

Translation of Akhtaeruzzaman Elias's "জাল স্বপ্ন, স্বপ্নের জাল"

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

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ID: 2016-1-93-018

Date of Submission: January 10, 2018

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Original Literary Work Declaration

I do hereby solemnly declare that this work has been done entirely by me except for the references which I have acknowledged duly.

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M.A. in English

Title of Dissertation: Translation of Akhteruzzaman Elias's "জাল স্বপ্ন, স্বপ্নের জাল"

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Preface

This dissertation presents the English translation of Akhteruzzaman Elias's story "জাল স্বপ্ন, স্বপ্নের জাল" ("Feign Dream, Dream's Snare"). The introductory chapter of this paper discusses the basic requirements that are needed to translate a text. This chapter also includes an introduction to the author that begins by outlining Elias's life and the latter part deals with the introduction of the text. The second chapter offers the rationale for choosing this text and throws light on the difficulties faced in translating the text. The third chapter presents the English translation of the story. The last chapter proffers concluding remarks and provides bibliography of the works that have been used.

Acknowledgement

This is a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirement of the degree of Master of Arts in English. This thesis includes an English translation of Akhteruzzaman Elias's story "জাল স্বপ্ন, স্বপ্নের জাল" ("Feign Dream, Dream's Snare"). After an intensive period of seven months, today is the day to write this note of thanks. It was a period of intense learning for me, not only in the academic arena but also on the personal level. I would like to reflect on the people who have supported and helped me so much throughout this period. That is why I would like to take this opportunity to convey my heartfelt thanks to all of them.

I am greatly indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Afrin Zeenat, Assistant Professor, University of Dhaka and Adjunct Faculty, East West University, for permitting me to complete this thesis under her supervision. I would like to show my gratitude to her for supervising the dissertation, for providing me continuous support and feedback to complete this research work. This is not the first time I worked under her supervision; I did many other courses that helped me to explore many other sides of literature. I hope, I have been a worthy explorer of the realm she has led me to.

In addition, I am also grateful to Tanvir Ahsan, Assistant Professor, Jagannath University and Adjunct Faculty, East West University, without whom I would not even know the basic difference between a *literal* and a *real* translation, let alone doing a complete short story myself.

Specially, I would like to thank one of my seniors from East West University, Ainul Momen Rafat for his valuable guidance. He definitely provided me with the tools that I needed to choose the right direction and successfully complete my dissertation. Through his care, patience, support and unwavering belief in me, I have been able to complete this long

dissertation journey. He read and offered extensive feedback on my translation. This is partly the fruit of his dedication and my effort. I am really thankful for the help and support that I received from him in my whole academic life at East West University.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to Translation Studies

According to linguists there are five to six thousand languages in this globe. It is not possible to have knowledge of all languages of this world. Most of the translators learn to translate different texts over the years for different purposes such as social needs, political, economic or academic purposes, or simply for pleasure. The task of a translator involves the intended outcome of the language of the translated text that echoes the original one. It can be said that a translator's task is to free a text from the fixed signs of its original shape with a view to making it known to the Target Language (TL) readers. A translated text makes a communicative affiliation among the author, the translator and the readers.

The art of translation is considered as a creative act which requires both adaption and negotiation. In this act of art, translators negotiate between two languages, two cultures, and two different mind sets. This is the process which calls forth a deep understanding of the language they are translating from and a fluency in the language they are translating into. It is an intricate and creative process of acclimatizing one text into a new reality, mediating between the source and target language. Thus, the task of translators is not only complex and challenging but also highly creative. Anton Popovič notes that the translator has the right to differ organically and to be independent (85). Translators need to be independent for the sake of authenticity, if they are reproducing it as a living work. Thus, it can be said that translation is usually a task of solving "context" problems, where creativity "chimes in."

Translation has become a very vital instrument in the realm of multilingual world. The main objective of translating a text is obviously to introduce a Source Language (SL) text to the

audience of the Target Language (TL) text. The objective of translators is to let their target audience know or understand that the SL text has said. Thus, it is imperative for the translators to have the flawless knowledge of both SL and TL. In addition, they must understand the sense and meaning of the original author, as well as the word, speech and tone needed for translation (Dolet 58).

Furthermore, translators should always keep in mind the purpose of translating a text. They should take into consideration the culture and social perception of their target readers. Thus, they need to be careful in choosing dictions. In addition, if necessary, they can omit a few lines which society or their target readers will not appreciate. They should not surrender to the impossible or the untranslatable if they come across a text that has some rules which are non-existent in the Target Language (TL). They should also be efficient in adopting the setting of a foreign country and transforming it into the target reader's setting.

The purpose of offering these thoughts on translation and specifically story translation is to give readers a general idea of this dissertation which will present a translated story (“জাল স্বপ্ন, স্বপ্নের জাল”–“Feign Dream, Dream's Snare”) of Bangladeshi famous writer Akhteruzzaman Elias.

