

Enigmatic Arrivals: A postcolonial analysis of Bangladeshi English literature

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Abstract: In *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), V.S. Naipaul evokes a picture of the English countryside of Wiltshire, his residence in England and constantly recalls images of his native Trinidad that are set against the English country atmosphere, ushering the presence of the colony in the post-imperial English countryside. He also attempts to negotiate and reevaluate his colonized 'self' with that of his writer's 'self', shaped by imperial standards, hence, creating a sense of anxiety. Naipaul's anxiety is also seen in the Bangladeshi English writers. While their works challenge the notion that literature can only be produced in one's mother tongue, they are also susceptible to be branded as elitist. If we look at the works of some *littérateurs* who have consciously chosen English for literary purposes, we will find that their works embrace hybridity and challenge uniform national identity but at the same time the works are exclusive. This paper will look into the works of some post-1971 *littérateurs* who endorse postcolonial hybridity and whose conscious choice of English for creative writing challenges the notion of uniform Bengali identity. The paper will also show how elitism and alienation often creep into their works.

V.S. Naipaul in *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987) wishes to sketch a story based on Giorgio de Chirico's painting. He describes the painting as delineating "A classical scene ... a wharf ... the top of the mast of an antique vessel; on an otherwise deserted street in the foreground there are two figures, both muffled ... The scene of desolation and mystery: it speaks of the mystery of arrival ..." (Naipaul, 106). Weaving a story out of this scene remains unaccomplished as Naipaul shifts in his description to a depiction of the English countryside of Wiltshire--his residence in England and constantly recalls images of his native Trinidad that becomes a presence in the post-imperial English countryside. Naipaul also makes an attempt to reevaluate his colonized 'self', shaped by the realities of Trinidad, with that of his writer's 'self', shaped by imperial standards. He positions himself in the book as a hybrid postcolonial writer who is anxious to establish himself in the West and for whom the English language provides "the only energy out of which he can write." (Suleri, 150)

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Naipaul's anxiety is also prevalent in Bangladeshi English writing. Though English has stayed in South Asia for a long time, only a privileged few can access it. For the majority English is an enigma. Moreover, our national identity, centered on Bangla, has discouraged the use of English and hence its status has been that of a foreign language since the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. Quite naturally, creative expression in English has also been discouraged.

The exclusionist nature of English and the antagonism towards the creative uses of the language have confined English literary practice to a small group of writers who mostly belong to the upper echelon of the society. To understand their works, their positioning should be taken into account. Stuart Hall, while analyzing the West Indian diasporic identity, defines positioning as one's attempt to forge his/her identity by continual negotiation between the fractured identities of the past ("The past continues to speak to us") and the dictates of the present. (Hall, 395)

Bangladeshi English writers also attempt similar negotiations. On the one hand they provide a challenge to what Sankaran Krishna describes as the "fixation with producing a pulverized and uniform sense of national identity (usually along majoritarian lines)" by opting to write in English (Krishna, xvii) while, on the other, their works give the impression of elitism. Bangladeshi English writing can be analyzed by contextualizing Tabish Khair's analysis of Indian English fiction in *Babu Fictions* (2001).

Naipaul in *The Enigma of Arrival* speaks from a position that Bhabha identifies as "... the uncertain interstices of historical change: from the area of ambivalence between race and sexuality; out of an unresolved contradiction between race and class; from deep within the struggle of psychic representation and social reality" (Bhabha, 113). Bhabha's analysis refers to the negotiation that the colonized made with the hegemonic colonial social order to form their psycho-social identity. The Indian migrants in the Caribbean also made similar negotiations. Naipaul is aware of these negotiations: "... the past for me—as colonial and writer—was full of shame and mortifications" (Naipaul, 267). Hence he adopts liminality ("Yet as a writer I could train myself to face them") that gives him scope to acknowledge the impact of Trinidad in his formation as a writer (Naipaul, 267). He is able to take an aesthetic distance from the pastoral England he sketches in *The Enigma of Arrival*.

