

Selina Hossain's *Gayatri Sandhya* as a Reflection of Struggle for Identity Formation of a Bengali Nation

Sadia Afroz¹

¹Senior Lecturer, Department of English, Stamford University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

Selina Hossain is one of the most important women writers in Bangladesh. She publishes novels, short stories, prose writings, treatises, and essays. Her literary writings are a moving account of the contemporary socio-political, economic, and cultural crises and conflicts as well as the recurrent themes of the lives of struggling masses. Her portrayal of the life of a particular community living on the southeast coast of Bangladesh is informed by a deep awareness of life which transcends regionalism. In this regard, Selina's novel Gayatri Sandhya foregrounds the theme of self-identity, self-investigation, and existential inquiry of a Bengali nation. The first part of Gayatri Sandhya has been written based on the partition of 1947 to the military rule of 1958. The second part covers the period from the years 1959 to 1969. The third part also covers the years 1969 to 1975. The events of this period play an important role in establishing an independent sovereign state named Bangladesh in the atlas. For this purpose, this article would like to examine 20th-century socio-political, economic, and cultural inequalities of Bangladesh through the art of characterization and plot construction. Most importantly, it aims to look at Selina's Gayatri Sandhya as a reflection of the struggle for identity formation of a Bengali nation.

Keywords: Ali Ahmed, Bengali nation, Gayatri Sandhya, identity formation, Selina Hossain, and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Received 23.03.2025

Revised 16.04.2025

Accepted 03.06.2025

CITATION OF THIS ARTICLE

Sadia Afroz. Selina Hossain's *Gayatri Sandhya* as a Reflection of Struggle for Identity Formation of a Bengali Nation. Inter. J. Edu. Res. Technol. 16[2] June 2025;125-132.

INTRODUCTION

Subrata Kumar Das (2001) points out that Selina Hossain's *Gayatri Sandhya* is a three-volume series from 1948 to 1975. During this period, this novel has been written based on the background of an independent state called Bangladesh starting from the partition of 1947 between India and Pakistan till 1975. According to Milton Vishwas (1996), "The socio-political and cultural crisis of a nation and injured and gory individuals and cordialities of human life based on those events this novel has been written" (Vishwas 19 quoted in Musa 187). [My translation] Because the contemporary socio-political, economic, and cultural conflicts of the Indian subcontinent have been presented. From the pre-World War II progress movement to the post-World War II catastrophe - famine, riots, partition of 1947, language movement of 1952, six points of 1966, liberation war of 1971, a brutal massacre of 15 August 1975, and so on in the wake of poverty, exploitation, torture, war, murder, etc., crisis, instability and uncertainty of the struggle for identity formation of a nation of Bangladesh, overcoming and re-emerging anarchy, despair, hopelessness, and panic. Thus, such historic events have been reflected in the novel *Gayatri Sandhya*. Plot construction and the art of characterization have been presented politically to foster the real picture of the struggle for an identity for the formation of a Bengali nation as well as for establishing a sovereign Bangladesh. Though the novel is lengthy, each story and each character have been presented following the main theme of the novel generically. Selina Hossain with her artistic judgement, subtle devotion, profound realization and sensuousness of human life, and above all, perfect artistic practice has composed the novel *Gayatri Sandhya*. In this regard, the novelist comments:

I was reading a comment written by Professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury regarding Anowar Pasha. He wrote: He left India in 1947 because he was a Muslim; and was killed in 1971 by the Pakistani army because he was a Bengalese. I was seriously concerned about this fact. Then I thought that this was our identity crisis and I planned to write a novel based on this identity crisis. Language Movement of 1952, Partition of 1947, Khagra Ward due to staying in Rajshahi, that famous deposition of Ela Mitra and later military rule of 1958; all made me write this novel. Later it seems to

me that a novel can be written based on the political background. (Selina's *Set Free from Fear* 192 quoted in Musa 187) [My translation]

From this quotation, it needs to be mentioned here that Selina's novel *Gayatri Sandhya* foregrounds the theme of self-identity, self-investigation, and existential inquiry of a Bengali nation.