Introduction to the Author:

Akhteruzzaman Elias is one of the most acclaimed Bengali novelists and short story writers. He was born in Gaibandha District on 16 February 1943 and till his death (January 4, 1997) he wrote a number of masterpieces in Bengali literature. His father, Badiuzzaman Muhammad Elias, was a member of the East Bengal Provincial Assembly and Parliamentary Secretary of the Muslim League. Akhteruzzaman Elias earned his Secondary School Certificate from Bogra Zilla School in 1958. Then he was admitted to Dhaka College and from there he successfully passed Intermediate in 1960. He also obtained his graduation and post-graduation degree from the University of Dhaka .

At the beginning of his career, Elias joined as a lecturer at the then Jagannath College and continued to teach there till 1983. Then, he switched his job a number of times as Deputy Director, Directorate of Primary Education, Vice-Principal of Music College, and Professor and Head of the Department of Bangla at Dhaka College. He was also an active member of the Mofizuddin Education Commission and conducted many helpful social activities for the welfare of the students.

Akhteruzzaman Elias is known as one of the prominent fiction writers of Bengali literature. He is particularly noted for his subtle sense of humor, realistic use of dialogue and dialect, and for his Marxist commitment to the lower class in both towns and villages. He began his literary career with a volume of short stories *Onno Ghore Onno Shor (Another Tune in Another Room)* in 1976, though before it his *Chilekothar Sepai (The Soldier in an Attic, 1986)* was published serialized in a national daily. By then he came in limelight as a serious and committed fiction writer. In his life span, he wrote two novels, *Chilekothar Sepai* which portrays the psychological journey of a man during the turmoil just prior to Bangladeshi independence in

1971. This novel also contains what is arguably the most authentic depiction of life in old Dhaka, the ancient and unique part of Dhaka. And the other novel *Khoabnama (Tale of Dreams, 1996)* is a story about the socio-political situation in rural pre-partition Bangladesh. Akhteruzzaman Elias made an indelible impression on Bangladeshi readers. His short stories collections- *Dojoker Om (The Warmth of Hell)*, *Dudhbhate Utpat (No Peace in Milk and Rice)*, *Khoari (Hangover)*, *Jal Shopno*, *ShopnerJal (Feign Dream, Dream's Snare)* were written by him with an active political agenda. His essays collection which includes 22 essays, *Shongskritir Bhangra Shetu (Broken Bridge of Culture, 1997)* published posthumously is also a remarkable addition to our literature.

It is believed that in the realm of Bengali fiction, no one's writing is more distressing yet fascinating like Elias's. His novels and short stories are the embodiment of subtle shades of human characters, depiction of physical and psychological detail, intense sense of wit and humor, and humorous treatment of hypocrisy. Elias very wittily uses colloquial language and aesthetic articulation in his writing which makes him exceptional in Bengali literature. He very vividly observed and explored all classes and their consciousness belonging to various strata in society. Elias's stories are the complete pact of powerful characters, who are the subaltern in the society; he also unmask the mask of the oppressors through penning their thoughts and activities.

Akhteruzzaman Elias received a number of distinguished awards among them Humayun Kabir Smriti Puraskar (1977), Bangla Academy Sahitya Puraskar (1983), Alaol Sahitya Puraskar (1987), Ananda Puraskar (1996), Sa'dat Ali Akhand Puraskar (1996), Kazi Mahbubullah Gold Medal (1996), and Ekushey Sahitya Padak (1999, posthumous) are notable. Some of his works have been translated into several foreign languages. *Chilekothar Sepai* has been rendered into a film.

Introduction to the Text “জাল স্বপ্ন, স্বপ্নের জাল” (“Feign Dream, Dream’s Snare”):

Most of the works of Elias blends past and present together. According to Elias, the past cannot be simply ignored because the present is constructed from the past and at the same time it helps us to communicate with the future. “No matter whether it is in East or West Bengal, you cannot find another writer like Akhteruzzaman Elias. His vivid observation of all the classes, knowledge about history, genuine objectivity, use of colloquial language and humor made him an incomparable writer. If I could write something like him, I could feel really proud.” -

Mahasweta Devi commented while talking about Elias’s works.

“Feign Dream, Dream’s Snare” is a fiction which is the interflow of pre, post, and during independence. Thus, time always appears as a protagonist in most of the Elias’s literary works. In “Feign Dream, Dream’s Snare” Elias shows the Bengali nationalistic movement that led to the Liberation War. The Liberation War took place because of the oppression of the West Pakistan but after getting independence, oppression against the masses took a new shape.

The critical political history of this region and the never-ending struggles of the mass people are simultaneously present in his writings. In this fiction, one of the leading characters Imam Uddin is portrayed as a freedom fighter. Imam Uddin and Lal Mia have been brought up together since childhood and have a very close friendship between them. In spite of a very close friendship between them, Lal Mia supports Najir Ali, the Rajakar* during independence. Though, Lal Mia shows his concerns for the safety of Imam Uddin and his family, he also shows his subservience towards power. Lal Mia is a character who always takes the side of power for his own survival and benefit. Even after independence, he also shows his subservience towards Power in forming legacy and oppression of Najir Ali. Imam Uddin and his son Bullet are the

victims of society. Imam Uddin died for the freedom of this country and his wife was also killed by the Pakistani Army for being the wife of a freedom fighter. But, in spite of being the son of a martyred freedom fighter, Bullet has been brought up under Lal Mia's supervision without getting any kind of help from the society and people for the betterment of his future. He used to live in a house which was allotted by some freedom fighters after independence. But, Najir Ali plans to take the possession of the house and ultimately he would take the possession because of his power and money. Thus, Bullet has been portrayed as the embodiment of oppressed, whose past, present, and future would have been robbed by the oppressors. Bullet gets no return in spite of sacrifice of his parents for this country rather the provokers are benefited hugely after independence.

