

Translating Literary Texts: Impediments, Cultural Implications and Possible Solutions



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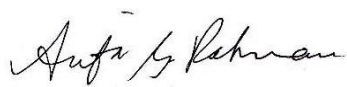
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Arifa Ghani Rahman", written over a horizontal line.

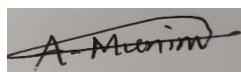
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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Munim', is written over a light gray rectangular background.

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the obstacles and hindrances faced by translators while translating from one language to another, along with some possible ways to minimize the differences between the intended meaning of the author in the source language and the meaning understood in the target language. This thesis will also focus on the importance of culture, context, and language structure in translation. A Bangla text will be translated into English, and that translation will be analyzed to serve the purpose of this study. Through this analysis, this paper will show how some phrases that have been translated in the target language to convey the intended meaning of the source text, express meaning in the target language with relation to both context and culture. The text I have used for this thesis is titled “আমার যত ভণিতা, জিনিয়াকে নিয়ে” (**Amar joto bhonita, Jiniake nie**) written by Sumon Rahman. In terms of translation theory, I have used the theory of “Dynamic Equivalence” throughout the translation, along with “Sociolinguistic approach” to translation.

Chapter One: Introduction

This study aims to investigate the obstacles and hindrances faced by translators while translating from one language to another, along with some possible ways to minimize the differences between the intended meaning of the author in the source language and the meaning understood in the target language. This thesis will also focus on the importance of culture, context, and language structure in translation. A Bangla text will be translated into English, and that translation will be analyzed to serve the purpose of this study. Through this analysis, this paper will show how some phrases that have been translated in the target language to convey the intended meaning of the source text, express meaning in the target language with relation to both context and culture. The text I have used for this thesis is titled **“আমার যত ভণিতা, জিনিয়াকে নিয়ে” (Amar joto bhonita, Jiniake nie)** written by Sumon Rahman. In terms of translation theory, I have used the theory of “Dynamic Equivalence” throughout the translation, along with “Sociolinguistic approach” to translation.

Language has always been the medium through which human beings have communicated with each other. In essence, this medium of communication is an intricate part of the culture of any given society. According to renowned linguists Abbasi, Zadeh, Janfaza, Assemi & Dehghan (2012), “Language is a phenomenon and a factor that links different cultures and a way of expressing feelings and ideas that people try to convey” (83). Translation plays an important role in connecting the different cultures of different contexts. According to a famous linguist named Ivir (2003), “Any act of translation represents an attempt to bridge the gap between two cultures”. Therefore, translation can be considered as an essential way of transferring culture from one language to the other. However, sometimes culture itself becomes a limitation for the translator as

culture varies from language to language and it is important for the translator to be able to convey the intended meaning of the original text in the target language. Abbasi, Zadeh, Janfaza, Assemi & Dehghan (2012) contend that “A good translator should simultaneously be aware of the cultural factors, views and tradition in order to consciously consider the chronological orders, explicit meaning, development of related disciplines, historical and religious background of the source text” (83).

Newmark defined culture as “the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression” and Vermeer stated that, “language is part of a culture” (Abbasi, Zadeh, Janfaza, Assemi & Dehghan, 2012,). The relationship among language, culture and translation is an important aspect considering the importance of human communication in the world. “The variety of languages with different cultures and necessity of communications in human life caused translation to be a very effective factor in communicating, exchanging cultures, and knowledge” (Abbasi, Zadeh, Janfaza, Assemi & Dehghan, 2012). Elaborating about the necessity of the translator to know about cultural usage of both source and target languages, Abbasi, Zadeh, Janfaza, Assemi & Dehghan (2012) said, “... two things are necessary for a good translation - an adequate understanding of the original language (source language) and an adequate command of the language into which one is translating (receptor language)” (84). Ivir, a renowned linguist (2003), defines a translator’s strategy as it is determined by his understanding of the “communicative function of the element of culture to be translated in that particular context of situation” and his knowledge of the “contrastive relations between the source and the target language”, and his awareness of the “translating traditions” in the target culture (117).

This discussion shows how it is essential to consider both language and culture in the process of translating and for this purpose, my study will focus on providing some solutions that will be helpful for the translators to minimize the differences of intended meaning and understood meaning respectively from the source language to the target language.

The objective of this study is to reduce the challenges faced by translators while translating due to the lack of cultural knowledge of the original context. Some solutions can be generated by analyzing the target text to show how some of the phrases have been translated, conveying the intended meaning from the source language into the target language. From this analysis, this thesis will provide some possible solutions to minimize the problems for translators.

The research questions that will be answered in this study are,

1. How is context and culture a crucial part in translation from source language to target language?
2. What sort of difficulties arise when translating a text without any given context?
3. What can be some possible solutions to minimize the loss in core meaning and intended meaning from the source language?

This study covers one translated short story from Bangla to analyze the process of translation, considering the cultural differences. This investigation will follow a two-month long time-frame for the translation to be completed, followed by a month of analysis of the translated text. The analysis will focus more on cultural differences of phrases in the source text that is more prominent than the minor ones, which in turn will be a decisive factor in affecting the readers of the target text.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This study is focused on evaluating the differences between the intended meaning in the source text and the meaning understood by the target readers in the target text. It will focus on how being an insider and understanding the cultural implications of the source text while translating is a crucial factor in determining how the target readers will interpret the implicit meaning in the source text. Many researchers have conducted different studies to address the obstacles faced in translation due to lack of cultural understanding of the original context and they have tried to provide some effective techniques for the translators to minimize the differences. Al-Masri's (2009) study, for instance, in which he talks about the "cultural inequivalences." Vlachopoulos' (2004) study addresses the cultural obstacles faced by a translator. Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek's (2005) research paper focuses on the lack of cultural-specific expressions in translation along with the findings of some strategies for translators. Niedzielski's (1991) explores the cultural transfers in translating humor in the target language. Guo's (2012) study focuses on the influence of the culture in translation. Simms' (1997) book is based on the linguistic aspects of translating sensitive texts coming from different cultures and James' (2002) article discusses the importance of cultural implications in translation along with the importance of providing the missing background of the original text by the translators.

Al-Masri (2009) conducted a study on cultural translation in which he addresses the issue of "cultural inequivalences" or losses occurring in the translation of Arabic literary texts and also to explore the translation strategies that led to "cultural losses." In his paper, Al-Masri argues on three aspects in which translations of Arabic texts may not be doing justice to the source text. Firstly, the omission of proverbial, idiomatic, and figurative translations results in the target text to be "unfair" to the readers when it comes to retaining the cultural meanings and contexts.

Secondly, he argues that a translator needs to put in a considerable amount of effort to conserve the ‘emics of the source language.’ This retention enables the translator to keep the ‘cultural implications’ of the source author intact while translating. The third argument centers around translating out of context, which ultimately results in cultural losses and ‘losses of the unfamiliar to the target readers. This paper is directly related to my research, in terms of cultural importance in translations, and how it becomes a deciding factor in how the Target readers interpret the Target text with relevance to the Source Text. Towards the end of this paper, Al-Masri proposes ways in which the difference in source text and target text to be merged, or ‘graded continuum of these losses’ (Al-Masri, 2009).

According to a study conducted by Stefanos Vlachopoulos (2004), the cultural obstacles faced during translation from English to Greek were analyzed to understand if the cultural conventions of the target language have been met by the translator in the translated text. Koller (1992) says that texts are not just the accumulation of words or phrases rather they should serve as “an organ of collective perception” linked to that culture (cited in Vlachopoulos, 2004). Moreover, the translated texts should convey the intended meaning in the context of the target language culture, so as not to lose any of the cultural norms associated intricately with specific words and phrases. That is to say, the method and means used to translate a given text reflect on the reasoning of the producer of the original text. The translation of legal texts works as a mirror for the legal reasoning of the legal traditions of both the Source language and the Target Language. As the targeted text for translation in this study is a legal text for a Greek citizen who needs to present the translated text before the Greek court, it is essential that the translated text must carry the exact intended meaning expressed in the Source Language. The translation must consider if the translated text is able to serve the communicative purpose while following the legal text translation

process. In Babiniotis' (1992) words, the translator needs to determine the communicative purpose of the "syntactic and semantic information conveyed by punctuation" (cited Vlachopoulos, 2004). Adverbial devices are used to make sense of paragraphs or sentences which have been translated out of context, enabling them to retain "intratextual independence" (Vlachopoulos, 2004). The study conducted in this chapter is related to my research in a number of important ways. The analysis of cultural differences and discrepancies that has a defining impact in translating to the target language.

A research paper by Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek (2005) explores the problems that can be encountered by a translator of cultural-specific expressions. Here, some methods and strategies have also been discussed to deal with "cultural specific expressions" with the help of various theoretical implications of the translation process. According to Bell (1991), the translator must have enough "socio-linguistic competence" along with an excellent knowledge of both the source and the target language, which comprises vocabulary and word formation, grammar, spelling and pronunciation. The socio-linguistic competence will help the translator to understand the text within its particular context and to determine its functions along with the prediction of its receiver. It is indispensable to have the understanding of the "customs and culture" of the language in which the text is being translated. There may be different distinctions between a situation that arose in the culture of the source language and the meaning in the culture of the target language. The target language may lack a more specific term or concept which is "Hyponym" or a more general one which refers to "Superordinate." The target language may also lack a literal translation of word for word meaning which can be completely "undecodable" (cited in Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek, 2005).

According to Korzeniowska and Kuhiwczak (1994), translators always need to remain under the constant pressure to "reproduce the exact meaning of the original in the translated text." They have

to bear in mind that the meaning of their translated text can be constructed by its target readers very often. The way they will construct the meaning depends on their understanding of the cultural background addressing their “social position, nationality, political preferences and historical context” to a large extent. Baker (1992) also adds that translators have to make adjustments through some effective strategies to implement in order to overcome the various obstacles faced by them due to the “lack of equivalence, cultural untranslatability and with loss in translation.” Here, one of the most commonly applied strategies to deal with various problems faced in translation has been discussed which is “Translation by generalization.” In this strategy, the translator usually uses superordinate or a more general word in other words. The translator may also replace a whole concept which is more specific with a more commonly known one. However, the replacement of a problematic specific concept with a more general one may result in “excessive generalization” and eventually in “oversimplification” in the translated text which may cause the loss of meaning. The opposite strategy of “Generalization” is the use of “Hyponym” which refers to the use of a more specific term while translating. However, this may bring out the possibility of overinterpretation of the meaning conveyed in the source language. Another very important strategy is translation by “cultural substitution”, which refers to the replacement of a “culture-specific item or expression” in the source text with an item from the target language and this replaced term will describe a similar concept in the target language. This strategy helps the readers to connect a concept which they can relate to and which is easily “understandable, familiar and appealing” to them. However, with certain texts, this strategy may not work as it may create “simple misunderstandings” due to different historical backgrounds. The strategy of using “loan word” helps in the case of understanding newly introduced concepts. Translation by paraphrasing helps “to achieve a high level of precision in specifying the meaning of a word or concept that

poses difficulties in translation.” The translation strategy by “omission” refers to the omitting of the relatively less important phrase, word or expression while translating (Paluszkiewicz-Misiaczek, 2005). The strategies discussed in this paper will be helpful for the translators to overcome the problems they face while translating to a larger extent.

Niedzielski (1991) explores the cultural transfers in the translating of humor as “humorous incongruities” vary from culture to culture. According to him, the “paramount importance” of the cultural contents should appear very clearly in the translated humorous text. In order to translate humor, the translators and the interpreters must overcome the “cross-cultural” obstacles created by the differences in “norms, expectations and incongruities” existing in the cultures of both the source language and the target language. The translators need to adapt some possible techniques on the basis of some “equivalence between acts, expressions or visual representations” in both the source and target communities. According to Niedzielski (1984), This refers to the findings of some solutions to look for “although not the similar, will evoke the same concepts, feelings, emotions or reactions”. Niedzielski (1991) shares his adapted techniques that he has been using since many years of his teaching such as: “dissecting the source language text into SL translating units (SLTU), analyzing etymology and target language of each SLTU, searching for basic target language equivalent translating units, checking TL idioms and selecting among TL paraphrases or clichés.” Another alternative approach in translating humor can be “semantic trees, creating branches which account for the humor and the dual scripts, both the expected and the distorted scripts” (Raphaelson-West, 1989). So, this chapter and the techniques discussed here will help the translators while translating humor from the original text to the translated text.