Naipaul is able to give a fascinating account of the English country-side as his "ideas bred essentially out of empire, wealth and imperial security" and as he settles "in the valley, in that cottage, the grounds of the manor," he realizes that "the language" he used and the "vocation and ambition" he had all belonged to the empire (208). Such overpowering imperial presence forms the theme of the book. Naipaul realizes that without propitiating the "metropolitan audience" he would not be able to establish himself as a writer (167). Hence he adopts the

English pastoral tradition. Naipaul also acknowledges his birthplace Trinidad:

... the island--- with the curiosity had awakened in me for the larger world, the idea of civilization, and the idea of antiquity ... the island had given me the world as a writer ... given me the themes ... had made me metropolitan. (Naipaul, 167)

The quote suggests that the island taught him to be “metropolitan” to cope with the postcolonial realities confronted by a writer from the colony.

Rob Nixon, in his analysis of *The Enigma of Arrival*, says that “Naipaul savors the irony of his liminal postcolonial presence between the two estates--the colonial plantation that was his grandparents’ destiny and the English manorial grounds long sustained by the wealth drawn from such foreign properties” (Nixon, 103). The quote refers to Naipaul’s positioning himself differently from that of the British writers, a position that Bhabha calls hybridity. This hybrid positioning creates anxiety that is endemic to postcolonial authorship. Such anxiety stems from the realization that the former colonized (as writer) must acknowledge his colonial past to deal with the present, shaped by the ‘metropolitan’ West and also must use the colonizer’s language to connect between the man and the writer.

Naipaul’s embracing of hybridity and his anxiety are also shared by the Bangladeshi English writers. If a general premise of postcolonial hybridity is to conform to an identity that is a continual negotiation between the racial and cultural identity one is born with and the identity that emerges from one’s interaction with the West, then the innocent acceptance of English as the language to produce Bangladeshi literature becomes problematic.

In *Babu Fictions*, Tabish Khair questions the celebration of liminality in Indian English Writing. Indian English literature, Khair says, is “pervaded by the element of alienation in it” (Agarwal, 75). The novelists writing in English in India, Khair argues, are all from “the upper strata of life” (ibid) and their attempt to represent India becomes problematic if “the socio-economic line of division ... conceptualized in terms of the opposition between Coolie (subaltern) and Babu classes” is taken into consideration (Khair, ix). As the elites (‘Babus’) have access to Western culture and their language, they often misrepresent the ‘Coolie classes’ who are “non-English speaking, not or not significantly ‘westernized’ ... culturally marginalized and, often, rural or migrant-urban populations” (ibid).

Khair is also critical of the celebration of hybridity and exile in the Indian English fictions. Using Aijaz Ahmad’s idea that Third World literature inflates “the choice of immigration into a rhetoric of exile,” he argues that a writer living in a provincial town in India should be considered an exile as he is “divorced from Indian English writing facilities, contacts, English-language trends, journals, books and information and even a lived experience of the language of

one's choice" (Khair, 67). Khair's argument seriously questions the fashionable embracing of exile. Highlighting the exile, Khair concludes, suggests the alienation of Indian English writers from the Indian society where they never attempt to belong to.

Similarly Khair criticizes the postcolonial writers for having embraced hybridity as a "theoretical position ... not just to obscure certain Indian and global realities but ... to escape the negative connotations of being described as alienated" (79). The quote refers to Khair's insistence that hybridity enables the 'Babu' Fiction writers to fit themselves under the rubric of postcolonialism, promoted by the Western academic intelligentsia.

Apart from questioning the notions of exile and hybridity, Khair also questions the Anglophone Indian writer's use of English. Referring to Venkateshwar Rao's analysis of R. K. Narayan, Khair says that the "English language is and will remain a problematic issue in India" (99). He also says that producing authentic Indian dialogue in English is difficult, hence, the writers adopt different techniques, such as, translating "phrases and expressions" literally, concentrating only on "western / Anglophone (urban) Babu sections of Indian or expatriate Indian society" or evolving "a pidgin Indian English" like Rushdie (100). Yet, the writers, Khair says, face "the problem of writing in English about a country whose physical and cultural geographies are yet to be comprehensively mapped by and in (Indian) English" (101).

Khair's view resembles the language debate between Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe. The debate revolves around Achebe's favoring the use of English in Africa and Ngugi's rejecting it as he stresses that language must "carry the content of our people's anti-imperialist struggles to liberate their productive forces from foreign control," an argument similar to Khair's that the language must carry the inspiration of the masses (Pennycook, 269). Khair's criticism of the sub-continental English writing and the language debate between Ngugi and Achebe are both pertinent to the case of Bangladeshi English writing.