In fact, Elias's stories are seemed unfinished which create a sense of curiosity and an incomplete sensation. Elias's short stories can be defined to the tune of Tagore, "it ended, yet it did not." However, time in Elias's literary works moves in circles and the dead find an afterlife in the body and the consciousness of the living. After Imam Uddin's death, his son, Bullet becomes the embodiment of oppression but the difference is that Bullet's role against the oppressor is always seen passive, whereas Imam Uddin always tried to resist exploitation. Elias shows that in course of time legacy and oppression is defeated. But, the new form of legacy and oppression supersede in our system by the old one. Thus, the destiny of the oppressed or subalterns will remain unchanged because of the overwhelming domineering influence of the new form of oppressive system.

Then, the intermingle of dream and reality is one of the most conspicuous characters of Elias's works. This fiction begins with the description of Lal Mia's dream. Dreams in "Feign Dream, Dream's Snare" appear immensely and abruptly. Dreams in this fiction have significant

interpretations. The old Muslim who appears in the dream of Lal Mia and Bullet may be the incarnation of Najir Ali. In their dreams, the Muslim old man tries to impose his influence on Lal Mia and Bullet; similarly, in reality Najir Ali schemes to take the possession of the inherited house of Bullet after Liberation War and establish legacy over Lal Mia and Bullet. In the end of this fiction, Bullet dreams that the Muslim old man chases him and he tries to run away from him. This indicates that soon he is again going to be victimized and deprived by Najir Ali. After all, at the end of the story Bullet is seen with the old Muslim that remakes his connection with the oppressor and the oppressed (Bullet) and his futile effort to survive from the clutches of oppressor.

However, Akhteruzzaman Elias is the first author who mingled the life of lower stratum of 'Old Dhaka' with an important episode of our history. The conspicuous writing style of Elias makes him different from others. In "Feign Dream, Dream's Snare" Elias introduces many characters and brings in multiple voices in the telling of a story that are usually told from the point of view of one character while the others, being filtered through his eyes, cannot grow independently.

Chapter 2

Significance of this research:

I believe, in the first place, the translation of “Feign Dream, Dream’s Snare” will be the gateway of exploring new idea about Bangladeshi literature. This is the high time to subvert the image of a canonical text like “Feign Dream, Dream’s Snare”, as it depicts the scenery of Bangladeshi Liberation Period. Secondly, familiarizing readers with Bangladeshi writing situation and Liberation War is another intention. Subsequently, I intend to produce a culturally equivalent text where alien elements will be properly introduced to readers. Meanwhile, the translation will be an attempt to bring back fidelity and translucency in translation. Finally, the aim of this research is to make Elias’s ideas well known so that our native speakers as well as foreign speakers can understand their importance and relevance.

In a broader sense, this study intends to show that literature is universal. In addition, the research will be done assuming that through it the writers and readers of Bangla and English Literature will come across a new dimension. Moreover, it is hoped that innumerable Bangla and English readers will be benefitted from this study.

Reasons for Choosing This Text:

Most of the translators do not choose texts randomly. There is always a motive in picking a text. It cannot be denied that selecting the right text is not an easy task. Hence, translators should be observant in choosing texts, especially if the text is from literature. The best thing would be to translate something which is not widely known to the target audience and is helpful for academic researchers.

Akhteruzzaman Elias is a prominent writer in the realm of Bengali literature, but only a few translated works and research are found on Elias's work. In spite of being a very proficient writer, he remains in darkness in the territory of world literature. This translation will not only attract fiction lovers and make them appreciate his talent but also inspire them to translate many other short stories, essays, and novels as well as do their research on Elias. This piece of translation will help readers to understand how they can translate any piece of Bengali literature into English (if they possess competency in English).

The objective of this translation is to introduce Elias to a large group of readers so, it has been thought appropriate to translate one of the most conspicuous fictions named "Feign Dream, Dream's Snare". From this translation, readers will get ideas about Elias's writing style, for example, the use of colloquial language or dialect, the subtle shift of tense (intermingle of present, past, and future), depiction of old and present surroundings, intermingle of dream and reality, historical time-freeze, radical thematic content, representation of the subaltern and their struggle to survive against the domineering class, and so on. Thus, this piece of translation will help the readers to understand Elias's fiction who would not otherwise get the opportunity to read them.

