in the post-traumatic cultural context of Bangladesh. The novel showcases the significant role religion plays in the evolving dynamics of the political, social, and cultural background in the country's post-traumatic state. Anam successfully captures the transformation of both the state and its individuals through themes of social activism, recuperation, and resilience. Postcolonial literary trauma representation differs from dominant Western trauma narratives; therefore, applying consistent Western conceptions of trauma may result in ethical risks. Anam's

novel particularly addresses the negotiation between secularism and Islam within her country's political landscape, while Western academia often overlooks the religiously informed perspective of third-world subjects. Thus, decolonizing trauma theory begins with understanding the natives' belief systems and accommodating the cultural specificity of colonial traumatic events. The analysis of major characters like Sohail and Maya demonstrates the engagement with spiritual and religious traditions and their significance in the therapeutic process of overcoming traumatic memories and their aftermath in Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim*. The conceptual framework in postcolonial trauma studies emphasizes the spiritual and religious modes of addressing trauma. This particular aspect of the postcolonial approach to reading trauma texts aids in advancing literary trauma theory toward decolonizing dominant Western interpretations in postcolonial contexts. While acknowledging the foundational insights of secular trauma theory, this article contends that its frameworks are inadequate for engaging with postcolonial realities such as those depicted in *The Good Muslim*. The analysis favours a paradigm shift toward culturally embedded and spiritually informed trauma narratives that better reflect the social, historical, and ethical complexities of formerly colonized societies. In doing so, the article positions decolonized trauma theory not only as an addendum but as a necessary alternative to Western-dominated discourse.

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