Kaiser Haq in the appendix to his book of poetry, *Published in the Streets of Dhaka* (2007) has said that English writing from the subcontinent has always dealt with the question: "Why write in English and not your mother tongue?" (Haq, 151). This question, he says, has affected the writers of the Indian subcontinent since they started using English during the colonial times and has persisted even after the independence of Bangladesh.

The reason behind such antagonism is that the national discourse of Bangladesh is centered on Bangla since the Language Movement of 1952. The culmination of the movement was the Liberation War in 1971, and the passion revolved around Bangla "so much so that when the country became independent in 1971 it came to be known as Bangladesh" (Alam, 321). However, the result of "such nationalistic fervor was that no one writing in English in Bangladesh could hope

to find favor with local publishing houses” (ibid). Hence there have been few Bangladeshis writing in English but one such Bangladeshi who has gained international reputation is Kaiser Haq himself.

For Haq, the debate surrounding English can be tackled if the writer/poet can “keep on questioning his/her relationship with the language used” (Hussein 2007). He also suggests that sub-continental poetry in English can only be appreciated for “its irony and satire, the quality of its imagery, its use of the Indian voice” (Haq, 155). Haq also embraces hybridity to illustrate what he calls the “complexities” of Bengali “cultural inheritance” (156). To understand the nature of Haq’s poetic philosophy one must take into consideration the colonial legacy that has affected the literary politics in Bengal.

Clinton B. Seely in his introduction to *The Slaying of Meghanada* (2004) says that the work: “... calls attention to the clash as well as the accommodation of cultures that took place in South Asia at the height of the two hundred years of her colonial period” (Seely, 1). Kaiser Haq inherits Michael Modhusudhm Datta’s legacy as his works are an ample proof of cultural accommodation with attempts to fuse Western rationality and Eastern romanticism.

Haq’s awareness of the colonial legacies of English and also the claptraps of writing in English is evident in the article “The Story of Indo-Anglian Poetry” where he mentions the tendency among the Bengali bourgeoisie to reject Indian English poetry as “attempts to ape western literary models and mimic western culture ...” (Alam, 322). Haq cites an example of dalits celebrating Macaulay’s birthday that serves as proof that English has not left the Indian sub-continent with the end of European colonization (Hussain 2007). Hence, for Kaiser Haq, English does have a strong claim in Bangladesh to be used for creative expression.

It is important to note that Haq’s poetic stance is clearly that of a Bangladeshi and the fact that he has translated the works of two modern major poets of Bangladesh, Shamsur Rahman and Shahid Qadri, proves his close relation with the tradition of Bengali literature, thus, making him different from the advocates of exile and multiculturalism who are criticized by Tabish Khair.

Hybridity emerges in Haq’s poetry naturally because of his background (He teaches in the English Department of Dhaka University, he pens poetry in English and he has also fought in the Liberation War of 1971). In writing in English from the Bangladeshi perspective, Haq rejects the fashionable embrace of exile as is seen in the poem “Published in the Streets of Dhaka”: “What are we to do, Mr. Vidal? / Stop writing, and if we do, not publish? / Join an immigration queue, hoping / To head for the Diaspora dead-end / No way. Here I’ll stay, plumb in the centre / Of monsoon-mad Bengal ...” (Haq 31). The lines express Haq’s strong rejection of migration. Haq’s insistence that he will stay “plumb in the center / Of monsoon-mad Bengal” and will proudly “be / Published once again in the streets of Dhaka” implies that his roots are in Bangladesh (ibid).

The poems that explicitly express Haq's brilliance in sketching Bangladeshi life are the "Four poems in Subcontinental English" (Alam, 327). The poems "satirize our foibles and prejudices" and are illustrative of Kaiser Haq's natural talent for quipping at the postcolonial realities of Bangladesh. (Alam,324)

"Welcome Tourist Saheb!" is a young man's attempt to lure a tourist but with comic consequences. Culture, for him is "television, cinema, dances and songs" and also going to cinema with "neighbouring daughter" and "singing in bathroom" (Haq, 96-98). "Civil Service Romance" criticizes what Akhtaruzzaman Elias in his "Sanskritir Bhanga Setu" depicts as a vulgar method of romance, popular with the bourgeoisie (Elias, 27). There is also an "implicit satire on bureaucracy and red-tapism": "By the grace of Allah my boss today / is sending me with URGENT file to your section" (Alam, 325).