Chapter 3

Methodology:

For this research, an attempt will be made to translate the fiction “Feign Dream, Dream’s Snare”, by Akhteruzzaman Elias. The text which has been selected for this research will be translated from English to Bengali following the conceptual translation method; emphasis would be given on unattainable chase after the exact meaning of words. The grammatical rules will be bent if not violated to meet up the necessity of the translation. However, idioms, phrases, and certain expressions which mark the very signature of an author will be preserved in a way so that the readers get to savor the originality of the writing and get to feel the author’s milieu; yet this would be done in a comparative way, keeping the readers’ native setting in mind so that they do not feel totally alien to them.

Difficulties Faced in Translating the Text:

As I translated the fiction “জাল স্বপ্ন, স্বপ্নের জাল” from Bengali to English “Feign Dream, Dream’s Snare” of which most of the dialogues are being delivered in colloquial language of ‘Old Dhaka’, I faced difficulties in understanding the dialogues, choosing diction since there are many local words in the text for which I could not find any suitable words in English, and struggle with subtle shift of tense. I had to depend on my own understanding of the fiction and skills and knowledge.

In this fiction, dialogues are rendered in pure dialects of one form or another. The voice of the narrator seeks to assume that of a character’s colloquial words, expressions and idioms that are introduced into narration. This happens quite often. Voice in the narration keeps shifting between different characters and refuses to go by the dictates of standard language. In Elias’s stories, it is impossible to deny the vividness of different language forms which are present with their challenging realities. This fiction differentiates itself from those with one unitary model of the standard form.

Consequently, I had to look for alternative words and had to write and rewrite different lines and dialogues to arrive at the best word(s), sentence(s), and dialogue(s). For this reason, I had to consult both English and Bengali dictionaries, search the internet and sometimes even check grammar books. Moreover, the subtle changes of tense sometimes made me too confused, for this I had to read and re-read the text for a number of times to translate it in accordance with the shift of tense of the Bengali text. But, as I went deeper into his language, I was a bit alarmed. The sole purpose of my second reading was to be better equipped for starting off the translation.

I could not get hold on of any criticism of this writer and library did not have anything on him in its collection. I endeavored to get material from online journals but that too did not work out. So, I was entirely on my own with this paper. My only sources were the supervision of Dr. Afrin Zeenat and random reviews posted by readers on the internet.

In the beginning, I found my translation sounded too literal and appeared as boring and uninteresting. Thus, I made every endeavor to make the text sound more interesting and vivid, for this I had to redo my version over and over again.

Chapter 4

Feign Dream, Dream's Snare

“Having turned my neck right then left for salaam, I saw a man of seventy saying his prayer next to me. He was seventy or seventy five years old. Not seventy-five, it seems, he was eighty or eighty-five. Could be ninety.”

“Do you know him? Have you seen him before?”

“How, can I say? Never seen him before. The old man had long beard and was very fair. It seems that milk was coming out from his cheeks.”

“Color of the cheeks? Black?”

“May be. While finishing my prayer___”

“Was there any mark on his face?”

“Not at all. Why would he black? His face was as smooth as wax, if someone flicks blood will come out. Hey listen, what was I saying? What I said? You always make trouble. What was I saying?”

“While turning your left neck for salaam, you saw him praying next to you-”

“Yes, when I turned left for salaam, I saw an old Muslim saying his prayer next to me. He was too old, could be ninety or ninety five. But, could not guess since he looked very young. When I noticed his feet ___”

“Did not you see his chest? How did you see feet without seeing chest? Any mark of bullet in his chest?”

“ Sshhh, listen boy, old Muslim, our senior.” - I looked at his feet with respect and noticed both his feet. Alas, alas! Both of his feet were turned backward.

“On his rear? How?”

“Do not you understand? - Look, where are our feet?-before of the legs. We walk and move with these feet. Is not it so? And, the feet of that old Muslim had come out from the backward of his ankles. Do not you understand? Wait, I am showing you-.”

“How did you notice the feet of that Muslim while praying? How did you see the feet without seeing chest, belly, and waist?”

“You never know, what is shown by Khuda* in dreams? How can I say everything?”

Lal Mia carries on the story of his dream despite of the listener’s suspicion of his narration along with his own uncertainty of his opinion. He could not remember where he said his prayers, it could be the Bintabibi’s Mosque of Narinda, but clear water was seen from the window in his dream. Where is such kind of marsh in Narinda? Again, the ceiling of the mosque was too high; a lot of stars were carved in the ceiling. Those could be the real stars, otherwise how could they glimmer?

“It seemed that the roof of the mosque was covered like sky. Did you see it well?”

But, Lal Mia does not have the habit of noticing the location or structure or architecture of the mosque in his prayer. After the foroz and sunnat prayers of Esha, while he turned his salaam during the witr namaz towards the invisible angel, he got scared to see the reverse pattern of the feet. What did Allah make him to see? What did it mean? Lal Mia offered prayer for a long time by seeking forgiveness and to get rid of fear or may be on the influence of the soul of

that reversed feet Muslim. “I raised my hands towards Allah and offered prayer for a long time. I cried a lot for about half an hour or may be an hour or could be even two hours in my prayer.”