IDENTITY FORMATION

Identity formation has to do with the complex manner in which human beings establish a unique view of self and is characterized by continuity and inner unity. It is related to terms, such as the self, self-concept, values, and personality development. *The Struggle of Recognition* has recently emerged as a powerful paradigm. The theme of the struggle for identity formation is at the intersection of different areas of human sciences: philosophy, gender studies, critical theory, discourse analysis, literature, etc. According to Axel Honneth (1992), the core of any public sphere is always a struggle for recognition. Nancy Frazer (2004) has talked about a *Recognition Theoretical Turn* to foster a tendency to tackle many pressing real-life issues –such as discrimination, exclusion, social justice, political equality, and gender equality– in terms of the struggle for identity formation and against all forms of disrespect.

At the core of the struggle for identity formation paradigmatically, we find the question of identity formation, self-realization and subjectivation. Those engaged in a struggle for identity formation are struggling against institutionalized patterns of value that sustain and reinforce various mechanisms of exclusion. Individuals are struggling against those institutionalized patterns of value because they strip them of dignity and subordinate them out of existence. Therefore, when they engage in struggles for identity formation, they seek to redress injustices as much as to step out of invisibility and to claim their ethical capacity as full right subjects. The struggle for identity formation may take different forms, which can be classified into two categories: argumentation and violence. These two forms are exclusive; we can come across many examples when the struggle for identity formation is both argumentative and violent. Some struggles for identity formation seek reconciliation and a viable consensus, while others may refuse the idea of consensus and seek instead to perpetuate an agonistic confrontation.

In this concern, I agree with E. H. Erikson (1968) who opines that,

“Identity” and “identity crisis” have in popular and scientific usage become terms that alternately circumscribe something so large and so seemingly self-evident that to demand a definition would almost seem petty, while at other times they designate something made so narrow for purposes of measurement that the over-all meaning is lost, and it can just as well be called something else. (Erikson 15)

GAYATRI SANDHYA AS A REFLECTION OF STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY FORMATION

The first part of *Gayatri Sandhya* has been written from the partition of 1947 to the military rule of 1958. A large number of events are included in the first part of the novel. This period can be regarded as a rise in the identity formation of a Bengali nation. Because the Tebhaga movement was led by Ela Mitra and Ramen Mitra, Comparam Sigh's protest against the discrimination and maltreatment of the landlords, the Tolabati movement, indiscriminate killing of Khagra ward in Rajshahi jail, the advent of the language movement, impeachment against language protestors, students and people's participation in the language movement, recognition of a state language, election of 1954, winning of the united front, Kagmari movement, the constitution of 1956, communal riots, and military rule of 1958 and so on have faithfully been presented in this novel. These events help the Bengali nation awaken and struggle for identity formation. In this concern the novelist writes:

I have no ability to think of this period; rather I have a painful experience. Whether I will come out successful or not; is my conflict. Pakistan which was emerged from the sense of religious commonality; for the Bengalese has struggled to establish their existence as identity formation. (Hossain 10 quoted in Musa 190)

The British have divided the Indian subcontinent into two states: India and Pakistan. In Pakistan, the two states are born: East Pakistan and West Pakistan. Due to the communal and religious riots between Hindus and Muslims, the family members of Ali Ahmed and Nashrulla leave their parental estate in the Rangamati village of Murshidabad. Loosing sixteen family members due to the Hindu-Muslim riots, they are accompanied by Hamida (alias Kalo Khala). A modest and humble son Fazle Gazi is also accompanied by her. Headmaster Nashrulla's wife Hasna Begum and two sons, called Mofizul and Tariqul. Their destination is to reach Nachol. On the other hand, Ali Ahmed's son Pradipta. And, his wife Puspita suffers from spawning on the way. The destination of Ali Ahmed is to reach Rajshahi. Meanwhile, Puspita gives birth to another child named Pratik Ahmed while she is travelling from Rohanpur railway station to Rajshahi by train. Selina Hossain has written her novel *Gayatri Sandhya* based on the family members of Ali Ahmed through plot construction and art of characterization. The rise of a sovereign state called

Bangladesh and the bloody struggle for establishing self-existence have been unveiled through the sacrifices of Ali Ahmed's family members.