The other two poems, "Sahara Desert" and "Party Games," are critical of the social rounds. "Sahara Desert" reflects the sexual frustration of urban teenagers ("O Brother, what is life without wife") who "take over New Market every evening to ogle girls since 'viewing is out hobby'" while "Party Games" is "a farcical account of Dhaka's beau monde" whose glitter and glitz fail to conceal the dark and corruptive side of their life (325).

The four poems illustrate Haq's ability to evoke the postcolonial realities of Bangladesh through satire, irony and imagery, vindicating the use of wit to make subcontinental English poetry interesting. Haq also observes Bangladesh with a cosmopolitan outlook in the poems by internalizing the comic aspects of our life.

Hybridity in Haq's poetry is more evident in the satirical poems "East and West: A Plan for World Peace" and "Ode on the Lungi." The first poem contextualizes culture clash by alluding to the act of defecation with allusions to Freud ("the turgid depths of the Unconscious"), Dryden's "MacFlecknoe" ("Can open a trapdoor"), and Derrida ("... all binary oppositions / readily deconstructed in order to show the simple difference between cultures: "EAST IS WASH / WEST IS WIPE!") (Haq, *Transnational Literature*, 1).

"Ode on the Lungi" also trivializes cultural difference by evoking Walt Whitman and telling him to make an attempt to wear a lungi "to a White House appointment" (Haq, "Ode on the Lungi" 2010). The hope to organize "lungi parties," "lungi parades" and to celebrate "an International Lungi Day" is Haq's attempt to ridicule the one-sided nature of global culture while the call for Lungi activism is an attempt to diffuse the "sheer illogicality" of the pronouncement, "clash of civilizations" made by Samuel Huntington (ibid). Hence, the poems become celebrations of hybridity while illustrating Haq's commitment to passionate portraying of Bangladesh.

Haq is sometimes criticized as urban as the Coolie (subaltern) experience seems missing from his poetry though he has written poems like "My Village and I," "A

Peasant's Lament," "Cousin Shamsu, Durzi," depicting the life of the common men (Hussein 2007).

Contrary to Haq's shunning the idea of living abroad and his emotional attachment with Bangladesh, Adib Khan's novel, *Seasonal Adjustments*, shows how exile and hybridity is celebrated, and what happens when Bangladesh is seen from a privileged point-of-view. The novel depicts Iqbal whose marriage with Michelle falls apart and he returns to Bangladesh with his daughter Nadine after an eighteen year-sojourn in Australia. From the very beginning of the visit, he is alienated from the Bangladeshi society.

His visit to Shopnoganj, his native village, is a misadventure and his alienation becomes acute: "Travelling beyond Dhaka is like taking a giant leap back in time" (Khan, 10). Shopnoganj to Iqbal is "a replica of the thousands of villages which confirm to the rural primitivism of Bangladesh" (11). The people he meets there are either like Mateen, evil and spirited religious bigots or simple-minded villagers who are "perplexed" as Iqbal "speaks English but do[es] not live in England" (ibid). His alienation continues as he moves to his family house in Banani, an affluent residential area of Dhaka. Unable to cope with the bourgeoisie norms of the family, he observes them from a distance.

However, it is the blatant stereotyping of the Bangladeshi society that categorizes the novelist as a propagandist of the false notions of exile and hybridity. The stereotyping suggests the narrator's as well as the author's detachment from the Bangladeshi society. The narrator's inability to discern any change in the villages of Bangladesh makes Kaiser Haq say that the narrator only sees Bangladesh "in terms of prefabricated generalizations, stereotypes, caricatures. The sole purpose of his narrative is self-aggrandizement" (Haq 2005).

The elitist narrator mocks the subaltern. The bare-bodied shopkeeper talks about money: "A ten taka note does wonders for his descriptive precision" (107). This description is perilously close to Kipling's orientalizing of India in *Kim*: "The immemorial commission of India," as noted by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (Said, 150). The rickshawallah takes recourse to "fearless feats of giddy manoeuvring" at Nadine's "excitement" when Iqbal undertakes a rickshaw-ride with Nadine (254). The ride is suggestive of the Coolie's (subaltern) relentless serving of the Babu (upper-class) whims.

Another example of degrading the subaltern is the description of the bus journey in the latter part of the novel. The scene involves an old farmer with a goat, attempting to ride the same bus as the narrator. As the farmer tries to convince the bus conductor, his goat sneezes and "A trickle of pale yellow liquid splattered the footpath" (285). Moreover, when the farmer curses his goat it "bleated in protest and shed a load of small black pellets ..." (285-86). The farmer is disgraced as he belongs to the Coolie (subaltern) class and the comedy that Adib Khan attempts to create is "mostly directed at the 'folk' and not at official ('proper English') culture" (Khair, 248).