Another study conducted by Guo (2012) is focused on the influence of culture on translation and also provides the “semantic and pragmatic equivalence approaches” in translation. Words may

contain some cultural connotations and also mirror the cultural characteristics as culture and language are closely related to each other, therefore, it is very difficult to translate them correctly. In order to serve the purpose of translation with better accuracy, it is important to know the semantic equivalence and pragmatic equivalence of the words that are going to be translated. Theoretically, “a good translation should give its reader the same conception as what a native reader gets from the original” (cited in Guo, 2012). Eugene (2001) defines a good translation as the response of the receivers to that translated piece of work and then the received message must be compared with the expressed message in the original setting of that original piece of work. Jakobson held the view that translation does not just mean the change of symbols into another language, but it is a “process of information substitution” (cited in Guo, 2012). Catford explained that in translation there is no “meaning equivalence”, but just the “signifier equivalence” (Guo, 2012). Due to the differences in historical backgrounds, geographic locations, local customs and religious beliefs, there will be some obstacles in translation which may cause misinterpretation or misunderstanding between the cultures of source language and target language. This refers to the fact that translation not only involves the “linguistic competence” of the translator or the interpreter, but also calls for the acquaintance with the “respective cultures” (Guo, 2012). According to Eugene (2001), translation consists in “reproducing the receptor language, the closest natural equivalent of the source language, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style” and in order to reproduce “the closest natural equivalent” in the target language is influenced by the “cultural differences” between these two languages (cited in Guo, 2012). So, this study shows us that without cultural knowledge, it is difficult to translate the original into target language accurately. However, the approaches of semantic and pragmatic equivalence in translation can help to get a new perspective of understanding culture and translation.

Simms (1997), in his book, discusses the linguistic aspects of translating sensitive texts. A translator's most important attribute is to immerse in the phenomenology of culture rather than the knowledge of semantics. In translation theory, "literal" translation and "free" translation have been introduced. A literal translation conceives the intention of the source text to be its "extension" and it attempts to render this extension as faithfully as possible by "rendering each individual word of the source text into an equivalent drawn from the lexicon of the target text" whereas a free translation is on the side of the reader than the author in which there is "relatively little respect for the author's own form of words, so long as the underlying message remains intact" (Simms, 1997). However, free translation can become the "cultural translation," the translation of lexical items, phrases and passages into the contemporary cultural equivalents rather than into the equivalent meanings. A literal translation is particularly an interlinear one that makes everything visible even if the target reader is completely unaware of the source language. Some translations may preserve literality while helping the reader where the reader's understanding might fail through cultural ignorance. This would involve "textual interpolation" on "Jews" or "friars". The lower case in the Spanish indicates what would be accepted by the original readership, that these are not literal Jews but characters which carry with them a complex set of symbolic values. Such characters, as quite peculiar to the culture in which they are to be found, do not have a readily-accessible English semantic equivalent for their name (Simms, 1997). The different approach-based translations discussed here will help the translators while translating sensitive texts.

James (2002), in her article, discusses the importance of cultural implications for translations. Toury(1978) defines translation as a kind of activity that inevitably involves "two languages and two cultural traditions." This definition implies how the translators struggle to find the "most appropriate technique" of successfully conveying the implicit cultural aspects of the source text in

the target language. According to Nida (1964), “these problems may vary in scope depending on the cultural and linguistic gap between the two (or more) languages concerned.” Nida also confers “equal importance to both linguistic and cultural differences between the SL and the TL while discussing the problems of correspondence in translation” (cited in James, 2002) and concludes in Nida’s (1964) words that “differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure” (cited in James, 2002). Thus, the significance of cultural implications for translation is as important as the lexical concerns. Lotman and Uspensky, both established linguists, states in their theory that “no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its center, the structure of natural language” (Lotman,1978). This is the reason why the language of a certain nation is what defines its culture and traditions. Susan Bassnett(1980), a renowned translation theorist, underlines the importance of this double consideration when translating by stating that language is “the heart within the body of culture,” the survival of both aspects being interdependent. Linguistic notions of transferring meaning are seen as being only part of the translation process; “a whole set of extra-linguistic criteria” must also be considered. As Bassnett further points out, “the translator must tackle the SL text in such a way that the TL version will correspond to the SL version in order to attempt to impose the value system of the SL culture onto the TL culture is dangerous ground” (Bassnett, 1980). Thus, when translating, it is important to consider not only the lexical impact on the TL reader, but also the manner in which cultural aspects may be perceived and make translating decisions accordingly (James, 2002). The article by James basically examines the importance of culture in translation. It also shows the importance of providing the missing background of the original context by the translator and also to which extent.

Translating texts of any form is a huge challenge for academics. Although it is quite a challenging task to provide concrete solutions to the obstacles faced in translating, this thesis will focus on some of the possible ways to make the translated texts as close to the source texts in terms of intended meaning. All these aforementioned literatures are intricately linked to the research that will be conducted in this paper. Cultural implications, importance of being well-acquainted with both the source and target language and critical emphasis on context while translating remains a key ingredient for quality translation. This particular study will focus primarily on how these factors can be mitigated in order to find a solution to the obstacles faced while translating any given text.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This research includes one short story written by Sumon Rahman titled আমার যত ভনিতা, জিনিয়াকে নিয়ে (*Amar joto bhonita, Ziniake nie*). This story is translated into English by the author of this thesis, after which some aspects of the discrepancies between the source text and the target text are analyzed. The focus is mainly on the problems faced while translating from Bangla to English in terms of cultural difference. The nature of the impediments or obstacles faced while trying to convey the core meaning of the story to the readers will be assessed and identified for analysis. Emphasis will be put on the cultural impediments faced while translating certain terms from source language to target language. Following the qualitative method, this work of translation and analysis will use a timeframe of three and a half months. Special attention will be drawn towards “untranslatable” words or phrases which, when translated into the target language, will change the perception of the text as opposed to the readers of the source text.

Chapter Four: Analysis

This chapter presents an analysis of some of the highlighted obstacles faced while translating “আমার যত ভণিতা জিনিয়াকে নিয়ে” written by Prof. Din M. Sumon Rahman into English. The problems faced, along with the “untranslatability” of some words and phrases will be assessed in an effort to pinpoint the source of the issues.

To begin with, “Untranslatability” in translation refers to word(s) or phrase(s) of any given source text that are not translatable into the target language, mainly due to an inability to find any equivalent substitute. This paper will focus on the reasons some specific parts of the aforementioned short story were untranslatable and what methods have been used to try and minimize the difference in meaning from ST to TT. For this, the writer has approached this paper from the perspective of a few major theories in translation studies.

The first approach is the sociolinguistic approach in translation studies. This approach focuses on the social context and emphasizes how social contexts are an inseparable part in translation. This particular approach puts stress on how a translator is unavoidably a part and parcel of the society that he/she is brought up in, which inadvertently has an effect on the translations made by that person. According to famous linguist Nida (1976), “only a sociolinguistic approach to translation is ultimately valid” (p.77). Some of the sociolinguistic obstacles of the ST will be discussed in this paper.

Let us start with the title of the short story which is narrative in nature rather than word-specific. আমার যত ভণিতা, জিনিয়াকে নিয়ে (“Amar joto bhonita, Ziniake nie”) is the title of this story. The title itself proved challenging to translate. The general meaning of the term “*bhonita*” is to act

as a form of introduction or preamble, any unrequired introductory statement which indicates an act of hiding or nullifying the main contents of any conversation or writing. Although the dictionary does offer direct word meaning in the form of 'preamble' and 'colophon', in this case these direct substitutions for the word “bhonita” do not quite portray the core meaning of the title. For the title to be translated, the reader needs to read the entire story to achieve a certain perspective. The translator translated the title after translating the entire story as-

আমার যত ভণিতা জিনিয়াকে নিয়ে (*Amar joto bhonita Ziniake nie*)= All my preamble is about Zinia

This translation may not be the exact meaning intended to be portrayed by the author of the story, but it came as the closest according to the translator.

The second impediment arose in line 6 of the source text. “...গল্প যত সাদামাটা, বয়ান তত ভণিতাময়” (*Golpo joto shadamata, boyan toto bhonitamoy*). This part of the text again needed a rephrasing in such a way which did not directly compliment the actual word-meaning of the word “সাদামাটা” (Shadamata) and “ভণিতা” (Bhonita). “সাদামাটা” (Shadamata) is a compound word which gives the meaning of “simple” or “ordinary” in English. In this case, the author chose the term “simpler” to denote “সাদামাটা” (*shadamata*). In the case of “ভণিতাময়” (Bhonitamoy), however, the word "preamble" could not be used as a substitute. In English language, the general adjectives used to describe the narration of a story does not match with any meaning of the word “ভণিতা” (Bhonita) provided in the dictionary. To make the sentence more plausible and relative to the readers, the author chose the word “dramatic” to denote “ভণিতাময়” (*Bhonita*). The translation of this entire phrase became:

গল্প যত সাদামাটা, বয়ান তত ভনিতাময় (*Golpo joto shadamata, boyan toto bhonitamoy*) = The simpler the story, the more dramatic the narration.

The word “ছোট” (*Chhoto*) in Bangla language is used in a variety of ways, all depending on the context. The next part of the translation where the translator faced an obstacle involved the use of the word “ছোট” (*Chhoto*) in it. The sentence was:

আমি ছোট মানুষ, সপ্তডিঙ্গা টেলিভিশনের ফ্রন্ট ডেস্কে বসি (*Aami chhoto manush, shoptodinga televisioner front deske boshi*).

“ছোট” (*chhoto*) in Bangla language refers to the position of lesser value when mentioned together with the term “মানুষ” (*manush*), a person holding lesser status. Although in literal word meaning “ছোট” is shown as “small” and “petty” in the dictionary, in this case the literal meanings could not be applied due to the cultural use of this word in specific contexts. In this case, the context is of the writer trying to portray the narrator of the story as a person holding lesser value compared to the more important people in the society. After much consideration, the translator decided to use either of the two words “ordinary” or “insignificant” for the translation of the first phrase. The word “ordinary”, however, had the drawback of meaning “সাধারণ” (*shadharon*) in Bangla. Eventually the word “insignificant” was decided for translating the word “ছোট” (*chhoto*)! The final translation read:

আমি ছোট মানুষ, সপ্তডিঙ্গা টেলিভিশনের ফ্রন্ট ডেস্কে বসি (“*Aami chhoto manush, Saptadinga televisioner front desk e boshi*”)= I am an insignificant person who sits at the front desk of Saptadinga Television.

An important point to be noted is the mixture of ‘dialogue-like’ narration in the main narration of the story itself. This results in one key factor to become integrated with the source text itself: the informal narration. For example, we can consider the word ‘অস্থির’ in Bangla. The dictionary meaning defines the word as ‘restless’. However, in everyday informal use of the word it is used in quite a different sense altogether. According to the *The Concise New Patridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, it is used in the same sense as the word ‘sick’ used in informal spoken English to denote the sense of ‘awesome’. This form of informal narrative story-telling played a crucial role in determining the level of equivalency the translator could maintain while translating the source text.

‘ফুটফরমাশ’(Futformash) was another term which the translator had a difficult time in translating. This term, although not used in everyday conversation that often, is a compound word which denotes the sense of running small errands, being sent on miscellaneous chores. Even then, the sense that the writer is trying to convey with the words can only be related by someone living and brought up in the same culture as the writer himself. For lack of a better substitute, and to keep the core meaning as intact as possible, the translator used the term ‘running errands’ to translate ‘ফুটফরমাশ’(Futformash). The sentence then read:

“প্রোডাকশন অ্যাসিস্টেন্ট থেকে প্রতিদিনের ফুটফরমাশ, কখনো বদলি রিসেপশনিস্ট, কখনো বা ছোটখাট প্রোগ্রামের অ্যারেঞ্জার” (*Production assistant theke protidiner futformash, kokhono bodli receptionist, kokhono ba chhotokhato program arranger*) = “It ranges from production assistance to running errands, from acting as a substitute receptionist to a makeshift program arranger.”

For the entirety of the translation, Dynamic Equivalence as suggested by Nida was used (Nida 1964a: 159). This form of equivalency results in the target text be fluent and easy for the readers to understand, while keeping the spirit of the original text intact. Dynamic Equivalence also aims to elicit a similar response from readers of the translations as that of the readers of the source text.