“Half an hour or one hour or two hours? How could you not notice time? You offered prayer for about two hours but the mosque should be closed by then? How did you come out from the mosque?”

Day by day, it was becoming difficult for Lal Mia to disclose his dream to this boy. When he is awake, he remains alert about rice, chickens, spices, oil, dalda*, meoya*, the amount of gas, and the activities of the carriers and waiters, but is it possible to estimate everything we see in dreams? He wants to sleep to escape from the worldly affairs, but dream comes by the warmth of sleep. Is it possible to notice everything in dream? This boy Bullet is the master of shirking work, but always remains alert to find out the trivial mistakes of Lal Mia’s dream. A perfect scoundrel. Is this Bullet’s fault though? How was his father? Lal Mia becomes angry at Bullet’s father. Since his father was dead, he thought it is safe to become angry at his father and thus in anger he turns up more gas from the burner. He turns up the gas and this flares up his anger. Traitor’s traitor, he was the number one traitor. He is the son of that traitor; can anyone wipe out the stain of bad blood? Imam Uddin never trusted him and he had passed this mistrust to his son. What was Imam Uddin’s benefit by mistrusting Lal Mia? Having blown away the electric transformer of Rothkhola intersection, he was trying to flee but fell in the end of Bangshal by the bullets of the military .What was the reason of escaping through that street? How dare he took the decision to flee through the wide streets of Nababpur? The grenade must have been thrown by someone standing behind that transformer, which is at the end of the Golokpal lane and in front of the water tap. He was supposed to enter instantly into Golokpal lane, was not he? After a few steps, if he could reach into Kandupotti, there were a number of

lanes and by lanes of Khankipara, having crossed the houses and the overpopulated slum, he could reach into English Road and then crossing that road, he could find the recently occupied laundry of Najir Ali; Lal Mia, the only employee of the laundry used to stay there. Having blown away the transformer with a grenade and injuring a military man, if Imam Uddin somehow managed to reach Lal Mia's home, could not he hide him under the heap of filthy clothes? He could. But, Imam Uddin did not have a clean heart, how could he mistrust his childhood friend, if he had an immaculate mind? Najir Ali is the master and employer of Lal Mia. Having taken possession of the laundry, Najir Ali employed Lal Mia there. Najir Ali, the military informer, follows them everywhere. Is that Lal Mia's fault? Why would Imam Uddin suspect him for this? Were they new friends? They had known each other since their births. Both of them went to learn Ampara in the Madrasha of Hafijullah Mollah, but terminated it in the middle of their studies, flying kites from one's roof to another's, while they were growing up. On the day of Chaitra Sankranti, both of them used to dangle while flying kites. Having served as the Gatemen of the Nagor Mohol cinema hall, both of them used to enjoy cinema for free, and used to flirt in front of the Bangla Bazar girls' school at 10 and 5. They had performed all duties together. But, only Lal Mia got the opportunity to enjoy movies at Nagor Mohol, when he became a little older. But, was that Lal Mia's fault? He was good looking and had a fair complexion. If he did not get his hair cut for a long time, having tugged the crest of the hair and flipped on the cheek, the ticket-master of the Nagor Mohol used to say "Scoundrel, why do not get your hair cut? Have you become a hoodlum?" But, the man liked Lal Mia's curly hair. After the night show, if he massaged the man downstairs, next day, he let Lal Mia enter into the front stall. Once, he pushed Lal Mia to the balcony of the first floor. But, was this Lal Mia's fault too? Imam Uddin was becoming taller and taller, when he was only 12 or 13; he overtopped that ticket-master within a

year. Where there were pockmarks all over his face and above the lips, there grew a line of moustache like tar. There was no reason for the ticket-master to be enticed by him? Moreover, he possessed a very bad mouth! A very bad one. He used filthy words whenever he spoke. He could not even speak without abusing the parents of any person. Could a gentle man adore such a lad? There were more. What? He always tried to find out the mistakes and argue with people. After watching an action movie, the next day, Lal Mia began to tell the history of the movie but Imam Uddin began to interrupt him at every step. He asked questions in everything, asked questions only to harass him. Lal Mia had taken his first job in the small tea-stall of Najir Ali in the lane. Najir Ali got out around 10 or 11 for another motive. Then, there were fewer people in the stall. He used to tell the story of the movie of yesterday night, while pouring tea into the filter. He had recently become accustomed to hold the listeners' attention by mixing much sugar and milk into the tea. Everybody listened to him, even though the listeners used to express their views. But, if Imam Uddin were there, he had to interrupt in the middle of the story. Lal Mia had been appearing as a hero since yesterday night but when he was describing the action of that hero, Imam Uddin made faces at him, "Bahadur hit hundred of his enemies and they fell down. Even, the lass hid into his chest? Cannot you find any other place to say these bull shits?"

"What are you saying! Who could save Nargis, if the oppressors were not killed?"

"Your father."

Without considering Imam Uddin's interruption, Lal Mia continued describing the heavy body of the hero, face which was as hard as stone, perfect moustache, and neck like an iron pillar, but he could not pacify Imam Uddin even comparing his strength with the hero. At last, Lal Mia had to surrender before Imam Uddin like this, "What can I do? I said what I watched. Even today, this movie is playing at Nagor Mohol. Let's go for the second show. Will you?"