Hybridity manifests in *Seasonal Adjustments* through the narrator's commitment to the Western values. Iqbal declares that his Australian existence is centered around "Work ... money ... consumerism ... ceaseless striving for professional success and recognition" (7). He is also committed to Western liberalism: "I ... support the Greenies, argue in favor of land rights for the Aborigines, speak in favor of Amnesty International ... continue to vote Labor" (7-8). Moreover, his declaration, "Effortlessly I can slip into cultural roles," enunciates his ability to fit into a hybridized individual (9).

But the tenuous relation with Catholic in-laws disrupts Iqbal's hybridity. He remains an eyesore to them because of his *otherness*. Michelle's relatives also make Iqbal uncomfortable. He feels that they want him to display "a mythical oriental passivity and an inscrutable smile" instead of his scowling, refuting, contradicting and correcting (148). This "cruel demands of cultural dualism" gets under the narrator's skin when his father questions his marriage and his daughter's identity (161). Just as he has an unsettling in-between status in Australia ("I don't have anything to hang on to with conviction, nothing really I can call my own"), the Bangladeshi society also wants him to remain faithful to a singular tradition (117).

Adib Khan is critical of this notion of singular identity. He criticizes the ethnic cleansing of the Biharis just after the Liberation War in the novel. The mentioning of violence against the Bihari community "is in itself commendable, since there is a tendency among Bangladeshis to elide them, as if they were negated by the fact that the Pakistan Army and its collaborators had perpetrated much greater atrocities" (Haq 2005). Australia also pressurizes him to conform to a single identity.

Iqbal decides to fight the foes of hybridity as he continues to suffer the pains of liminal existence: "Do you know what it means to be a migrant? ... You can never call anything your own. But out of this deprivation emerges an understanding of humanity unstifled by genetic barriers." (143)

The postcolonial concepts of exile and hybridity are also the thematic elements of Bangladeshi short stories to be discussed in this paper. The stories deal with different experiences of Bangladeshi life, such as the Liberation War, migration, arranged marriage, the Bangladeshi diasporic experience and are narrated from a privileged point-of-view. The stories are also painstaking attempts to *appropriate* English to the context; regardless of the story being a portrayal of Bangladeshi expatriate life or an individual's coming to terms with the long history of struggle to forge Bangladeshi nationhood.

Syed Manzoorul Islam's "The Mapmakers of Spitalfields" depicts the part of London that many Bengali expatriates call 'home'. The story is about Brothero-Man who is described as "the enigmatic 'mapmaker' of Spitalfields ... whose mission it is to walk down the streets and alleys and into the homes and shops in

Spitalfields, all the while 'drawing the secret blueprint of a new city'" (Chatterjee, "A new literary map for Spitalfields"). Thus he enunciates the experience of the Bengali diaspora living in England.

The narrator confirms Brotherly-Man's exile and hybridity: "... he was a shareng on a ship from the Indies. He must have been one of the pioneer jumping-ship men, who landed in the East End and lived by bending the English tongue to the umpteenth degree" (Islam, 113). Just as the Brotherly-Man has misled the "two blond men in white overalls," he continues to allude to the narrator who looks at the secret life of the Brotherly-Man from a privileged position (107). Hence, he cannot grasp his diasporic struggles completely.

Nonetheless, he searches for him frantically in the Sonar Bangla Café, among the children who rejected him at first but then they accepted him "as a permanent landmark in their playground" (110), among the Bengali youths who "hyped on black-Afro-man's vibes" (111), in Zamshed Mia's shop where Brothero-Man would "run his fingers along the rows of saris" to "hear the secret melodies in the rustles of silk" (113), at Kamal's shop, in Haji Shaheb's grocery and even, in the poet's place .

While Brothero-Man is searched, the narrator describes: "How he loved the rhymes ... Those Bengali ones, learnt from the hums and lullabies of their mothers, were mixing with the *hickory dickory dock* of those English ones" (109-10) and how he would enliven Brick Lane. Brothero-Man symbolizes the Bengali community's struggle to survive the daily grind of an immigrant's life while at the same time continue to weave the hopes of future, a future that can be secured by "drawing the secret blueprint of a new city" (113).