While Ahmed enters East Pakistan, he realizes the identity crisis of a nation. As a Muslim, the identity crisis of a nation, as well as a humanistic crisis, are too much with his mind and sensibility. He takes a teaching service after coming to Rajshahi. While he teaches Rabindranath in the class, he says: "Rabindranath is the soul of Bengalese. It is the 'I' of our existence which will be demolished with him" (Selina 31). On hearing his statement, students whisper that he is a *Malawian*. He never imagines that in a Muslim state that he will be regarded as a *Malawian*. But he does not seem to be disheartened. He wholeheartedly advocates the language movement led by students who participate in the procession on the streets. A wave of new peace and a new state makes his mind enliven his vital power. He dreams of how a Bengali nation will form their identity and will build up an independent state.

Not only students but also common people participate in the Tebhaga movement led by Ela Mitra and Ramen Mitra; on the other hand, Comparam Singh leads the Tolabati movement together with the poor farmers. Muslim league government takes cruel steps to ban their protest. Their maltreatment and cruelty turn into a devastating shape. In this regard, the novelist comments:

The rule of the Muslim League Government is imposed on the country. Men will not be permitted to speak freely. They are conspiring to withstand the struggle for human rights. Ela Mitra had been taken into hospital in a dying condition while he was maltreated and tortured at Thana last week. They are informed of Ela's physical condition by the jail authorities. Hearing his critical situation, everybody gets angry and feels sympathy for him. But the state prisoner has nothing to do? He knows nothing about whether people protest or not. No news comes to him through jumping the high wall. Many people criticize Muslim League Government. Is it a Muslim state? (Hossain 113 quoted in Musa 191)

Muslim League Government not only maltreats and discriminates but also creates a crisis for artificial products in East Bengal for the interest of the capital of West Pakistan. As a result, famine and lamentation break out throughout East Bengal. Many people in grouping run away to the city for a handful of rice. The price of necessary products is on the increase day by day. They suffer from depression. The dream which makes people establish Pakistan breaks into pieces. The political conspiracy of the Muslim League Government is clearly understood even by the common people. In this concern, the novelist writes:

The mother said that they would not have any paucity in Pakistan. They did not establish a new state to get sorrows and suffering. But sorrows are too much with them. Ohi does not understand many things why these are getting happened. Man cannot live through hope and dream. (Hossain 150 quoted in Musa 192)

On the other hand, Ali Ahmed is transferred to Dhaka. The central government of Pakistan takes dangerous steps to break the political spine of the Bengalese. Not only that, the government decides to demolish their struggle for identity formation through cultural aggressive policy and practice. The government prepares to impose the Urdu language on the people instead of the Bengali language. He declares that Urdu shall be the state language of East Pakistan, and the Roman alphabet will be used instead of the Bengali alphabet throughout East Bengal. A revolutionary and fairy protest spreads out across the country. Students build up movements to protect the existence of Bengalese as well as the prestige of the Bangla language. All classes of people participate in that movement. The Pakistani army take all preparations to ban the movement. 144 section is issued to ban the movement, but students violate the section and participate in the procession on the streets. The police shoot at them and instantly Salam, Rafiq, Barkat, and Jabbar sacrifice their lives in the procession. Their names are glorified in the golden page of history. Moreover, many young boys are shot down on the streets; whose names are still unknown to Bangladeshi. One of the revolutionary characters Mofijul of the novel also gets martyred in the language movement. Father Nashurallh did not find out his dead body. As a representative of the grass root people, Ohiullah Ohi also gets martyred. A preliminary pillar of the nation's existence and identity formation is grounded through their sacrifices and bloody struggle. This political progress is grounded in the tremendous victory of the Joint Front in the election of 1954. In this regard, Selina Hossain has expressed her strong desire by portraying the character of Ali Ahmed thus:

21 February is getting turned into hope and ambition among the minds of the people of East Bengal. On that day the conspirators break Shaheed Miner; but how will they suppress the emotion of the human heart? A large Shaheed Miner has been built up in the essence of the nation. Ali Ahmed feels excitement in his mind. After observing the results of the election, he does not get astonished. It makes his sense clear what must be, what must be. The Joint front wins in the election by getting a majority of votes. Shere-e-Bengala Fazlul Huq is the Chief Minister. (Hossain 205 quoted in Musa 193)