The next cultural barrier that the translator had to face was in the word ‘ঝাড়ি’ (Jhari). The word ‘ঝাড়ি’ (jhari) is unique to the Bangladeshi culture in more ways than one, and there is no correct equivalent for this word in the English language. No dictionary entry for this word is present in the Bangla-Bangla or Bangla-English dictionary. Usually used in spoken language, this word signifies the use of harsh language to express anger, to scold, rebuke, reproach or to criticize strongly in a manner which is hurtful. Although closer in meaning to the words “বকা” (*boka*) and “ধমক” (*dhomok*) in Bangla, the word “ঝাড়ি” (*jhari*) is used in colloquial language to give the meaning of a somewhat stronger form of “scolding” and “chiding”. The sense being portrayed in the Bangla language for this word does not have any proper or correct equivalent in the English language to capture the emotion and imagination of the reader. Only one who is versed in the Bangla language, culture and social norms can come close to understanding the true sense of the word ‘ঝাড়ি’ (jhari) in its entirety. Eventually the translator decided on using the word ‘scolding’ as the translation, in an effort to minimize the gap in core meaning as much as possible.

One of the toughest words to translate was ‘কুফা’ (kufa). This word is a well-known word used in modern spoken Bangla, to denote a bad omen. It is used to define a person who is cursed, someone whose mere presence is enough to bring bad luck. However, no equivalent word for ‘কুফা’ (kufa) can be found in the English language to bring out the same sense as in the Bangla word itself. As it is used in the form of informal spoken language in Bangla, no dictionary meaning exists for it

as well. The translator decided on using the words ‘bad omen’ to denote the meaning of ‘কুফা’ (kufa) in English. The cultural differences between the native speakers of the two languages plays a big part in the outcome of the translation. The translated part of the sentence read:

...;লাইভের ভয়েস সিংক করে নাই, কুফা হিসাবে আমার দিকেই আঙুল তুলবে এডিটর (...live er voice sync kora nai, kufa hishabe amar dikei angul tulbe editor) = I get pointed out as a bad omen by the editor if the live-show voice is not synced.

Phrases such as ‘প্রথম প্রথম আউলা ঝাউলা লাগত,...’ (*Prothom Prothom aula jhauula lagto*) posed a definitive obstacle. ‘আউলা ঝাউলা’ (*Aula jhauula*) again gives the sense of being nonplussed, puzzled, at a loss to comprehend the surroundings, dazed. Being a spoken term used in modern Bangla, this term does not have any dictionary entries. In an effort to minimize the difference in core meaning, the translator used the phrase ‘At first it seemed very confusing to me,...’. In this phrase the term ‘প্রথম প্রথম’ (*Prothom prothom*) also provided a choice to the translator, to choose between ‘At first’ and ‘In the beginning’. The finalized translation of the phrase read:

প্রথম প্রথম আউলা ঝাউলা লাগত,... (*Prothom prothom aula jhauula lagto*)=At first it seemed very confusing to me,...

The essence of the meaning this phrase holds lies within the concept and context within which it is used in the Bangladeshi culture. The translator, while trying to maintain Dynamic Equivalency, also tried to maintain the theory of ‘Invisibility’ provided by famous linguist Venuti. According to him, translators can remain invisible by translating the Source text fluently in the Target language, providing an idiomatic translation which gives an “illusion of transparency”. The other way for

the translator, according to Venuti to remain invisible, is to translate the Source text in accordance with the culture of the target text. He wrote:

“A translated text, whether prose or poetry, fiction or non-fiction, is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer’s personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text – the appearance, in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the ‘original’ (Venuti 1995: 1).

In accordance with this theory of Invisibility, the translator made a considerable effort in balancing the core meaning of the Source text with the Target text, while simultaneously striving to achieve the “Invisibility” theorized by Venuti.

The next step where the translator faced a considerable degree of difficulty was the idiom ‘আপনি দেখছেন এক টিকিটে দুই ছবি,...’ (*Apni dekhchen ak ticket e dui chobi,...*). This idiom proved to be more challenging for the translator, as the literal translation of this idiom is: ‘You are watching two movies with one ticket’. Considering the context and culture of the native speakers of the Target language, this literal translation could not be used in the Target text. The sense that this idiomatic phrase provided was that the readers are getting the benefit of two things for the price of one, how the readers are getting to know the story of the narrator along with the story of Zinia. In accordance with this core meaning, the translator improvised and decided to use the sentence ‘You get to hit two birds with one bullet,...’. Although there is a direct equivalent present in English language for the Bangla idiom in question (kill two birds with one stone), in the translator’s opinion the idiom in English strays too far from cultural sense intended by the author. However, the final sentence used in the translation provided the core essence of the source text, while not straying too

far from the exact meaning of the idiomatic phrase. The final translation of the given sentence read as follows:

“ফলে আপনি দেখছেন এক টিকিটে দুই ছবি, শ্যাম্পুর সাথে সাবান ফ্রি!” (*Phole apni dekhchen ak ticket e dui chobi, shampoos shathe shaban free!*) = You get to hit two birds with one bullet, free soap with the purchase of shampoo!

The Bangla sentence that follows immediately after the aforementioned idiom reads “এই গল্পে আমিই সাবান, নাম সোলমান” (*ei golpe ami e shaban, naam solman*). This again required improvisation on behalf of the translator, as the Bangla sentence in question needs to be interpreted in context of the story itself. “এ গল্পে আমিই সাবান” (*ei golpe ami e shaban*) cannot literally be translated into “I am the soap in this story,” as this will lead to the readers of the target text getting misguided. The author of this story is trying to portray that Solman is not the protagonist but rather a side character of the story. Although the final translation might take the liberty of making the intended meaning clearer as opposed to the original author’s intention of dramatization, it assists the translator in staying loyal to the sense that the author was trying to portray. In this case, the cultural portrayal of the phrase ‘এ গল্পে আমিই সাবান’ cannot be made in the English language. The obvious limitations remain in the sense of remaining loyal to the source text, which would not be possible if a cultural equivalent of the aforementioned phrase was searched for. The eventual translation of the sentence read:

“এই গল্পে আমিই সাবান, নাম সোলমান” (*ei golpe ami e shaban, naam solman*)= I am Solman, the auxiliary in this story.

There are some particular terms and expressions in both Bangla and English that capture the emotion and imagination of the readers in their native language only. When translated however, these terminologies lose the essence of that meaning and are “untranslatable”. At best a general meaning can be established with a mixture of literal and figurative translation of these ‘untranslatable’ terms, which comes at the cost of losing cultural significance.

Another notable point in the narration of this story is the liberal use of English terms in Bangla phonetics. A significant number of sentences contain English words in the narration. In some case almost entire sentences are written in English using Bangla phonetics. One such example of this is in the sentence ‘ওয়ান্স অ্যা প্রডিউসার, অলওয়েজ অ্যা প্রডিউসার’ (Once a producer, always a producer) (line 37-38). This is noteworthy because of the mixed message it delivers to the readers. In essence, the reader needs to be well-versed in both Bangla and English languages to be able to grasp the core meaning of the story. A mixture of cultures of both languages can be found in the narration of the story, which ultimately plays a deciding role in determining the response to the final target text. For the purpose of remaining loyal to the Source text, the translator did not paraphrase or change in any way the English expressions used in this story.

One of the most difficult sentences to translate in this story was ‘জুমচাষীদের মত তাহারা ঘুরিয়া ঘুরিয়া কোপায়!’ (*Joomchashider moto tara ghuria ghuria kopay!*) (line 40). To begin with, the translator tried to break down the sentence into smaller components to facilitate accurate translation. The dictionary meaning of the word ‘কোপানো’ (kopano, noun form) is to ‘chop up; cut to pieces; strike repeatedly with a weapon’. The term ‘ঘুরিয়া ঘুরিয়া’ (ghuria ghuria) has been used in a figurative way. This repetition of words in Bangla is common in Bangla, and is used to signify a continuous act of doing something. For example, ‘সে হাপাইতে হাপাইতে ঘটনা বর্ণনা

করলো’ (She **hapaite hapaite** ghotona bornona korlo) is translated as ‘he/she narrated the incident while panting’. Similarly, ‘সে দৌড়াইতে দৌড়াইতে ভবনে প্রবেশ করলো’ (she douraita douraita bhobone probesh korlo) is translated as ‘he/she entered the building running’. The final translation had to be done keeping in mind the nature of “slash-and-burn” technique used by Jhum cultivators. It provides the sense of utilizing a specific piece of land for cultivation and then moving on to the next piece of arable land. In the context of this story, it provides the sense that the producers move to one conquered land to the next. The final translation therefore read:

‘জুমচাষীদের মত তাহারা ঘুরিয়া ঘুরিয়া কোপায়!’ (Joomchashider moto tara ghuria ghuria kopay!)
= They slash-and-burn like Jhum cultivators.

Some terms used in this story can only be properly understood after reading the related passage completely. For example, in line 65 of the Target text we find the sentence ‘টেলিভিশনে যারা কাজ করে, তাদের প্রায় সবাই বাবা ভোলানাথ’ (*Television e jara kaj kore, tader prae shobai baba bholanath*). This term “বাবা ভোলানাথ” (*baba bholanath*) is not immediately comprehensible to the reader in the most accurate sense unless the remainder of the passage is read through. It does not contain any entries in dictionaries of either Bangla or English languages. In order to translate this, a proper concept of the phrase needs to be obtained from the next two sentences that follows:

“সকালের কথা বিকালে মনে থাকে না। ফলে আমার তাদের দরকার পড়ে” (Shokaler kotha bikale mone thakena. Phole amar taader dorkar pore).

These two sentences that follows the sentence in question reveal the meaning of the word “বাবা ভোলানাথ” (*baba bholanath*). The core sense of this term indicates that the people working in

television have a very weak memory and tend to forget things often. By afternoon they forget what happened in the morning. In view of this elaboration, the translator decided to define the term “বাবা ভোলানাথ” using the word ‘all-forgetful’. Point to be noted here is the pun intended in the usage of this term “বাবা ভোলানাথ” (baba bholanath). “*Bholanath*” refers to Lord Shiva in Hinduism. In this case, the term “baba bholanath” implies that the bigshots who work in the television channel are forgetful in nature. Therefore, it was a choice between changing the term into a verb, or to translate the word as a noun the way it is written in the Source text. In the end the translator decided on using the noun form in the target text. Although this term in question may be understood by the speakers of Bangla language, the cultural difference will not allow native speakers of English language to grasp the core sense of it. The finalized translation of this sentence read:

“টেলিভিশনে যারা কাজ করে, তাদের প্রায় সবাই বাবা ভোলানাথ” (*Television e jara kaj kore, tader prae shobai baba bholanath*) = Most of those who work in the Television sector are all-forgetful.

A more difficult prospect was to translate the word “স্মৃতিধর” (Sritidhor) (line 68). Although in terms of core meaning it is the opposite of the term “বাবা ভোলানাথ” (baba bholanath), the integration of such a term in the Target language became a difficult prospect. In English, the word ‘eidetic’ is used as an adjective to define a person who can recall every visual image vividly. However, the term “স্মৃতিধর” (sritidhor) used in Bangla is not an equivalent to the English word ‘eidetic’. “*Sritidhor*” gives the core meaning of someone who has a very good memory and can recall memories forgotten by most others. The context of the story leads the reader to believe in the sarcastic use of both the terms “বাবা ভোলানাথ” (*baba bholnath*) and “স্মৃতিধর” (*sritidhor*). ‘In this case again we see how cultural difference plays a deciding part in the comprehension of the

readers of the Target text. The translator decided to change the noun form of “স্মৃতিধর” (*sritidhor*) into verb form in the target text, and reverted to using the term ‘eidetic’ for lack of a better term in English.

“অনেক স্মৃতিধর আছে, বিপদজনক” (*onek sritidhor ache, bipodjonok*)= There are many people with eidetic memories who are dangerous.

A similar term “জাতিস্মর” (*Jatishor*) has been used as an antonym to the term “ভোলানাথ” (*bholanath*) in this story (line 74). The Bangla-to-Bangla dictionary defines “জাতিস্মর” (*Jatishor*) as someone who remembers the incidents in his/her past life. This again is a cultural term inherent to the native speakers of Bangla only. A similar evocation of sense and emotion cannot be achieved by translating it into English, as the native speakers of English language do not possess the concept of this word. The dominating religions in the cultures of the source language and target language is also one of the key reasons for this term to remain “untranslatable”. For lack of a suitable equivalent, the readers of the target text must remain content with the term “All-knowing” as the translation of জাতিস্মর’ (*Jatishor*). The completed sentence in the Target text reads:

‘প্রয়োজনে জাতিস্মর, প্রয়োজনে ভোলানাথ’ (*Proyojone Jatishor, proyojone bholanath*)= All-knowing when required, amnesic at other times.