The mapping of exile and hybridity in Khademul Islam's "An Ilish Story" is hidden within the layered tale of the story. The tale unfolds before the readers the horrors of partition and also the traumatic experiences of millions of Bengalis during the War of 1971. Glimpses of the two historical events are stitched together with a narrative in the present tense. The narrator sketches "a brilliant mid-morning on a back verandah in Rayer Bazar" of the month, December (Islam, 76). It is 1972, the War being ended, the narrator is able to recall the horrific events of the War-time uncertainty and angst.

The grandmother's cutting of an *Ilish* provides the backbone of the story. The narrator depicts the cutting of the fish vividly: "Fish scales fly in all directions and a few sizzle upward, float momentarily at the top of their arc, aquamarine and topaz spangles, before gliding down on the cement" (77). The description serves as a preamble to discuss the events of 1947 and 1971. But, the violence and deaths of 1947 and 1971 are not detailed; only glimpses of horror are given.

While the grandmother cuts off the fish's head, she refers to an incident about the killing of a Hindu man during the Liberation War. She talks of the slitting of the

man's throat by the *maulavi* while she "pulls out the slithery guts from the marbled, moist cavity with practiced fingers" with her "agile fingertips worry inside the gaping, boat-shaped abdominal hole, checking and rechecking for detritus" (78). The apocalyptic violence that undid many people during partition and the War of Independence, the story suggests, have reshaped the Bangladeshi nationhood and the Bengali identity: "What unmakes us, makes us" (79).

Dilruba Z. Ara's "Detached Belongings" and Nuzhat A. Mannan's "Branded" are stories written from female perspectives. Hybridity is endorsed by both the writers as they address the plight of women in the society. However, the stories end up speaking only for women belonging to the Babu (privileged) class.

In "Detached Belongings," the narrator is exiled both in the physical and spiritual sense. Married to a Swedish, she leaves her native Bangladesh to be with him and soon discovers his inability to support her emotionally. While suffering from a disease that causes the foetus in the womb to die, she finds Sweden extremely alienating.

Moreover, she is seen as an 'other' while she receives treatment at the hospital: "She was no longer just any foreign woman, but a particular foreign woman with a rare disease" (Ara, 149). Hence her longing for "mashed potatoes with mustard oil, for a refreshing bowl of dal" is met with the suggestion of Western cuisine (152).

Her alienation is doubled when she realizes that her dead child "had the Bible by its head" instead of the Islamic ritual with which she wanted to bury her child. She realizes her terrible isolation: "Had she been at home now, her relatives, neighbours and friends would have been sitting there. They would have lightened the burden" and she also grasps the tragedy of hybrid existence: "She had not only left her country, she had also left her language" (155-156). As she walks out of the hospital, the corridor resembles "a lost route in a no-man's land" suggesting the tragedy of in-between existence that many other postcolonial writers have shown in their works (156).

Nuzhat A. Mannan's "Branded" is a story that criticizes arranged marriage. Ruma, an upper-middle class woman (Babu class), attempts to compromise with her married state and ends up looking at the vagaries of arranged marriage. However, her viewpoint regarding arranged marriage is representative of the privileged class.

She explains her marriage to both an Eastern and a Western audience which is illustrative of her hybridity, but at the same time she exemplifies her alienation from the mainstream society.

Ruma's family status ensures her entrance into the multicultural global society through her marriage with "An Economist at an International Organization" (165-66). This privileging allows Ruma to look at arranged marriage from a

critical point-of-view: She could analyze her marriage as having “a poignantly settled quality. It was indubitably ‘arranged’. The attachment ‘arranged’, the absences ‘arranged’, its meaning ‘arranged’ and its strangeness ‘arranged’” (167). This analysis of hers supposes that the traditionally arranged marriage in the sub-continent is nothing but an institution that denies freedom. This penchant for freedom is only possible in the Babu social context where the “poignantly settled quality” of the bourgeoisie marriages allows the married women to reflect on their condition.

Though a privileged, Ruma is able to see through the constraints in marriage as she is unable to judge her condition in terms of the majority of women of her society. Hence the story remains alienated from the existential realities of the Coolie class. Just as the exilic narrator of “Detached Belongings” represents the privileged hybridized class of Bangladesh, Ruma also represents a class for whom globalization is an everyday fact and so is their alienation from the mainstream Bangladeshi society.