“I do not watch movies after being screwed up by the ticket-master”

If you cannot afford to watch the movie, then do not go. But, where is the problem in listening about it? Neither he listened to it nor let them others to listen out of jealousy.

‘Insaniyat’- hey listen, oh my God, what an acting he did in that movie! He made Dilip Kumar wear a red shirt to give honor to his selfless love, “Dilip Kumar was looking understand? The moron was wearing a red shirt with creased collar.....”

“Did you lend your this shirt to Dilip Kumar? You, the son of a bitch, do you watch after being drunk? Red-blue-yellow-green- can you see everything?”

Being scolded by Imam Uddin , Lal Mia became silent. How did he make Dilip Kumar to wear this shirt? Even he could not understand the trick behind fixing himself in the place of Dilip Kumar or Dilip Kumar to himself. Lal Mia could not speak for a long time.

Then, where would Lal Mia speak? Imam Uddin troubled him like Cholera; it broke out like small pox in the tea-stall and among the customers. When Lal Mia was about to tell his story, the customers made faces at him and they would make fun of his words whenever they got the chance. Those who were very clever suddenly jumped onto another topic. And, they did not have any problem listening to those rubbish stories. He had only read half of the Ampara, and a man like him was used to get letters everyday from the girls of class seven and eight of Bangla Bazar School, who belonged to the upper class. Moron, do you know, how to read a letter? - He became angrier since he could not utter these words, and because of his anger he mixed more sugar and milk into the tea that increased its taste and the customers paid more attention to Imam Uddin’s fabrication while sipping. The face which was black and full of pockmarks seemed that someone had been pouring tar on his body as he was growing up. The thin body lacked energy.

And, all the girls of the area were crazy for him! What had he said? “When I was going to press, the daughter of brother Khasru; the granddaughter of Moti Sardar was standing for a rickshaw near the Shinghtola intersection yesterday. She smiled at me on seeing me and said, brother Imam, why have you not given me a letter? I said, why letter when I can speak? She smiled. Today, she sent her brother to me with a letter, she asked for the notebooks of class eight.” He added something more to make his words more believable, “I work in a press which deals with books but she thinks that I am the owner of all books. But, I am illiterate; tell me what can I do with this girl?”

After fibbing for a long time, he humored himself and the listeners became jealous of him and easily believed him. Even, Lal Mia accepted his love story by offering a cup of tea and intended to attract the listeners by telling them the preface of the movie, ‘Banjaran’ .“ Buddy, have you seen the thighs of Nilo in ‘Banjaran’? Entirely uncovered-.”

“Was that reason for which you had laid down under the seat.” Imam Uddin laughed loudly, “How did you see the uncovered thighs in the movie?”

After so many years, Lal Mia identified the same habit in Imam Uddin’s son. Many years have passed, he is becoming old after passing youth, his fair cheeks have become brown, wears a stalk of beard. Though his beard has turned white, he does not look old under this thin beard. How many days will he remain alive? He has given up watching movies a long time ago; he never misses Jummah* prayers, and on the night of Shab-e-Barat, he stays at Mirpur sanctuary the whole night. Allah shows him dreams, people dream about so many things but Bullet always questions his dreams, he only suspects him and always finds out the flaws, but how can Lal Mia show his dream to everyone? Nowadays, a thorn pricks him under the thin hair of his skull along with dream; how has he inherited the habit of his father? There is doubt- if the boy was eight

months when Imam Uddin was killed by the random firing of the military men. Three months ago before this incident, when the military had started the coercion, he went to India and after that, he had no communication with his son. Had he informed Lal Mia about his son? He might not. Where was the hindrance? Before going to India, Imam Uddin did not say a single word about his son, "Your father said to me, I am leaving my weaning child to you, look after him." He fitted the dialogue to his dead friend without any hesitation. Though he tried several times, he could not utter this dialogue before Bullet. Lal Mia could talk with the traitor, if he would come to his dream. He did not keep any relation when he was alive or after his death. Does Imam Uddin blame him for his death? Why? He did not listen to Lal Mia's advice regarding going to India. Then? Some students of Jagannath College used to come to Bangla Bazar Press for printing some junks where Imam Uddin worked. He went to war on their advice. Then, where is Lal Mia's fault? Before going to war, Imam Uddin came to see him during curfew. Could not he but come? After all, they were childhood friends. Both of them had started to learn Ampara in the Madrasha, which was situated on Raysa Bazar and was terminated it in the middle of studies, flying kites from one's roof to another's while they were growing up. On the day of Chaitra Sankranti, both of them used to dangle while flying kites. Having served as the Gatemen of the Nagor Mohol cinema hall, both of them used to enjoy cinema for free and used to flirt in front of the Bangla Bazar Girls' School at 10 and 5. He seeks forgiveness even he shouldn't say that they used to visit brothels sometimes- they had performed all duties together. Whatever danger was lurking, could not he but visit Lal Mia for once before going to India? Once Lal Mia mumbled, how long those college boys of educated families would maintain the relationship? Today, they might take care of him but would he be able to show his influence in the battle ground? Would he take his words seriously? On the night of curfew, the heavy breathing and the