The concept of context being an integral part in translation is evident in the passage starting from line 77 in the Source text. As the text proceeds to line 86, we find the phrase ‘...লিপি আমার হাত চাপড়িয়ে ধরে’ (...*Lipi amar haath chapraye dhore*). Now “চাপড়ান” is a Bangla word which has the dictionary meaning of ‘pat’ defining it in the verb form. However, the word ‘pat’ is used very

differently in the English language. One usually ‘pats’ someone on the back, hand or knees as a form of consolation or appreciation. The word ‘pat’ is used for both humans and pets or other animals. However, In Bangla language the use of the word ‘চাপড়ান’ (chaprano) is quite different.

Yes, it is used in a Bangla sentence to show appreciation for someone’s work. For example:

‘পরিক্ষায় প্রথম স্থান পাওয়াতে আমি তার পিঠ চাপড়ে দিলাম’ (Porikkhay prothom sthan paoate ami taar pith chapre dilam)= I patted his back upon him achieving first place in the examination.

On the other hand, ‘চাপড়ান’ (chaprano) is also used in Bangla language to express extreme grief, sorrow or insanity. For example:

‘সে পাগলের মত বুক চাপড়ানো শুরু করলো’ (she pagoler moto buk chaprano shuru korlo)= he started beating his chest like crazy.

However, in the Source text we see the term ‘ধরে’ (dhore) has been used alongside ‘চাপড়ায়’ (chaprae). When these two words are used together, they give a different sense in line with the context. Reading from line 78 of the Source text, it becomes clear that Lipi often confuses intellectuals with other people, which landed her in deep trouble once. For this reason, she wanted Solman to stay with her in the reception to aid her in recognizing the intellectuals arriving in the TV station. Hence when the sun set, Lipi wanted to get close to Solman for his help. That is the reason the final translation read “Lipi grips my hand” (line 87). In this case, the word ‘grip’ was used instead of ‘pat’, keeping the context of the story in mind. The word ‘grip’ gives the meaning of a firm hold on something or a body part of someone, whereas similar words such as “grab”, “grasp” and “clutch” provide the meaning of seizing with sudden use of force. As the author’s

intention here is to portray an intended show of intimacy by using the words “চাপড়িয়ে ধরা” (chaprae dhora), the word “grip” was used in the final translation. It read:

“...লিপি আমার হাত চাপড়িয়ে ধরে” (Lipi amar haat chaprae dhore)= Lipi grips my hand

The liberal use of spoken terms in the source text is visible throughout, and one such example is the term “দহরম মহরম” (Dohrom mohrom) (line 130). This term is used in spoken Bangla to indicate physical intimacy or sexual relationship. It is an equivalent to another spoken Bangla term “মাখামাখি” (*makhamakhi*). They both express the same sense, and the use of the aforementioned terms indicate a form of sarcasm aimed the “would-be” and “ought-to-be” celebrities mentioned in the story. However, in English language this sense of cynicism portrayed by the Bangla term cannot be properly substituted with any words or term. The word “intimacy” does serve as a close replacement for “*dohrom mohrom*”, but the cultural impact and the emotional response of reading the Bangla term will not be the same as reading the English substitute of it. This is applicable not only to the ones who are versed in both Bangla and English, but also to those who speak either of the two languages. The reason is, once again, the different cultures that the native speakers of these two languages grow up in. For lack of a better term however, the term “intimacy” was used in the final translation. It read:

“...,কোন প্রডিউসারের সাথে বেশি দহরম মহরম জানি,...” (*kon producerer shathe beshi dohrom mohrom jani*)=I know which producers they are most intimate with.

“ঘ্যাঁচাং” (Ghachang) is another such term used in the source text which does not have any dictionary entry, since it is purely a spoken term used in very specific context. It can be considered an onomatopoeic word in Bangla, referring to the sound made by scissors when something is being

by it (paper etc.). However, the word *Ghachang* can be used in a much wider sense in Bangla than just its onomatopoeic use. It can be used to denote the cutting down of budget or time. It can also be used in the sense of elimination or axing. In English language, we find the use of onomatopoeic words to denote similar meaning. For example, In English we say “it was a sizzling-hot day” or “He slurped his ice-cream”. The limitation lies with the varied use. This again is a culture-specific attribute of the source language which is absent in the target language. The core meaning of the Bangla term *Ghachang* can be portrayed with the English word “removal” in this case, where the sacrifice of the cultural value and evocation of response has to be made. The final translation read:

“...,যে কোন গুরুত্বপূর্ণ চরিত্রকে অল্প নোটিশে যে কোন সময়ে ঘ্যাঁচাং করে দেয়া যায়” (*Je kono guruttupurno choritroke olpo notice e je kono shomoy ghachang kore deya jae*)=...any important character can be removed at any time with a few days’ notice.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This thesis aimed at providing an insight on the cultural and linguistic differences between languages, based on my translation of “আমার যত ভনিতা,জিনিয়াকে নিয়ে” (*Amar joto bhonita, Ziniake nie*) written by Prof. Din M. Sumon Rahman. The cultural and linguistic diversity in language in this literary text, in my opinion, was one I could utilize to compare with its translation in English. The differences in intended meaning and the meaning understood by readers of the target text have been portrayed in this thesis, as well as outlining the limitations of the target language in terms of mirroring the source language culture. I tried to overcome the obstacles faced while minimizing the differences in meaning, all the while trying not to stray too far from the cultural essence of the source language.

This thesis can be utilized by other researchers to further their own research regarding cultural difference in translation, as well as analysis of certain linguistic expressions. As far as the core sense of certain terms are concerned in the source text, they have been portrayed by using near-equivalent terms and phrases in the target text. However, in my opinion it still does not come close to the author’s intended effect on its readers. This cultural and linguistic gap between the source and target language is reflected through the various terminologies used for analysis. Further analysis can be done on this subject in the future to expand on the knowledge of cultural implications in translation studies.

Limitation:

This paper has one major limitation, and that is the subjectivity of it. Literary translation itself is a subjective matter, where the translator’s perception and understanding of any given text will differ

from the perception of the original author. The readers' perception and understanding of the source text or target text will also differ in many ways. For this reason, the scope for disagreement with the translator is very large. The reasons shown for use of specific words and phrases in the target text lies entirely with the translator himself. The cultural upbringing and localized traditions in which the translator grew up also shaped the final translation of the source text. The interpretation of the target text by readers will vary depending on them knowing either only the target language or both the source and target languages. There is and perhaps never will be any definite form of standardized translation of literary texts, given the aforementioned reasons.

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Appendix I: Source Text

আমার যত ভগিতা, জিনিয়াকে নিয়ে

জিনিয়া পারভীনের গল্পটি এত শাদামাটা যে বলতেও হিম্মত লাগে।

ভাবছেন, শাদামাটা গল্পে এত হিম্মতের কী আছে? জ্বি আছে জনাব, গল্প যত শাদামাটা, বয়ান তত ভগিতাময়। আর জিনিয়ার গল্পের সমস্যা হল, এই গল্পে সকলেই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হিস্যা চায়। এমনকি জিনিয়ার তিনমাসের বয়ফ্রেন্ডও! কাজেই আপনার মনেই হতে পারে, গল্পটি আশলে কার? জিনিয়ার, নাকি তার বয়ফ্রেন্ডের, নাকি প্রডিউসার ওবায়েদ হাসানের, নাকি যে বলছে তার? নাকি এটি হরদরে সপ্তডিঙা টেলিভিশনের গল্প? এই সাম্যবাদী চক্রে নিজের গল্পে খোদ জিনিয়াই সাইডলাইনে পড়ে থাকে। এখন কথা হল, নিজের জীবনীর মধ্যেই যাকে শক্ত দাগে শনাক্ত করা যায় না, এই মাংসাশী মিডিয়ায় তার পায়ের নিচে শক্ত মাটি মিলবার সম্ভাবনা কতটুকু? জিনিয়া কি একদিন সত্যি সত্যি সেলিব্রিটি হয়ে উঠবে?

এই প্রশ্নের ব্ল্যাক এন্ড হোয়াইট জবাব দিবার মত এলেম আমার নাই। আমি ছোট মানুষ, সপ্তডিঙা টেলিভিশনের ফ্রন্ট ডেস্কে বসি। যখন যা করতে বলা হয়, তাইই আমার চাকরি। প্রোডাকশন অ্যাসিস্টেন্ট থেকে প্রতিদিনের ফুটফরমাশ, কখনো বদলি রিসেপশনিস্ট, কখনো বা ছোটখাট প্রোগ্রামের অ্যারেঞ্জার। তবে আমার মূল চাকরি হইল কর্তব্যাক্তিদের ঝাড়ি হজম করা। টক শো-র সেটে এসি কাজ করছে না, প্রডিউসার ঝাড়ি দিবে আমারে; মেগাসিরিয়ালের নায়িকা শ্যুটিং শিডিউল মিস করছে, ঝাড়ি আমারই প্রাপ্য; মেক-আপ রুমে নিউজ-প্রেজেন্টার ম্যাচ-করা টাই খুঁজে পাচ্ছে না, ঝাড়ি খাবার জন্য আমার অ্যাভাইলেবল থাকা লাগবে; লাইভের ভয়েস সিংক করে নাই, কুফা হিসাবে আমার দিকেই আঙুল তুলবে এডিটর; স্ক্রিপ্ট রাইটারের পেমেন্টের চেক রেডি হয় নাই, অপরাধ একান্ত আমার! প্রথম প্রথম আউলা

ঝাউলা লাগত, আস্তে আস্তে বুঝলাম এই নিখিল সপ্তডিঙা টেলিভিশনে ইহাই আমার চাকরি।

বুঝতেই পারছেন, যে গল্পটি বলছি সেটি একা জিনিয়ার নয়। আমারও গল্প। ফলে আপনি দেখছেন এক টিকিটে দুই ছবি, শ্যাম্পুর সাথে সাবান ফ্রি! এই গল্পে আমিই সাবান, নাম সোলমান। এটা যদি একা জিনিয়ার গল্পও হত, তবে এই সাবানমাথা লম্বা ভণিতা থেকে আপনার নিষ্কৃতি কোনোভাবেই মিলত না।

পৃথিবী যে গোল, আমি সেটা প্রথম টের পাই মিডিয়া হাউজে চাকরি করতে আসার পর। শক্তির নিত্যতার সূত্রেরও প্রমাণ পাই একই সাথে। তবে এই নিত্যতার ফর্মুলায় ‘শক্তি’ মানে ‘প্রডিউসার’। ওয়ান্স অ্যা প্রডিউসার, অলওয়েজ অ্যা প্রডিউসার। প্রডিউসার জন্মও নেয় না, ধ্বংসও হয় না। রূপান্তর হয় কিনা. তা অবশ্য পরিষ্কার বলতে পারব না। তবে সার্কুলেশন হয়, টের পাই। জুমচাষীদের মত তাহারা ঘুরিয়া ঘুরিয়া কোপায়! এই চ্যানেল থেকে ঐ চ্যানেলে, স্টুডিও থেকে আউটডোরে, করিডোর থেকে বাহুডোরে! শুধু প্রডিউসার কেন, সেলিব্রিটিরাও ঘুরিয়া ঘুরিয়া আসে। তবে তারা আসে বিরক্তিসম্মত, বিশালাকার অ্যানড্রয়েড ফোনে আঙুল বুলাতে বুলাতে। আজ নাটকে, তো কাল টকশো-য়, পরশু রেসিপি অনুষ্ঠানে, পরদিন রিয়েলিটি শো’তে বিচারক হয়ে। আমারে সচরাচর দেখে না তারা, যদি দেখে, বিস্মিত হয়। সানগ্লাস কপালে তোলাই থাকে, এ যাত্রা শুধু ভুরুজোড়া কপালে ওঠে:

- আরে সোলমান, তুমি এখনো আছো?
- জ্বি স্যার আপনাদের দোয়ায়।

আমার অনাবিল হাসি। কিন্তু সেই হাসিতে তাদের বিস্ময়ের মীমাংসা হয় না। তারা ভেবেই পায় না, একটা প্রাইভেট টিভি চ্যানেলে এরকম একটা অথর্ব কোন্ গন্ধর্ব-প্রতিভায় বছরের পর বছর টিকে আছে! পাঁচ মিনিট