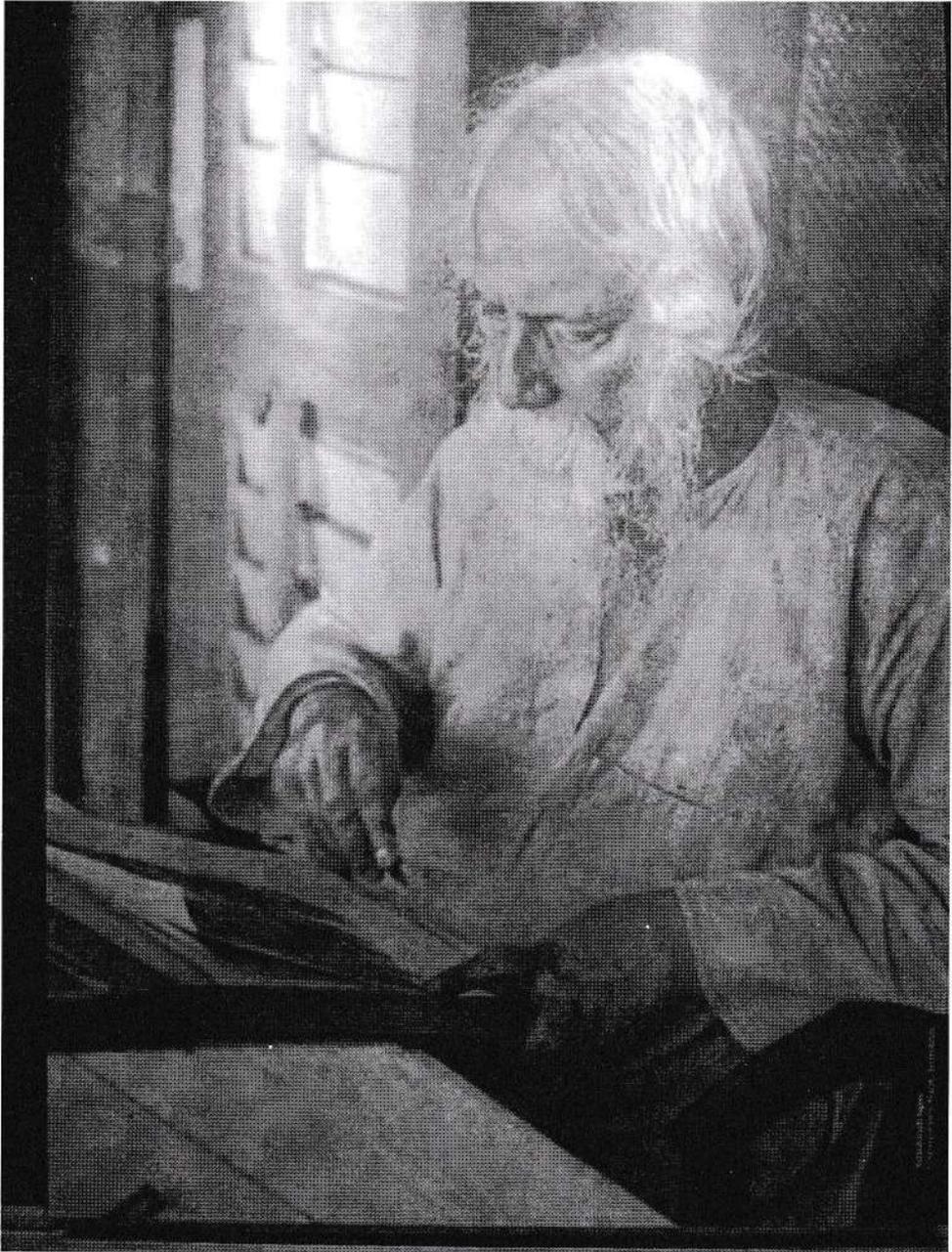
The literary works discussed above also display the problem of language usage that Tabish Khair highlights. To contextualize, the writers either resort to selective translating or use what has come to be known as “Rushdie’s ‘chutney English’” (Khair, 102). Adib Khan provides translations of the Bangla he uses: “*Kee hohbey?* What will become of the boy?” (Khan, 4) and leaves some words like *Mashallah*, *Dhonnobad*, etc. untranslated. Nuzhat A. Mannan translates a well-known Bangla phrase into “... she couldn’t afford to be a frog in the well anymore!” (Mannan, 166) and in “The Mapmakers of Spitalfields,” Soraya shouts at her husband: “*Have you eaten your head or what?*” which in Bangla means to be out of one’s mind (Islam, 111). Khademul Islam scatters Bangla words throughout his narrative with translations: *Taja* (fresh), *mama* (maternal uncle), *paras* (neighbourhoods), *Bhalo* (good), *Khub Bhalo* (very good). Ara’s story shows the narrator’s perpetual estrangement from the mother-tongue along with her physical detachment: “She had not only left her country, she had also left her language” (Ara, 156).