noisy sound of the military men as well as Imam Uddin's courage made Lal Mia feel vacant. Imam Uddin said, "I am saying, Pakistan will not exist for long. Many people have crossed the border and many others are returning after training, how long the military will prevail? Come with me, we will not take long time to return. Let's go." Sitting on the laundry table and swinging his feet, Lal Mia heard the low voice of Imam Uddin. The lad had changed a lot by this time, had his training started here? Had any one ever heard his whispering like this? But, Lal Mia could not tolerate his whispering. He could hear the noisy sound of firing but nothing was more disturbing than Imam Uddin's murmuring. Suddenly he stopped Imam Uddin to save his ears, "But the lender says, these are the evil deeds of India. They commit these evil deeds accompanied by the Hindus of this country, they have mobilized some traitors, and our boys become excited without knowing anything. The Pakistani military has never been defeated by the Indian military, what these boys will do?" "Fuck your lender!" Agitated Imam Uddin used his favorite words and Lal Mia was relieved to hear his familiar voice. Imam Uddin spoke in his own voice not to relieve him but to show his courage, he again said, "After two months, I will take the son of a bitch to the Bhetoria Park and after tying him to a tree and putting a rifle in his ass hole, I will blow that son of a bitch, understand? Where will his disruptiveness remain then? He has occupied this laundry; will this remain in his possession? Will not the owner kick him after coming back?" Then, will Lal Mia be able to keep his job? Thinking of how secure this job was, he may have said, "Kartik Babu was killed by the military men on the first day of war. And, will his boys return from India?" Imam Uddin asked immediately, "Won't come?" But, he had doubts on the return of owner's sons, he thought for sometimes and said, "What will happen, if they don't return? Everything will be distributed among the poor. Your owner has occupied the stationery of Nobendu Boshak Lane, which belonged to the Radha Govindo Poddhar; the shop of

the Dhononjoy Saha was burnt down by the military, the house has been occupied by your owner. Just wait and see whether that son of a bitch can hold the possession of these for two months.” Imam Uddin again lowered his tone. Had he become feeble because of the interval of military lorries? Was he feeling sleepy in this silent night of curfew? Was he dozing and saying all these? His tongue was moving slowly; they were going to take the possession of the Naz-Gulistan and would enjoy a movie today. What had been injected in his brain by those college students? He would eat whatever he wanted after entering the Gulistan hotel. Had Lal Mia ever tasted the kebab-paratha of that restaurant? The foreign bottles of the Chu-Chin-Cho would be opened for all. Was Imam blabbering because of the advance sips of those foreign drinks? Having wiped out the military men, they would kill all the pimps and the agents of the country. Lal Mia’s heart began to pound while hearing all these: true, how long could the military be tolerated? The employers and the agents would be overthrown. But, this was also true that people like Najir Ali were the agents, were their courage less than anyone? The Pakistani military was the best army in the world, who could win fighting against them? Even Najir Ali said, “Wait for some days, we will say the prayer of Eid in the Ghorer Math of Calcutta. Have you heard the Lal Kella of Delhi? The flag of Pakistan will flutter above that fort, just wait and see. Those boys do not have any other work to do that they are fighting against the military men with muskets and knives.” But, all these words which were said by of Najir Ali all the time could not be expressed to Imam Uddin. What a temper he had! Being perplexed by his whispering words and roaring, Lal Mia looked here and there in the room. Lal Mia looked all around the corners of the room , the iron on the tool, dirty clothes on the floor, the layers of the sarees, dhuti, pant,shirt ,and punjabi in the almirah, and gave thanks to the dead or fugitive owners of these things because he exempted himself to look at the eyes of Imam Uddin. But, Imam Uddin would not exempt him,

having deprived him from thanking the invisible people, he stands up, makes his eyes small, and having bent his face, he says, “Are not you aged enough? How can I make you understand? Your owner, Najira is fucked by the military men and you, son of a bitch, are fucked by the Najira pimp. Worms have come out from the worms. I will return after two months. Then, I will see!”

Imam Uddin went to India. After that, did not he come here for once? After Imam Uddin’s departure, every night, Lal Mia had heard the sound of the grenades on the iron table. The random sound of the grenades, rifles, LMG, SMG and other arms used to ring like the tunes of music. Day in-day out the sound became intense and incisive, there emerged a jingle of an unknown weapon which intensified the curfew of the night and Lal Mia listened to the melodious sound of the weapons with a pounding heart. Except Imam Uddin, who dared to betray him?