একটা রিফ্লেকটর ধরে রাখলেই যার মাথা ঘুরায়, পিএবিএক্স-এ ফোন কল ট্রান্সফার করতে গিয়ে যে একশ-তে নিরানব্বই বারই লাইন ডিসকানেক্ট করে ফেলে, একটা সিএনজি দাঁড় করাতে বললে যার আধাবেলা খরচ করা লাগে -- তার চাকরি কিভাবে বছরের পর বছর বহাল থাকে সেটা তারা বুঝতে পারে না।

তবে আমার ধারণা. আমার গুরুত্বপূর্ণ যোগ্যতা আছে। তার সাথে আমার চাকরি বহাল থাকার সম্পর্ক থাকতেও পারে। সেটি হল আমার মেমোরি ম্যানেজমেন্ট। কোনোকিছুই ভুলি না আমি, যে কোনো ঘটনার ডিটেইল দিতে পারি। যত আগেরই হোক। টেলিভিশনে যারা কাজ করে, তাদের প্রায় সবাই বাবা ভোলানাথ। সকালের কথা বিকালে মনে থাকে না। ফলে আমরা তাদের দরকার পড়ে।

কিন্তু মানুষ যে সর্বদা স্মরণিকা হবে তা তো নয়। তাকে ভুলতেও হইবেক। কখনো কখনো সজ্ঞানে। অনেক স্মৃতিধর আছে, বিপদজনক। তারা সিন্ধু সেইচা স্মৃতিসাগরের তলা থেকে এমন একটা পরিস্থিতি উদাম করে দিবে, যেটা হয়ত আপনার আমার সমষ্টিগত অবচেতনা ভুলবার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছিল। আমি সেইরকম না। আমি জানি, কখন জানিয়াও না-জানিতে হয়। আবার কখন বিস্মৃতির সরোবরে স্মরণের মায়ানৌকা মিছামিছি বাইয়া যাইতে হয়। এই একটা তৎপরতায় আমি পাক্কা অভিনেতা। ইহাই আমার ভণিতা। প্রয়োজনে জাতিস্মর, প্রয়োজনে ভোলানাথ।

ফলে আমি অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। টক শো বুদ্ধিজীবীদের কথাই ধরেন, সাংঘাতিক রকমের সেনসিটিভ এনারা। তাদেরকে পাড়ার দোকানদার চিনতে পারুক কি না পারুক, টিভি চ্যানেলের রিসেপশনিস্টকে চিনতে পারতেই হবে। নইলে সোজা চেয়ারম্যান। কী সব লোক রাখছো, আদব কায়দা জানে না! আমাদের ইভনিং শিফটের রিসেপশনিস্ট লিপি তো ভয়ে খালি তোতলায়! কবে সে কোন্ অফ-ট্র্যাক বুদ্ধিজীবীকে এসি মেকানিক ঠাউরায়ে বিরাট প্যাড়া খাইছিল। বোনাস ক্যানসেল হইছিল তার, স্যালারিও হ্যাং হয়ে

ছিল কয়েক মাস। শেষে ঐ বুদ্ধিজীবীর হাত-পা ধরে উদ্ধার! কাজেই সন্ধ্যা সমাগত হইলে, যখন টকশো সেটগুলিতে আলো জ্বলতে আরম্ভ করে, লিপি আমার হাত চাপড়ায় ধরে। সোলমান না ডেকে সালমান ডাকে, যাতে স্মার্ট শোনায়, আমি খুশি হই। বলে, সালমান ভাই একটু বসেন না এখানে, গল্প করি।

টকশো-বুদ্ধিজীবীদের আবার দয়ার শরীর। তাদের মেজাজ বৈশাখ মাসের বৃষ্টির মত। চট করে রাগেন, আবার চট করে ঠাণ্ডা। কিন্তু অল্পেই খুশি তারা। চায়ে কয় চামচ চিনি খান সেটা ঠিকঠাক স্মরণে রাখতে পারলে, আর যাবার কালে ধরিয়ে দেয়া খামে নামের বানানটা ঠিকঠাক লিখতে পারলেই চলে। খাম প্রদানের কালে যদি কোনোক্রমে ঐ বুদ্ধিজীবীর লেখা কোনো বইয়ের নাম স্মরণ করতে পারেন, তাহলে তো কথাই নাই!

বলাবাহুল্য, সপ্তডিঙায় এইসব কৃতকর্মের দায় আমার হলেও প্রশংসা লিপিতে বর্তায়। যথাযোগ্য কমপেনসেশন সাপেক্ষে নিভৃতিচারিতায় আমার অরুচি নাই। প্রতিদানে লিপি আমার সাথে গা ঘেঁষাঘেঁষি করে বসে। মাঝেমাঝেই এ কথায় ও কথায় হাত চাপড়ায় ধরে। লিপি সুন্দরী নারী, কিঞ্চিৎ বিগতযৌবনা। বছর দশেক আগে কোনো এক সাবানসুন্দরী প্রতিযোগিতায় টপ-টেন পর্যন্ত উঠেছিল, তাতে এই ডেস্ক তার ভবিষ্যৎ হয়ে দাঁড়ায়েছে। এহেন বিগতসুন্দরীর এই হাত চাপড়ায় ধরাটারে আমি বিশেষ প্রীতির চোখেই দেখি।

বিকালে যেখানে আমি জাতিস্মর, সকালে দিব্যি ভোলানাথ। সকালটা জুড়ে টিভির পর্দায় রাতের বাসি টকশো, গানের অনুষ্ঠান, সিরিয়াল, রান্নাবান্না আর সিনে ম্যাগাজিন। সন্ধ্যায় যেখানে সিনে, মিউজিক, টকশো আর ড্রামা সেলিব্রিটিতে মৌ মৌ করে সপ্তডিঙার অফিস, সকালে অবস্থা অন্য। সকালে যারা আসেন, তারা মূলত উড-বি আর অট-টু-বি সেলিব্রিটি। খুব হিসাব করে চিনতে হয় এইসব এনাদের। অভ্যর্থনাও জানাতে হয় বিশেষ হিসাবনিকাশ করে। অট-টু-বি সেলিব্রিটির খুব মারাত্মক! তাদের ব্যাপারে

ম্যানেজিং ডিরেক্টরের তরফ থেকে রেড এলার্ট জারি করা আছে। আপনার একটু পরিচিতিমূলক হাসির আশকারারে ভিসা বানায়ে তারা প্রোগ্রাম হেড এমনকি স্বয়ং চেয়ারম্যানের মোকাম পর্যন্ত পৌঁছে যাওয়ার মত প্রতিভা রাখেন।

মর্নিং শিফটের রিসেপশনিস্ট শিখার মনোযোগের অর্ধেকটাই পড়ে থাকে ডেস্কের নিচে সার্বক্ষণিক রাখা বিসিএস গাইডের পাতায়। ফলে সকালের এই হিসাবনিকাশ সামাল দেয়া তার পক্ষে মাঝেমাঝেই কঠিন হয়ে দাঁড়ায়। গ্যাঞ্জাম লাগলেই চিকন গলায় আমারে ডাক পাড়ে। গিয়ে দেখি উড-বি আর অট-টু-বি সেলিব্রিটিরা তারে ভীমরুলের মত ঘিরে রাখছে। উড-বি সেলিব্রিটিদের ভঙ্গি খুব মিহি, কিন্তু অট-টু-বি'দের অনেক লাউড। কড়া কড়া ঝাড়ি দেয় তারা। সোফায় বসে বসে এই প্রডিউসার ওই প্রডিউসার সম্পর্কে বাজে বাজে মন্তব্য করে। উড-বি'দের দিকে কড়া নজরে তাকায়ে থাকে। নিচু গলায় সমালোচনা করে। কিন্তু সেই নিচুগলার ঝাঁজ রিসেপশন ডেস্কেও পৌঁছায়। সেই ধ্বনিঝড় সামাল দিতে আমারে তখন কিছু একটা বলতে টলতে হয়। কখনো উদ্দেশ্য সফল হয়, প্রসঙ্গ পাল্টায়। কিন্তু অনেক সময় প্রসঙ্গ পাল্টে আরো বাজে রাস্তায় ধাবিত হয়। উড-বি সেলিব্রিটি থেকে সেটা গিয়ে পৌঁছায় প্রডিউসার, চেয়ারম্যান, তাদের কুকীর্তি, তাদের স্ত্রীর পরকীয়া, সন্তানের ইয়াবাসক্তি ইত্যাদিতে। প্রমাদ গোণা ছাড়া আর উপায় থাকে না।

বলাবাহুল্য, এই উড-বি আর অট-টু-বি'দের প্রত্যেকেই আমি ক্যাটাগরিক্যালি চিনি। নাম জানি, স্বামীর নাম জানি, প্রাক্তন প্রেমিকের নাম জানি, কোন্ প্রডিউসারের সাথে বেশি দহরম মহরম জানি, সব কয়টা স্ক্যান্ডালের খোঁজখবর রাখি, সেইগুলার ফেসবুক লিংক বুকমার্ক করে রাখি, এমন কি আগের তরফের সন্তান কোন্ স্কুলে লেখাপড়া করে তাও জানি। কেউ কেউ এত ভার্শিউইল যে কার সাথে ডেট করছে আর কার সাথে লিভ টুগেদার করছে নিজেরাই পরিষ্কার বলতে পারে না। কিন্তু আমি ঠিক ঠিক পারি। তাদের সেলফোন নম্বরও সেভ করা আছে। কিন্তু ফোনে

কখনো উনাদের রিকগনাইজ করি না। সামনাসামনিও না। এই স্থলে
আমারে ভোলানাথের রোল প্লে করতে হয়। ফলে, অতীব সম্মানের সাথে
“আপা” আর “ভাইয়া” ডাকি এইসব অযাচিত সেলিব্রিটিদের। আর যাচিত
সেলিব্রিটিরা হলেন “স্যার” আর “ম্যাডাম”। তবে ডাকার সুযোগ হয় না।
কেবল উঠে দাঁড়ায়ে একটা সেলাম পর্যন্ত ঠুকতে পারি। যাচিত-রা
সাধারণত রিসেপশনে কোনো প’জ দেন না। অ্যান্ড্রয়েডে টোকা দিতে দিতে
ইন্টারসিটি ট্রেনের মত বিদ্যুৎগতিতে ভিতরে অদৃশ্য হয়ে যান।

রিসেপশনের ফিল্টারে যারা আটকান, তারা যে চিরকাল আটকায়ে থাকেন
তাও তো না। তাদেরও সময় আসে, তারা অন্তর্মহলে প্রবিষ্ট হন। মিডিয়ার
অন্তর্মহল হলো খাজার দরবার, খালি হাতে ফিরবার উপায় নাই। কিছু না
পান, একটুকরা মিষ্টি আশ্বাস তো পাচ্ছেনই! সেই বার্তাটুকু সম্বল করে
দিনের পর দিন নানারকমের অডিশন দিতে থাকেন আমাদের উড-বি আর
অট-টু-বি সেলিব্রিটিরা। জিনিয়াকে প্রথম আমি সেই সমাবেশেই আবিষ্কার
করি।

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উড-বি সেলিব্রিটিদের আমরা ডাকি “টাগেট”। আর অট-টু-বিদের
“এক্সপার্ট”। এইটা আমার আর লিপির ভোকাবোলারি। সেলিব্রিটি ফুটিবার
আগেই এক্সপার্ট করলে রিসেপশনিস্ট হয়। এই কথা বলে লিপিরে ফ্লেপাই।

জিনিয়া পারভীন ঠিক কোন্ ক্যাটাগরিতে পড়বে, এ নিয়া লিপির সাথে
প্রায়ই তর্ক হয় আমার। লিপি তারে ‘এক্সপার্ট’ সাব্যস্ত করে, কিন্তু আমি
মনে করি সম্ভাবনা এখনো ফুরায়ে যায় নাই। জিনিয়া ওবায়দ হাসানের
সিরিয়ালে রোল চায়। এইসব মেগাসিরিয়ালের অসীম সম্ভাবনা। যে কোনো
সময়ে যে কারো জন্য অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ চরিত্র বানিয়ে ফেলা যায়। আবার,
যে কোনো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ চরিত্রকে অল্প নোটিশে যে কোনো সময়ে ঘ্যাচাং করে