From the above analysis, it can be said that Bangladeshi English writing has continued to emphasize hybridity and exile. Kaiser Haq satirizes the pettiness and drudgery of everyday existence in Bangladesh and provides challenge to the idea that Bangladeshi literature should only be written in Bangla. Adib Khan’s *Seasonal Adjustments* captures the Bangladeshi experience from a bourgeoisie point-of-view. The short stories “An Ilish Story” and “The Mapmakers of Spitalfields” successfully capture the political struggle of the Bangladeshi people and the expatriate experience respectively. “Detached Belongings” and “Branded” bring the problem of women to the fore. While hybridity and exile make Bangladeshi English writing diverse, the experiences depicted in the texts perpetuate detachment and alienation that makes them liable to be criticized as Babu Literature.

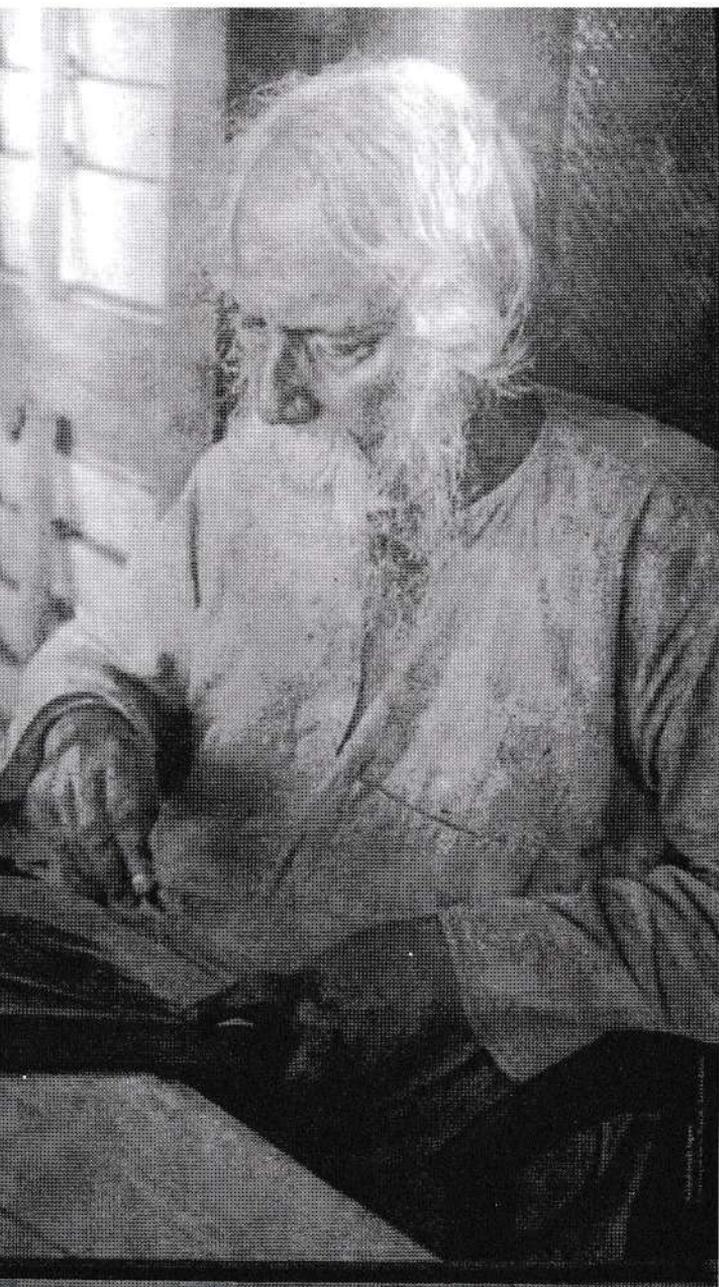
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Rabindranath Tagore at his study.



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