The first democratic victory of Bengali nationalism commences through the results of the 70' election. (Khan 53 quoted in Musa 193) The Pakistani government began to witness this concerted victory as fear and suspicion. (Rahman 43 quoted in Musa 193) The army began to seek out a new trick on how the Bengalese can be suppressed and controlled. The Joint Front Government was compelled to defeat and get themselves involved in communal riots through cheat and conspiracy. (Rahman 43) The cabinet was broken out. The rule of the central government was activated in East Bengal by introducing the 92-Kha rule. After a few days, the special counsel of the Awami League was held at Khagmari to violate the Pakistani rule. The seed of a free sovereign Bangladesh is germinated through this meeting. According to the utterance of Syed Shaheb:

Firstly, there is an international character in this convention. That is the global brotherhood and milestone of freedom. Secondly, our cultural identity has been enlivened in front of all and sundry from the grass-root level of our country. To enlarge our cultural identity through these concerted efforts is very essential. What I have realized in this concern is that this convention is very non-sectarian. Bengali language would be prosperous through the Hindu-Muslim concerted efforts. (Hossain 237 quoted in Musa 193)

Pakistani military rule was imposed on the Bengalese just after one year of the Khagmari convention. All sorts of political functions were banned. Though the people of East Bengal were temporarily getting weakened due to this military rule, it did not stop. The demo culture which was created in the mind of the people through the Khagmari convention began to spread out across the state. The Bengalese realize that there are no alternative means without bloody war if they want to get rid of colonial rule and military oppression.

The second part of *Gayatri Sandhya* has been written based on the period from the year 1959 to 1969. During this period the rise of a free sovereign state named Bangladesh is established. However, history can never be literature. The novelist has turned history into literature through her profound realization and artistic essence. To compose a genre based on recent history is very difficult where a writer has to go into the deeper meanings of historical sense through deconstruction. In this sense, Bangladeshi novelist has enabled to discover a bond and/or bridge between history and literature to awaken the national identity of the people of Bangladesh. Selina's ageless novel *Gayatri Sandhya* may be deemed as an epoch-making creation. She has prioritized historical facts and events, gory struggles, and profound love for freedom instead of history in detail.

The military rule of 1958 is significant in the political history of Pakistan. The political leaders staying in India in 1947 who took shelter in a new state had no electoral zone of their own. Because they thought that their effects on the democratic system would be limited. Due to the corrupt political system, the military rule stimulates the Bengalese into darkness. Human creativity gets demolished, and individual life crushes and is confined to a dark zone.

Nasib Hafizuuddin is determined to quit this painful and bloody struggle in the lives of the Bengali nation. After nine months of bloody struggle with the Pakistani army, the peaceful and independent Bengali nation can establish a free and independent state. A protesting sense is seen in the mind of the Bengalese against military rule. "The function of a movement is held to tackle the military oppression and rule. This movement aims to have repealed military rule from the state. In this concern, Shaheed Shoharardi will deliver his speech regarding the withdrawal of military rule from Karachi" (Hossain 301).

Students also prepare to take an active part in the movement. It is decided that the movement will commence on 21 February 1962. But all types of activities are denied. The reason is that Shaheed Shoharardi is arrested on 30 January from Karachi by the Pakistani criminal investigation department. The people become revolutionary on hearing the news of arresting Shoharardi. (Hossain 302)

To ban the movement, the military rulers arrest the editor of the *Daily Ittefaq* Manik Mia and the supreme political leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The movement gets worsened and dire. Being elected President Ayyub Khan forms a constitutional commission through fundamental democracy. According to that constitution, the date of the general election is announced on 1 March 1962. Students reject their election, and the Awami League and NAP also decide to reject the general election. While the education commission report is submitted, students call for hartal throughout the country intending to avoid false and fake reports. The movement gets more worsened and more dangerous.

The autocratic government plots to ban this movement. As a result, the communal riots between two nations, Muslim and Hindu. The riots of the Indian subcontinent hardly spread out from religious concerns; rather dirty politics is utterly responsible for this dire crisis. Many people of both castes get themselves involved in mass killing. The Pakistani Bihari kill many innocent children, men and women. In this regard, the novelist utters: "Vhuban lies unconsciously on the ground; being dried, blood has blackened. His harmonium is broken; a pair of drums is broken into pieces" (Hossain 336). Yet the

colonial conspirators fail to ban the movement. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman announces six points demands at Laldighi ground in Chittagong. The movement breaks out throughout the country. Ali Ahmed reacts regarding the six points demands thus: "New wave of Bay of Bengal hurts due to human thoughts if six points demands are exposed in front of the crowd. Reading the booklet, Ali Ahmed tells Pradipta, Pakistani politics is a dire and violent blasting, Dipu" (Hossain 377). Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is inhumanly tortured. He is charged with impeachment and a case is filed against him. A mass movement spreads out across the country. According to Selina Hossain:

On 24 the street is overcrowded. A mass rising spread out. Police, E.P.R cannot tackle the crisis. The army fires on them indiscriminately. At first Ruston sacrifices his life in front of Secretary gate. The procession goes ahead. Again, fire on! This time a student of class ten named Motiur is shot down. (Hossain 439).