দেয়া যায়। ওবায়েদ স্যার এ বিষয়ে ওস্তাদ মানুষ। তিনি আমাদের নতুন মেগাসিরিয়াল “আসাদ এভিনিউ”র পরিচালক। একদিকে তৈরি হচ্ছে, আর গরমাগরম অন-এয়ার হচ্ছে। এর মধ্যেই সাংঘাতিক হাই টিআরপি। বিজ্ঞাপন এজেন্সিগুলো রীতিমত ধর্না দেয়া শুরু করেছে। ফলে, আমার দৃঢ় বিশ্বাস, জিনিয়ার সাথে ওবায়েদ স্যারের গল্পে এখনো আরেকটা টুইস্ট বাকি।

ওবায়েদ স্যার নামকরা নির্দেশক। তার বানানো সিরিয়াল তিনচারটা টেলিভিশন চ্যানেলে সবসময় চলমান থাকে। একশ’ দুইশ’ পর্বের সোপ অপেরার ধারণা বাংলাদেশে ইনিই প্রথম আমদানি করেন। সোপ অপেরার নায়িকাদের মত তিনিও সবসময় ফেসিয়াল করে থাকেন, ফলে তার বয়স বোঝা মুশকিল। পঁয়ত্রিশও হতে পারে, আবার পয়ষড়ি হওয়াও অসম্ভব না। তাকে নিয়ে বেশ একটা মিডিয়া হাইপ আছে। দু’তিনটা প্রথম সারির পত্রিকা থেকে সবসময় কাভারেজ পান তিনি। ফলে, শ্যুটিং শুরু করতে না করতেই তার নাটক সুপারহিট হতে শুরু করে।

জিনিয়া প্রথম সপ্তডিঙায় এসেছিল অডিশন দিতে, ছোটভাইয়ের মত একটা বয়ফ্রেন্ড সাথে ছিল তার। ভারি চশমা বয়ফ্রেন্ডের, মাথাভর্তি কোঁকড়ানো চুল। কুতকুতে চোখে দুনিয়ার সন্দেহ। সারাফণ নিচুগলায় কথা বলছিল জিনিয়ার সাথে। দিনটা ছিল “আসাদ এভিনিউ”র অডিশনের প্রথম দিন।

ঘন্টাদুই পর ওবায়েদ স্যারের চোখ পড়ল জিনিয়ার দিকে। আঙুল দিয়ে ইশারা করলেন তিনি। জিনিয়া উঠে দাঁড়াল। সাথে তার বয়ফ্রেন্ডও।

- আপনাকে তো ডাকি নি।

জিনিয়ার বয়ফ্রেন্ড আগায়ে আসলে ওবায়েদ স্যার তার দিকে একপলক চেয়ে বললেন। ছেলেটি উশখুশ করতে করতে জবাব দিল -

- ওহ... আমি ওর সঙ্গে এসেছি।

- এখানেই বসেন। ভেতরে গার্ডিয়ান এলাউড না।

ওবায়েদ স্যারের হাসি। জিনিয়াকে খুব অপ্রস্তুত দেখাচ্ছিল।

- না না স্যার, ও এখানেই বসবে। তুমি উঠে এসেছ কেন?

বয়ফ্রেন্ডের দিকে অপাঙ্গে তাকালেন ওবায়েদ স্যার। তারপর আমার দিকে তাকালেন। আমি তখন রিসেপশনে বদলি ডিউটি করি। ওবায়েদ স্যারের তাকানোর অর্থ পরিষ্কার বুঝলাম। জিনিয়া ভেতরে অদৃশ্য হয়ে গেল।

বস্তুত, আমাদের বডি ল্যান্ডস্কেপের সমবেত গলাধাক্কায় জিনিয়ার সেই বয়ফ্রেন্ডকে অল্পদিনেই রিসেপশন রুম থেকে খারিজ করে দেয়া গেল। তারপর তাকে দেখতাম, আমাদের অফিসের সামনের রাস্তায় পায়চারি করে আর সিগারেট খায়। একদিন জিনিয়ার সাথে হাতাহাতি হতেও দেখলাম। তারপর জিনিয়া একা একাই আসতে থাকল। বয়ফ্রেন্ড নাই হয়ে গেল।

ওবায়েদ স্যারের জন্য সপ্তডিঙায় দরাজ ব্যবস্থা থাকে। প্রয়োজনে স্টুডিওর খালি সেটগুলি তিনি ইনডোর স্যুটিং-এর কাজে ব্যবহার করতে পারেন, বিশেষত সকালবেলায়। তেমনি একদিন কোনো এক সেট থেকে দরজা খুলে ওবায়েদ স্যার সামনে আমাকে পেলেন। ডাকলেন, এই সোলমান এদিকে আস। গেলাম। সম্ভবত ফাইনাল রিহাসার্সাল চলছে। এক কোণায় ট্রাইপডে বসানো ক্যামেরা। জনাদশেক নতুন অভিনেতা অভিনেত্রী জড়োসড়ো ভঙ্গিতে বসে আছে। জিনিয়া এক কোণায় দাঁড়িয়ে।

ওবায়েদ স্যার তাকে ধমকের সুরে বললেন, তুমি এখনো অনেক স্টিফ। আনপ্রফেশনাল। এজন্য এখন ডিফারেন্ট ক্লাশের কো-অ্যাকটর ট্রাই করব। সাপোজ, মিঃ সোলমান একজন নামজাদা ব্যবসায়ী। পরিবার আছে, বিরাট ব্যবসা আছে, সন্তান-সন্ততি আছে। তুমি তার সেক্রেটারি। তোমার সাথে তার পরকীয়ার সম্পর্ক ছিল, এখন এভয়েড করে। এ মুহূর্তে অফিসে কেউ নাই। এই সুযোগে তুমি তাকে একটা সেনসেশনাল হাগ করবে। পুরনো সম্পর্কে ফেরত যাওয়ার জন্য। অন ক্যামেরা।

হাগড হওয়ার জন্য আমি অস্লোন বদনে দাঁড়ালাম। জিনিয়ার চোখের ঘৃণা বিঁধছে আমার গায়। এগিয়ে এল সে। আবার পিছিয়ে গেল। কী যেন

ভাবল। তারপর আবার এগিয়ে এসে আমাকে জড়িয়ে ধরল। ওবায়েদ স্যার আমাকে জিজ্ঞেস করলেন হাগটি যথেষ্ট সেনসেশনাল হয়েছে কিনা। আমি ডানে বাঁয়ে মাথা নাড়লাম।

ওবায়েদ স্যার আবার ধমকালেন। শট রিটেক করা লাগবে। এবার যথেষ্টই সেনসেশনাল হল। জড়িয়ে ধরার পর, জিনিয়া আমার কানে কানে বলল, কুত্তার বাচ্চা!

আমার ভাবান্তর নাই। জিনিয়ার দিকে চোখ পড়তেই দেখি, অপমানে চোখে পানি এসে গেছে তার। আমাকে ছেড়ে দিয়ে ওয়াশরুমের দিকে ছুটল।

ওবায়েদ স্যার খুশি। আমার দিকে চোখ টিপে বললেন, সোলমান যাও। গরমাগরম চা আর সিঙ্গারা পাঠাও।

আসাদ এভিনিউর প্রথম ছাব্বিশ এপিসোডের স্লটে জিনিয়ার কোনো রোল হল না। কোনো অগুত কারণে কাহিনি থেকেই ঐ ক্যারেক্টারটা খারিজ হয়ে গেল। ওবায়েদ স্যার জিনিয়াকে বললেন, স্ক্রিপ্টরাইটারই নাকি ছেঁটে দিয়েছে! মেল-ফিমেল রেশিও ব্যালান্স করতে গিয়ে। তার বদলে ওবায়েদ স্যারেরই আরেকটা সিঙ্গেল নাটকে দুই মিনিটের অ্যাপিয়ারেন্স জুটল জিনিয়ার। বছর ঘুরলে সেই সিঙ্গেল নাটকের মেইন কাস্ট তারকা পুরস্কার পেল। ওবায়েদ স্যার পেলেন সেরা পরিচালকের পুরস্কার। দুই মিনিটের জিনিয়াকে কেউ নোটিশই করল না।

এভাবেই মিডিয়াসক্কার লালিমায় জিনিয়া মিলায়ে গেল। তার দেখা মিলতে থাকল মাছি-মারা সকালের স্লটে। কখনো কখনো চোখাচোখি হয় আমার সাথে। ততদিনে কোপ ঝরে গেছে তার মন থেকে। পরিচিত ভঙ্গিতে হাসে। আমি নিয়ম মোতাবেক অপরিচিতের মুখভঙ্গি করি।

- কেমন আছেন? একটু ওবায়েদ স্যারের সাথে দেখা করতে চাচ্ছিলাম।

- কী নাম বলব, আপা?

জিনিয়া আমার দিকে তাকাল একনজর। আমার না চেনার অভিব্যক্তি এত নিখুঁত যে ভড়কে গেল। নিজের নাম বলল। আমি খামোখাই ফোন তুললাম। অপরপ্রান্তে কল্লিত ওবায়দ হাসানের সাথে কথা বললাম। তারপর ফোন রেখে বললাম, স্যরি, স্যার সময় দিতে পারছেন না। পোস্ট-প্রডাকশন চলছে তো। নাম আর ফোন নম্বর রেখে যেতে বলেছেন।

জিনিয়া তবু দাঁড়ায়ে থাকল। অনেকক্ষণ। তারপর কাগজ চেয়ে নিয়ে ফোন নম্বর লিখল। সেটা হাতে নিতে নিতে আমি বললাম, স্যার বলেছিলেন যদি তিনি ফোন করতে ভুলে যান, তবে যাতে আপনি বিকেলের দিকে নয়াপল্টনে স্যারের অফিসে টুঁ মারেন। বৃহস্পতি আর শুক্রবার তিনি বিকেলের দিকে ফ্রি থাকেন।

প্রস্থাবটা জিনিয়া পুরাপুরিই বুঝল। কিন্তু নিল না। বলল, বিকেলে আমি বিজি থাকি যে। সকালের দিকেই আসব।

জিনিয়া সকালের দিকেই আসতে লাগল। এবং যথারীতি ফিরে যেতেও লাগল। কখনো আমি রিসেপশনে থাকি, কখনো ভেতর বাইর করার সময় উঁকি দিয়ে দেখি, সোফার এক কোণায় বসে বসে সেলফোন নাড়াচাড়া করছে। আমি ডেস্কে বসা থাকলে সামনে দাঁড়ায়ে আমার সাথে গল্প করার চেষ্টা করে।

- আপনাদের অনেক ব্যস্ত থাকতে হয়, তাই না।

আমি জবাব দিই না।

- কতদিন আছেন সপ্তডিঙায়?

- পাঁচ বছর হবে, আপা।

- স্যালারি প্যাকেজ ভাল?

- চলে যায় আর কি।

- ফ্যামিলিতে কে কে আছে?

রিসেপশন ফাঁকা ছিল, ফলে একদিন আলাপ এতদূর পর্যন্ত আগায়ে গেল।
জিনিয়ার দিকে তাকাই। আত্মপ্রবঞ্চনা দরকার মেয়েটির, সহানুভূতির পসরা
নিয়ে বসে আছে অন্যের কাহিনিতে ছড়াবে বলে! ভগিতাই হোক, তবে!

বানিয়ে গল্প বলি একটা। টিপিক্যাল নিম্নমধ্যবিত্ত পরিবারের গল্প। প্রয়াত
বাবা, বৃদ্ধা এবং চোখে ছানি-পড়া মা, আর প্রতিবন্ধী একমাত্র বোন
অভিনীত ষাট দশকের একটি টানটান সেন্টিমেন্টাল গল্প। জিনিয়ার হৃদয়ে
প্রচুর সমব্যথার উৎস ছড়ায় সেই কাহিনি। দীর্ঘশ্বাস ফেলে সে।

- আপনি কি অফিসে লাঞ্চ করেন? আমি যাওয়ার পথে বুমারস-এ থেয়ে
যাব। বাই দ্য ওয়ে, আসবেন নাকি, একসাথে লাঞ্চ করা যাবে!

জিনিয়ার চোখের ভাষা খুব চেনা।

- আপনি থাওয়াচ্ছেন?

- অবশ্যই!

থেতে থেতে জিনিয়ার সাথে আরো ঘনিষ্ঠতা হয়। ওবায়েদ স্যারের নাটকের
প্রসঙ্গ দিয়ে আলাপ ওঠে। জিনিয়া তার বয়ফ্রেন্ডের কথা তুলে একসময়।
বেশ হালকা গলায় বলে, খুব ইমম্যাচিউরড ছেলেটা। ব্রেক-আপ হয়ে গেছে।
আমাকেও নিচু গলায় বলতে হয়, ভাল করেছেন। ক্যারিয়ারের জন্য এরচে
ভাল ডিসিশন আর হয় না। বয়ফ্রেন্ড হলো বাটখারার মত। নিচের দিকে
টানে।

- সবাই তো আর একরকম না।

জিনিয়া গভীর চোখে তাকায়। যেন তার চোখের সামনে সেই চিরায়ত
লিবারাল বয়ফ্রেন্ড!

তারপর আরো আরো বুঝারস হয়। এ পর্যায়ে অসুস্থ মা আর প্রতিবন্ধী বোনের সংসারের আশপাশে একটা সম্ভাব্য ক্যারেক্টার হয়ে ঘুরঘুর করতে শুরু করে জিনিয়া। ওর বেদনাবিধূর চোখের সামনে কাহিনিটাকে টেনে টেনে আরো আরো লম্বা করি আমি। ওর দিকে চেয়ে বুঝি, এ শুধু তার আন্তঃশ্রেণি অ্যাডভেঞ্চার নয় -- সেই দূরতম গল্পের কোথাও হয়ত সে নিজের বিপন্নতাটুকুকে শনাক্ত করতে পেরেছে। সঠিক গল্প নির্বাচনের কৃতিত্বে আমি মনে মনে আটখানা হই। আপনি থেকে তুমিতে নেমে আসে সে। আমি অবশ্য আপনি তুমি-র মাঝামাঝি একটা জায়গায় ঝুলে থাকি। এরচে বেশি দূর যাওয়ার অপশন আমার জব ডেসক্রিপশনে নাই।

- ধুর, আমারে দিয়া কিচ্ছু হবে না সোলমান! জীবনটাই মিনিংলেস হয়ে যাচ্ছে।

একদিন জিনিয়া এভাবে বলে। জানতাম, এভাবেই বলবে সে। বলতে বলতে গভীরভাবে তাকাবে আমার দিকে। হাত ধরবে। জীবনের মিনিং সে কোন্ খাতে উৎপাদন করতে চাইতেছে, সেটা আমি পরিষ্কারই আন্দাজ করতে পারছিলাম। সালাম ওবায়েদ স্যার, দুয়ারে প্রস্তুত গাড়ি!

- বলি কি, ওবায়েদ স্যারকে আরেকটু ভাল করে পারসু করলে ভাল হয়। নয়াপল্টনের অফিসে কিন্তু ইনি ব্যাপক দিলদরিয়া মানুষ। “আসাদ এভিনিউ” তো হিট! এখন একটা মাঝারি সাইজের রোল পেলো আর পেছনে তাকাতে হবে না।

- তুমি বলছো যেতে?
জিনিয়ার ব্যথিত বিস্ময়।

হ্যাঁ, আমি বলছি। কারণ এটাই এক্সিট, জিনিয়াকে নিয়ে আমার যাবতীয় ভণিতা থেকে। বুঝতেই পারছেন এটা জিনিয়ার গল্প নয়, আমার তো নয়ই।

কোনোদিন তা জিনিয়ার হয়ে উঠতে পারে হয়ত, তবে এখন পর্যন্ত এটি আশলে ওবায়দ হাসানের গল্পই। তার নয়াপল্টনের অফিসই এই গল্পের প্রায়-অনিবার্য ভবিষ্যৎ। জিনিয়া একদিন নিশ্চয়ই সেখানে পৌঁছাবে, এই প্রকল্পনার ওপর আমি যাবতীয় প্রবঞ্চনাসমেত সান্ন্যাকালীন চামচিকার মত ওড়াওড়ি করি মাত্র। এর বাইরে আমার স্বতন্ত্র কোনো কায়া নাই, ইতিহাস নাই, লিবিডো তো নাইই।

এই যে জিনিয়া নয়াপল্টন যাওয়া না-যাওয়া নিয়ে একটা দ্বিধার মধ্যে ঝুলে আছে -- যতদিন সে এরকম ঝুলে থাকবে, ততদিনই আমার পরমায়ু। নয়াপল্টন থেকে যেদিন সে সদর্পে সপ্তডিঙায় ফিরবে, আমার ছায়াটিও দেখবে না আর। তার মনেও থাকবে না, আত্মকরণার ধাওয়া খেয়ে বেকুবের মত সে একটা ষাট-দশকী সেন্টিমেন্টাল গল্পের ফাঁদে পড়ে গিয়েছিল একদিন। সেলিব্রিটিদের বিস্মরণের খাতায় এমন অনেক বেকুবিপনা থাকা লাগে।

জিনিয়া সেলিব্রিটি হয়ে ওঠার পর কোনোদিন আপনি যদি সপ্তডিঙায় যান, রিসেপশনে হয়ত শিখা কিংবা লিপিকেই দেখবেন। কিন্তু সোলমান নামে কাউকে খুঁজলে অবাক হবে ওরা। সোলমান নামে কেউ কি কোনদিন ছিল? একজন বিগতসুন্দরী, আর গেরিলার মত সিভিল সার্ভিস পরীক্ষার প্রস্তুতি নিতে-থাকা অন্যজন -- একটি সাংঘাতিক ব্যস্ত টেলিভিশন রিসেপশনের ঘেরাটোপে বন্দী থাকা অবস্থায় তাদের যাবতীয় বিপন্ন মনোলগের মধ্যে কোথায় যে আমার জন্ম হয়েছিল -- সেই হিসাব ভোলানাথের দরবারে তারা কিভাবে রাখবে?

আর যদি জিনিয়া কোনোদিনই নয়াপল্টন না-যেতে মনস্থ করে -- তবে কেউ কেউ হয়ত মনে করতে পারবে যে, ওবায়দ হাসানের গতবছরের মেগাসিরিয়াল “আগুনডাঙা”র স্ক্রিপ্টে সোলমান নামে একটা ক্যারেক্টার ছিল। কী কারণে যেন শেষ মুহূর্তে কেটে বাদ দেয়া হয় তাকে। কাটা-পড়া ক্যারেক্টারগুলোর টেলিভিশন অফিসে তেমন কিছু করার থাকে না। এই

ডেস্ক ঐ ডেস্ক এই সেট ঐ স্টুডিও উড়ে উড়ে ঘুরে বেড়ায় তারা। কখনো একা, কখনো দল-বেঁধে। যখন জিনিয়ার মত কেউ যাওয়া এবং না-যাওয়ার মাঝখানে আটকে যায়, তখন তার সাথে এরা নির্দোষ ভণিতা করে সময় কাটায়।

তারপর একদিন এরা, এদের বানানো কোনো এক ষাট-দশকী সেন্টিমেন্টাল মা ও বোনের গল্প, আর নয়াপল্টন না-যেতে মনস্থ করা কোনো এক জিনিয়া পারভীন একসঙ্গেই রিসাইকল হয়ে যায়। অন্য কোথা, অন্য সিরিয়ালে।

Appendix II: Translation

All my preamble is about Zinia

The story of Zinia Parvin is so simple that its narration itself requires courage.

You must be wondering why courage is a requirement for the narration of a simple story. Yes sir, it is required indeed. The simpler the story, the more dramatic the narration. And the key issue/main problem with Zinia's story is that all of its characters demand an important role, even her boyfriend of three months. You might be confused as to who this story is about. Is it about Zinia? Or is it about her boyfriend? Or maybe it is about producer Obaed Hasan, or the narrator himself? Zinia herself is left in the sidelines amidst this communist maze. The thing is, someone who cannot be identified in her own biography, what are the chances of her finding solid solid footing in this era of power-hungry media. Can Zinia actually turn into a celebrity?

I do not have the knowledge to answer this question in black and white. I am an insignificant person who sits in the front desk of Shaptadinga television. My job is to do as I am told. It ranges from production assistance to running errands, from acting as a substitute receptionist to a makeshift program arranger. However, my actual job is to tolerate all the scolding and chiding from my superiors. Be it the air-conditioning not functioning in the talk-show studio, the heroine of a mega serial missing her shooting schedule, the news presenter not finding a matching tie, I was sure to face the music. I had to be available for food. I got pointed at as a bad omen by the editor when the live-show voice was not synced. If the payment-cheque for the script-writer is not ready, the fault lies entirely with me! At first it seemed very confusing to me. Gradually I realized that this was the entirety of my job in Shaptadinga television.

You can tell that this story is not only about Zinia, but mine as well. You get to hit two birds with one bullet, free soap with the purchase of shampoo! I am Solaiman, the auxiliary of this story. Even if this story solely centered around Zinia, you would not have had any respite at all from this long soap-filled drama.

I first realized that the earth was round after coming to work in the media-house here. I also got proof of the perpetuity of power alongside this. However, power in this case means 'producer' in the formula of constancy. Once a producer, always a producer. A producer is neither born, nor destroyed. As to whether a producer undergoes metamorphosis, I cannot say with conviction. But it does undergo circulation and I can feel it. They slash-and-burn like Jhum cultivators. They circulate from this Tv channel to that, from studio to outdoors, from corridors directly to bedrooms! Not only producers, the celebrities also follow the same circular path. The difference is, they come here annoyed, typing on their large android phones. If they are acting in a drama today, tomorrow it will be in a talk-show, a cooking program the day after, and a judge in a reality show the following. They do not often get to see me, and when they do, they are surprised. With their glasses already raised to their foreheads, only their eyebrows are raised to express their surprise.

-You are still here Solaiman?

-Yes sir, you are very kind.

I smile disarmingly. But their surprise is hardly resolved upon seeing my smiling face. They come to their wit's end trying to think what hitherto-unknown skills made a decrepit as myself survive in a private television channel; A person whose head starts spinning upon holding a reflector for five minutes, someone who disconnects the line ninety-nine times out of hundred while

transferring phone calls to PABX, someone who spends half a day in hiring an autorickshaw. They cannot begin to fathom how such a person can still work the same job for so many years.

But I think I have one important skill: memory-management This may have some connection with me being able to stay in the same job. I can provide details for any incident without forgetting any part of it, no matter how long ago it took place. Most of those who work in the television sector are all forgetful. They say something in the morning and forget about it by evening; that is where they require my assistance.

But a person can never be a living memoir all the time. He has to forget, sometimes consciously. There are many people with eidetic memories who are dangerous. They might delve into the deepest corners of our memory cells to bring up a certain memory which your and my subconscious had decided to forget. I am not like them. I know how to unknow something which I already know...Sometimes one has to navigate the memory lanes in pretension of remembering, something which I am very good at and which makes me a skilled actor in this regard. This is my pretense. All-knowing when required, amnesic at other times.

This is the reason I am very important. Consider the intellectuals sitting in talk-shows. They are extremely sensitive. No matter who else recognizes them, the receptionist of the TV channel has to recognize them. Otherwise, a direct complaint to the chairman ensues. What sort of people do you employ in your channel? They have no manners. Our receptionist Lipi who sits in the evening shift stutters all the time. Once she got into a lot of trouble assuming an off-track intellectual to be an Air-conditioner mechanic. Her bonus got cancelled. Even her monthly salary was suspended for a few months. Finally, things were resolved after apologizing to the said intellectual profusely.

This is why as evening nears and lights begin to be switched on in the talk-show sets, Lipi grips my hand. She calls me Salman instead of Solman, so as to make it sound smarter and pleases me. She says, Salman *bhai*, please sit. Let us chit chat for some time.

The intellectuals sitting at the talk-shows can be lenient too. Their mood/temper is as unpredictable as the rain in the month of *Baishakh*. They lose their temper quickly, and it does not take much time for them to cool down too/as well. But they are pleased with so little. It suffices for them if their name is spelled correctly on their payment envelopes, and one remembers the correct amount of sugar they take with their tea. And if one can recall the name of any books authored by that intellectual while handing over the envelope, then it would be beyond perfect.

It goes without saying that although I am responsible for all these activities, the praise lies with Lipi. I am not one to complain for time spent in intimate company. Everyday Lipi sits very close to my, often touching my hand with different excuses. Lipi is a pretty lady, and once was a very youthful lady at that. She reached the top ten of a soap beauty-contest some ten years back, which made this desk her destiny. I especially enjoy this beautiful lady touching my hand every now and then.