On the other hand, one of the accused in the Agartala Conspiracy case is Serjeant Jahurul Haque is killed by shooting at Cantonment. In this circumstance, the protesting meeting is held throughout Dhaka city; all classes of men, women and children participate. Moreover, following the assassination of Sergeant Zahurul Haq in jail, one of the accused convicts in the Agartala Conspiracy Case, on 15 February, students of Rajshahi University began conducting protests. Pakistani police assaulted the students on 17 February. On the same day, the local government implemented section 144 near Rajshahi University on the Natore-Rajshahi Highway. When the students broke the section, the Pakistani army was deployed to shoot them, but Shamsuzzoha approached them and requested the army officers not to fire on them. The soldiers opened fire on him as tensions rose. He was sent to the hospital, where he breathed his last ("Dr Zoha first martyred intellectual". www.bssnews.net). As a mark of appreciation for invaluable sacrifice, a memorial sculpture called "Sfulinga" was erected directly next to the Shahid Shamsuzzoha Hall.

Finally, autocratic rulers are compelled to surrender to the fearless and bold Bengali nation. On 22 February, repealing Agartala Conspiracy Case, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman together with other convicts are set free from the jail. The next day Student Sangram Parishad greets Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Ramna Racecourse ground, where he is hailed as Bangabandhu. This reaction which has been presented in the novel signifies an independent sovereign state called Bangladesh in the golden history of the atlas. For this purpose, the novelist writes: "Student Sangram Parishad greets the Chairman Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as Bangabandhu. Pradipta becomes excited hearing the echoes. He thinks racecourse ground has become a river due to the force of those echoes" (Hossain 445).

On 25 March 1970 Pradipta marries Monjulika through twenty-five paisa as a dowry. All the family members are over delightful. Both Puspita and Ali Ahmed are pleased. Pratik goes to purchase flowers because he wants to decorate their bridal chamber. When he returns home, he comes to know that Ayyub Khan abandons his throne and his power is handed over to General *Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan*. Military rule is imposed on the entire country. Being excited Pradipta tears all flowers that are crushed under his feet. The marriage of Pradipta and Monjulika, the power abandonment of Ayyub Khan, *Yahya Khan's accepting power, and military rule all these events bear a great significance for a free sovereign country called Bangladesh*.

The third part of Selina's novel *Gayatri Sandhya* covers the year 1969 to 1975. The events of this period have played a pivotal role in establishing an independent sovereign state named Bangladesh in the history of the atlas. In this regard, Selina Hossain writes:

This period covers from the year 1969-to 1975, only seven years. But the perimeter of a period will not be accounted for this year. During this period Bangladesh was born as a sovereign state. This period is a supreme time for the Bengalese. They have achieved a territory for the people of all religions, where a better sound echoes every day in *Gayatri Sandhya*. This territory epitomizes dreams and ambition for a nation. (Hossain 460)

The identity formation of a Bengali nation together with dreams and expectations is unveiled through the bloody struggle for liberation. Bangladesh was born as a free sovereign state in the atlas. The main inspiration of its liberty is to focus on democracy, freedom of speech, individual freedom, and socio-economic amity and equity. Bangladesh fails to fulfil its dream just after achieving freedom from Pakistan. Democracy diverges; freedom of speech, and individual freedom is blockaded. Political chaos spreads out just after achieving freedom due to national and global conspiracy. Politically plotters plan to uproot the history of the liberation war of Bangladesh.