If evening is my time to shine, then in the morning I am at my worst in remembering things. The entire morning goes by watching the talk shows of the previous night, music program, serials, cooking programs and cine magazines. Although the office of Shaptadinga is full of the hum and buzz of music, talk-show, cine and drama celebrities, it's a completely different picture in the morning. Those who come in the morning are usually would-be and ought-to-be celebrities. One

has to be careful in behaving with them, even when welcoming them in. These ought-to-be celebrities are very dangerous indeed! Our managing director has declared a red alert when it comes to handling them. Even a courteous smile offered in greeting can be used by them to reach the head of Programs, even The Chairman himself!

Morning shift receptionist Shikha only half-concentrates on her job at hand: the other half of it stays inside the pages of the BCS guide book kept beneath the desk. Often, she has trouble managing all these calculative behaviour in the morning because of this. I am called immediately if something goes wrong. I come only to find her completely surrounded with the would-be and ought-to-be celebrities. The would-be celebrities are very meek in nature, although the ought-to-be ones are very loud. They lash out aggressively. They sit on the sofas criticizing and passing harsh comments on the producers in a low voice, while glaring at the would-be celebrities. The resentment bleeding in their lowered voices, however, reaches the reception desk. That is where I have to step in to say something to tackle the rising tidal wave of critical voices. Sometimes, when I am successful, the topic changes to something else. However, most of the time, the topic takes a turn for the worst. They end up criticizing the producer and chairman instead, talking about their wicked acts and affairs, the addiction of their children and so on. Then all I can do is count the minutes till it ends.

It goes without saying that I recognise all these would-be and ought-to-be celebrities categorically: I know their names, the name of their husbands and former lovers. I know which producer they are most intimate with, have knowledge about all the scandals, bookmarking all the related facebook pages. I even know what school their children from previous marriage studies in. Some

are so versatile that they cannot properly remember who they are dating and whom they are living with. But I can. I even have their cell phone number saved. But I pretend not to recognize them over the phone, ever. In such circumstances I have to play the role of an amnesiac. This results in me greeting these unsolicited celebrities with a respectful 'Apa' and 'Bhaiyya'. And the solicited celebrities are addressed with 'sir' and 'madam'. But I never get the chance to address them as such. All I can manage after standing up is a curt salute. The solicited celebrities do not pause at the reception. They disappear like a streak of lightning, all the while typing on their android phones.

Those who are stopped at the reception to be filtered, it is not like they are stuck there forever. When their time comes, they reach the inner sanctums eventually. The inner sanctity of the media is a treasure trove, no way of returning empty handed from there. At least one can expect a piece of sweetmeat in there, if not anything else! The would-be and ought-to-be celebrities continue to give various auditions day in day out while clinging to that hope. I discovered Zinia at one such meeting.

2.

We named the would-be celebrities as targets', and the ought-to-be celebrities are labelled as 'expired'. This vocabulary is between I and Lipi. I tease Lipi by saying that if one expires before blossoming into a celebrity, they end up becoming a receptionist.

I often argue with Lipi regarding which category Lipi falls in. Lipi wants to prove herself as 'expired', whereas I think that there is still a possibility for her. Zinia wants a role in the serial of

Obayed Hasan. These mega serials hold immense potential. A very important character can be created at any time, for anyone. On the other hand, any important character can be removed at any time with a few days' notice. Obayed sir is an expert at these things. He is a producer of our new mega serial, 'Asad Avenue'. Episodes are being broadcast on-air while the production continues. The television rating points have skyrocketed amidst this. The advertising agencies have literally started importuning. Therefore, I believe that there is still a twist waiting in the story between Zinia and Obayed sir.

Obayed sir is a famous director. The serials that he has produced are shown in three to four television channels at a time. He is the first one to import the concept of soap operas running upto two hundred episodes in Bangladesh. Like the actresses in soap operas, he also does constant facials, making it difficult to gage his actual age. It can be thirty-five, or sixty five: the possibility exists. There is much hype about him in the media. He always receives regular coverage from a few first-rate newspapers. As a result, his drama serials become a superhit in no time after the shooting begins.

Zinia first came to Shaptadinga to audition for a role, with a boyfriend who looked like a 'Chhoto Bhai': heavy glasses, a headful of curly hair, squinting eyes full of suspicion. He was conversing with Zinia in a low voice all the while. It was the first day of auditions for 'Asad Avenue'.

Obayed sir's eyes fell on Zinia/noticed Zinia after a couple of hours. He gestured with his finger/beckoned with his finger. Zinia stood up along with his boyfriend.

'I haven't called you', said Obayed sir when Zinia's boyfriend came forward. The boy hesitated a bit.

'Oh...actually I came with her'.

'Sit here. Guardians are not allowed inside'. Obayed sir was smiling. Zinia became very unsettled/flustered.

'No no sir, he will sit right here. Why have you gotten up?'

Obayed sir looked at her boyfriend from the corner of his eyes, then turned his eyes to me. At that time, I was working as a substitute in the reception desk. I understood clearly what his meaningful glance meant. Zinia disappeared inside.

In effect, our combined hostile body-language was enough to unceremoniously throw him out of the reception room. Later he could be seen pacing the road in front of our office and smoking. Once I saw him in a fist-fight/fight with Zinia. After that Zinia used to come alone. Her boyfriend disappeared.

Shaptadinga provided liberal facilities in Shaptadinga studios. If needed, he could use the empty sets for indoor shooting, especially in the mornings. One day he exited the door to one such set and saw me in front of him. He called, 'Solaiman, come here'. I went. Perhaps the final rehearsal was taking place. A camera was set on a tripod in a corner. Some ten or so actors and actresses were sitting uncomfortably. Zinia was standing in a corner.

Obayed sir addressed her in a chiding tone, "you are still very stiff, unprofessional. So now we will try an actor of a different class. Suppose Mr Solaiman is a famous businessman. He has a family, children, and a huge business. You are his secretary. He had an extra-marital affair with

you once: now he just avoids you. No one is in the office now. You will take this chance to give him a sensational hug, wanting to return to your old relationship. This will all be on camera.”

I stood cheerfully waiting to be hugged. The hatred in Zinia's eyes pierces me. She came forward and then stepped back. She thought about something then moved forward again, hugging me. Obayed sir asked me whether the hug was sensational enough. I shook my head.

Obayed sir scolded her again. The shot had to be re-shot. This time around the hug was more than satisfactorily sensational. ‘Son of a bitch’ was what Zinia whispered in my ear after hugging me

I remained unmoved. Looking at Zinia, I saw that her eyes were brimming at this insult. She rushed to the washroom after letting go of me.

Obayed sir was happy. He winked at me and said, ‘Solaiman go and send some hot tea and Shingaras’.

Zinia did not get any role in the slots of the first 26 episodes of Asad Avenue. For some unknown reason, the character itself was cut off from the storyline. Obayed sir said, the scriptwriter himself had done so, to balance the male-female ratio! Instead of this, Zinia got a two-minute role in one Obayed sir’s single episode drama. At the end of the year, the main cast star received an award. Obayed sir received the award for best producer. No one noticed Zinia and her two-minute role.

This is how Zinia faded away into the dusk amidst the glamorous evening of media world. She could be seen in the morning slot where there was practically no work. Sometimes she catches my eye. By that time her anger towards me had receded. Smiles at me in a familiar way. According to the rules, I have to put up an 'I don't know you' face.

-How are you doing? I wanted to meet with Obayed sir.

-What name should I say Apa?

Zinia looked at me once. She was put off by my immaculate pretension of not recognizing her. She told her name. I picked up the phone and had a pretend conversation with Obayed sir on the other end. After holding up, I said, 'Sorry, sir does not have time right now, since post-production is going on. He has asked you to jot down your name and phone number'.

Still Zinia kept standing for a long while. Then she asked for a pen and paper and jotted her phone number down. In the process of picking the paper up, I said, 'Sir said that if he forgets to call, you should run by his office at Nayapaltan in the afternoon. Sir is free on the afternoons of Thursdays and Fridays'.

Zinia understood the veiled offer in absolute, but did not accept it. She said, 'I remain busy in the afternoons. I will come in the mornings.

She started dropping by in the mornings like she said, and went back empty-handed everytime. Sometimes I am at the reception, while at other times I peek at her while running errands to find

her seated on the sofa, fiddling with her cellphone. She tries to chat with me when I am seated at the front desk.

-You guys have to work a lot, don't you?

I do not reply

-Since how long have you been working here?

-Around five years Apa.

-Is the salary package good enough?

-It is sufficient I suppose.

-Who else is there in your family?

The chit-chat went this far one day when the reception area was empty. I look at Zinia. This girl needs self-assurance; full of sympathy that she is waiting to show towards other people's life-story! Why not fabricate a story then!

I made up a story. A typical story of a lower middle-class family. Deceased father, old mother with cataract and only one handicapped sister. A heart-wrenching sentimental story from the sixties acting world. This caused a wave of sympathy to rise in the heart of Zinia. She sighed.

-Do you have lunch in the office? I will be having lunch at Boomers on the way back. By the way, if you can come along, we can have lunch together!

The offer in Zinia's eyes was all too familiar.

-Your treat?

-Of course!

I became more intimate with Zinia during the course of lunch. Obayed sir's drama comes up during the conversation. Zinia brings up her boyfriend while talking. 'The boy is really immature', says Zinia in a very light tone. 'We broke up'.

'That was a good thing to do', I had to interject in a low voice. 'You could not have taken a better decision for your future. Boyfriends are like cinder blocks: they will only weigh you down'.

-Not everyone is the same

Zinia looks at me with an intense look in her eyes, as if she was looking at her liberal boyfriend in front of her!

There were many more days spent at Boomers. By this time Zinia began roaming around like a possible character around an ill mother and handicapped sister. I keep stretching the story further seeing the pain in her eyes. I realize when I look at her that this was not merely a inter-level adventure for her: rather, she could relate her own peril/endangerment somewhere in the far-away story. I become really pleased at my ability to select the correct story. 'Apni' comes down to 'Tumi' on her part. As for me, I stay somewhere in-between Apni and Tumi. My job description does not allow advancing further than this point.

-I am good for nothing Solaiman! My life is becoming meaningless.

One day Zinia said this to me. I knew she was going to say this: she would look at me deeply, hold my hand. I could clearly guess/deduce the direction she wanted to make her life meaningful in. Salute to you Obayed sir, your desired destination is almost within reach!

-You know, you should pursue Obayed sir a bit more sincerely. He is a very open-hearted person at his Nayapaltan office. 'Asad Avenue' is really a hit show! If you can just grab a medium-sized role in it, you won't have to look back from there.

-You are telling me to go?

Zinia voice held a pained surprise

Yes, I am the one saying this, because this was my way out of all the pretension with Zinia. You can clearly realize that this is not Zinia's story, and most definitely not mine. This story can become Zinia's one day perhaps, but in reality, this has been the story of Obayed sir. His office at Nayapaltan is almost an inevitable destiny of this story. Zinia will certainly reach there one day, whereas my job in this project is only to fly around like an evening bat with all my fraudulent ways. I do not have any independent body of existence, no history and certainly no libido outside this periphery.

As long as Zinia remains in a state of confusion regarding visiting the office at Nayapaltan, my dream lives on. The day she returns from Nayapaltan and steps boldly into Shaptadinga, she won't

even come close to me. She won't even remember that she had been stupid enough to fall for a sentimental story of the sixties one day while drowning in self-pity. Celebrities do need to have such stupidity in their book of things-to-forget.

If you visit Shaptadinga one day after Zinia becomes Celebrity, you will find either Shikha or Lipi at the reception. But if you look for someone named Solaiman, they will be surprised. Was there anyone named Solaiman here? between a former beauty contestant and someone busy taking guerilla-like preparation for her civil exam- their perilous monologue while being imprisoned in the trap of an extremely busy television station- how will they give account to Bholanath regarding this?

And if Zinia makes up her mind never to visit Nayapaltan- then maybe there will be a few who remember that there was a character named Solaiman in the script of Obayed Hasan's 'Agundanga', which was aired last the previous year. For some reason the character was cut off at the last moment. The cut-off characters do not have much to do at the television station. They roam around from desk to desk, from one studio to the other. Sometimes alone, sometimes in a group. When someone like Zinia gets stuck in the zone between going and not going, they spend their time in harmless pretence with them.

Then one day they, along with their sixties' sentimental story of a mother and sister, and a Zinia Parvin who decided not to go to Nayapaltan, are recycled together: to some other place, some other serial.