The first president of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and most of his family were killed during the early hours of 15 August 1975 by a group of young Bangladesh Army personnel who invaded his Dhanmondi 32 residence as part of a coup d'état (Basar 2017). Minister of Commerce Khondaker Mushtaq Ahmad immediately took control of the government and proclaimed himself president. The assassination marked the first direct military intervention in Bangladesh's civilian administration-centric politics (Kollol 2015). His death plunged the nation into political turmoil. The coup leaders were soon

overthrown and a series of counter-coups and political assassinations paralyzed the country. Order was largely restored after a coup in 1976 that gave control to the army chief Ziaur Rahman. Declaring himself president in 1978, Ziaur Rahman signed the indemnity ordinance, giving immunity from prosecution to the men who plotted Mujib's assassination and overthrow. (Maniruzzaman 119)

The third part of Hossain's novel *Gayatri Sandhya* has presented some remarkable events, including the legal framework order of Yahya Khan, a tidal wave of 12 November 1970, the election of 1970, the oration/speech of 7 March delivered by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the announcement of liberation, indiscriminate mass killing of 25 March, liberation war, intellectuals killing of 14 December, Naxal movement, the famine of 1954, the killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and so on. All these historical events and facts have faithfully been presented.

The common people did not accept the announcement of the election of 1970; on the contrary, they protested against the order of Yahya Khan. Through this declaration, Ali Ahmed ensures that the military is approaching. The entire nation is going to fall into a great dilemma. The crowd participates in the procession and the racecourse ground is overcrowded. In the convention, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declares: "Referendum will be held on account of the impending election on behalf of sovereignty rule" (Hossain 480). [My translation] Mass movement of 1969, revocation of the Agartala Conspiracy Case, after the failure of round table assembly, the popularity of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman reaches the pinnacle. A devastating tidal wave hits the southern part of the country on 12 November 1970. Consequently, 10-12 lacks of men, women, and children lose their lives. Yet the Pakistani government did not take any steps to save their lives during natural calamity. The people of East Bengal realise the negligence of the central government and are very much angry and revolutionary. Mawlana Vaswani calls for a meeting at Paulton; and declares a movement against the Pakistani government. Vaswani gives a slogan "Long live Free East Pakistan?" After three days, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman expresses his hatred attitude toward the central government in a protesting convention. The Naxal movement is a remarkable chapter in the history of the liberation war.

Without deconstructing the main theme of historical facts, Selina Hossain has written the novel. She has presented the perfect picture of the liberation movement through the experience of Pradipta and Monjulika while they travel at Sonakhali. Monjulika's uncle Kuddus stabs the president and he instantly dies on spot. Here the novelist writes: "He has a practiced hand; he knows where to pose. He stabs the neck of the president sharply, and bleeds through gush. His head is separated from body while he cries out violently" (496). Finally, the general election is held in Pakistan. The result of the election was previously conjectured. Awami league gets one hundred sixty seats out of three hundred seats in the national Parishad election. But in West Pakistan Awami league did not get any seats. At Raman racecourse ground, the elected members of the Awami League pledge in front of the crowd. The government procrastinates in hand overing the power to the league due to the conspiracy of Bhutto.

Following political deadlock, Yahya Khan delays the convening of the assembly – a move seen by Bengalis as a plan to deny Mujib's party, which forms a majority, from taking charge. On 7 March 1971 Mujib calls for independence and asks the people to launch a major campaign of civil disobedience and organize armed resistance at a mass gathering of people held at the Ramna Race Course Ground in Dhaka. (Hossain 2013)

The struggle now is the struggle for our emancipation; the struggle now is the struggle for our independence. Joy Bangla! Since we have given blood, we will give more blood. God-willing, the people of this country will be liberated ... Turn every house into a fort. Face the enemy with whatever you have. (Sen 325-326)

Mujib's speech gave the important message to the people that they would have to fight their final battle for independence. Pakistani military junta was not going to hand over power to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in a democratic manner. They already cancelled the first session of the newly elected assembly to be held on 3 March.

Tikka Khan (known as a butcher in Baluchistan) is appointed as a Governor of Bengal to tackle the Bengali nation. The chief justice of East Pakistan denies taking an oath without the permission of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The Pakistani government realizes the mentality of the East Pakistani. The Bengalese take preparation for the struggle which is the final weapon for protecting the country. On 25 March at midnight Pakistani army indiscriminately fire on innocent people like hyaenas. Thousands and thousands of men, women and children are killed either at home or on the street wherever they are found. Shops and houses are burnt with fire through pouring petrol and kerosine. Revolution is seen among the police force and E.P.R. Meanwhile Bangladesh Radio broadcasts: I, Major Zia, on behalf of our great national leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, declare the independence of Bangladesh. Through this declaration, the struggle for liberation war spreads out across the country. Pradipta together with Pratik joins the battle filled with the trick and intelligence of Bulu

Das. The Pakistani force are compelled to surrender to the freedom fighters due to their utmost protection, face to face war, and guerrilla attack on 16 December 1971. But on 14 December 1971 Ali Ahmed along with many intellectuals are untraced. On 10 January 1972, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman returns to the country. He calls for all and sundry to have devoted to building up the country with their concerted efforts. But all of a sudden law and discipline begins to get deteriorated throughout the country. National Socialist Party rises and takes an active part in dirty politics. Famine breaks out throughout the country in 1974 on account of a national and international conspiracy. In the meantime, the defence force is established. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman fails to bring peace and happiness to the country despite more than one modification in the constitution.

It needs to mention here that the novelist has presented those historical facts through the family members of Ali Ahmed. Though Selina Hossain's great epic trilogy *Gayatri Sandhya* is written based on direct history, its main purpose is to uphold self-enquiry, self-existence, identity formation, and self-discovery of a Bengali nation. This is certainly a reflection of Bengali nationalism which is perpetual and ceaseless. Though the orator of nationalism and founder chairman of the Awami League, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman sacrifices his life for the greater welfare of the entire nation, it does not end. This legendary figure will begin to bear a glaring example for generation after generation for all times and all ages indeed.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Though the novel *Gayatri Sandhya* fosters innumerable characters, it is not character-based. It is an episodic novel. The art of characterization has been given priority for the necessity of the episode. But most characters have been portrayed symbolically and meaningfully. From the first part to the second part of the novel, the character of Khalo Khala is symbolic in terms of historical facts. Khalo Khala exists still now losing everything; similarly, does today's Bangladesh. The second son of Ali Ahmed is Pratik who symbolizes future conflicts and chaos. Modan of Rajshahi also signifies a Hindu-Muslim friendship. Selina's novel can be regarded as a novel dimension in the field of Bangla literature. On the other hand, Ali Ahmed is the major character in *Gayatri Sandhya* who is the protagonist. This character seems to be the mouth speaker of Selina Hossain herself. He has been portrayed as a practical character to show the struggle for identity formation of a righteous nation. In this regard, the novelist comments:

Then twilight Azan blows over. ... He sees a delighted Gayatri Sandhya in front of himself. Such a twilight he expects, where human prayer for welfare is echoed like melody. An echo of Azan will be heard, everybody will recite the holy scriptures welfare bell will ring out-mosque, temple, shrine, and pagoda will become together. Ali Ahmed steps by step overtop through the foot of Shaheed Minar. He says, 'I would like to fulfill this dream as if religion can be greater than man' (Hossain 551).

The theme, art of characterization, plot construction, and human consciousness being reflected in Selina Hossain's *Gayatri Sandhya* are deemed as an epoch-making creation of modern times. One of the literary critics says: "The novel can be undoubtedly regarded as a modern prose-epic because of its Muslim's expectation, dream, struggle, and memoir of birth in this sovereign state of Indian subcontinent totally" (Musa 203). When Ali Ahmad's family members build their first residence in Rajshahi after the partition, their conflict was over not having their homeland.

The conflict has been repeatedly manifested in various sectors of socio-economic, and political inequalities. In Rajshahi, the Muslim League calls him an Indian spy, a communist and a Malayan. He did not escape from torture mentally and physically. Even after coming to Dhaka, he has to endure all these. The independent expression of the consciousness of 21 February 1952 has been hindered in many ways. His contradiction in consciousness makes the fact that Ahmed seems to be homeless at the weakest moment, but it can be expressed here that it is a contradiction in a society where people are disillusioned and prevented from following their history and tradition. In the name of religion, society imposes chains on its citizens. The battle to break all those chains had been going on for twenty-four years. The affection that Selina Hossain brings to the Bihari-Bengali communal conflict in the context of Syedpur has undoubtedly formed the novel as an epoch-making creation. (Das 2001) Truly speaking, *Gayatri Sandhya* is a reflection of the struggle for identity formation of a nation through self-discovery, self-existence, and self-identity.

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