Najir Ali used to come at daylight. But, his visits became infrequent with the rising of turmoil. At the end of war, he rarely came to check accounts because he had some other pressures outside. At that time, Lal Mia had an opportunity to steal money and used to spend a lot. But, the people who had occupied the houses of that area showed their influence over other people and did not want to pay money after washing their clothes. And, there were frequent rumors that on a certain day the war against India would start, the Air Force of the country was about to land, and the city people were running breathlessly to the rural areas. Business was dull, the condition of the country could be worse. Lal Mia understood it by looking at Najir Ali’s face during his infrequent visits. Sometimes, Lal Mia discovered the red colored glow and some other times he found the dusk dark behind the beard of Najir Ali’s pale face. The red colored glow behind the black beard used to be the signal light of his happiness. Yesterday noon, military men raided near the slum of Malibagh Bazar, caught four miscreants from there and one was killed by

the bullet of the military men. The military men set fire to the slum to catch them; Najir Ali felt sorry because seven or eight women and twelve to fourteen children were burnt to ashes on that fire. But, what could be done by the military men when the miscreants took shelter in the slum? They had to pay the price for giving shelter to the spies of the enemies. The man was amazed by the action of the military men and felt comfort since they never missed their target; Pakistan had survived for this time. He patted the back of Lal Mia to give him courage, "Don't worry, boy". Najir Ali took the help of mother tongue because he may not know Urdu more than this or to make understand Lal Mia, "Our leader had met Yahya Khan. Yahya Khan allotted 10 minutes for him but could not finish the discussion until forty five minutes." The picture of the president along with the party leader had been published in their own party newspaper. Najir Ali opened the news before him, their leader was sitting hesitantly and the president was looking at him with drowsing eyes. The eyes seemed to be known to him but looking at those eyes for a long time, Lal Mia could not reckon it. The darkness of the downstairs of Nagor Mohol cinema hall had blurred everything before his eyes.

The pale face of Najir Ali glowed in black and Lal Mia understood it. From the dark cloud of his cheeks rain fell down through his beard, the black stream was motionless but the restless waterfall was clearly visible. Yesterday, the miscreants of Chunkuthiya attacked the military camp on the other side of Buriganga and killed four military men. They had attacked many other camps in different places. Were the numbers of traitors increasing day by day in this country? See, even at Boro Maghbazar of Dhaka city, a number of Indian spies injured some Rajakars and left the place with their rifles and people were merely looking at the incident. Would Islam survive if Pakistan did not exist? The Muslims were somehow in good position. Would the Hindus tolerate this? Lal Mia was earning his livelihood because of Najir Ali's

business. Would not everything reverse, if the military did not exist? The dark cloud inside Najir Ali's black beard became darker and this shadow fell in the eyes of Lal Mia. Najir Ali's jeopardy meant his jeopardy.

Najir Ali returned home very early before darkness. Now, he had many houses and did not let others know where he would spend the night. During curfew Lal Mia napped, having closed the door. In those days, the whole Tati Bazar entered inside the closed room, even Shakhari Bazar tried to do so. Lal Mia startled by the sound of the rifle's butt, wondered if it was not the voice of Imam Uddin? "Wake up, how long will you sleep? I have left the dead body of your usurer in the middle of Johnson Road, go and throw away the body. He smells a lot. Get up and go." Lal Mia tried to seek the glint of smile in Imam Uddin's eyes to escape fear. But, having failed to see the slightest sign of that smile, he himself contrived to gain courage. How was the contrivance? No, - in one sense, it was a good news for him since after Najir Ali's death; he would be able to possess this laundry. The owner was already killed by the military, would the sons of the owner come back from India? Some dhutis were arrayed in the almirah, and these would be arrayed like this. Lal Mia would keep Imam Uddin with him, if he possessed the ownership. Imam Uddin would have to do nothing; he would just mark the dirty clothes with black pen and give receipts to the customers. Lal Mia himself would manage washing, ironing, and delivering clothes. But, he himself will collect money and maintain cash, it was better to keep it under his possession. And, sitting here, Lal Mia would tell the histories of the action of Santosh- Sabiha or Jeba-Mohammad Ali or Nilo-Wahid Murad or Suchonda-Razzak. Would Imam Uddin get the opportunity to interrupt the story? Then, would not Imam Uddin be the employee of Lal Mia? He became thoughtful regarding which history he would tell first, just at that moment, he jumped on hearing the explosion of a grenade near the door. Which scoundrel

was knocking at the door after exploding the grenade? The door was about to break open. He got up from the bed where clothes were ironed, he opened the door's cleat, chain, haft and found that Tati Bazar was filled with military men. Which was the movie? He tried to find out the faces of Nilo-Wahid or Suchonda or Koberi amidst them but instead of their faces, he found Najir Ali's cloudy face behind the rainfall of his beard. Najir Ali with a solemn voice said, "Let's go hurriedly, we have to go Imam Uddin's home. Lock the door!" He got the key from inside the room to lock it, but the key fell down by a solid kick from a military boot, "Isn't the motherfucker a friend of the traitor? Let's go, motherfucker!"

The lock began to dither. He, along with Najir Ali got into the jeep and started for Imam Uddin's residence. In the jeep, a military man was aiming his gun at him. By this time, he had known that yesterday night, around two hours ago; Imam Uddin was killed by the bullets of the military men while trying to escape after blowing out the transformer and injuring a military man. But, Imam Uddin was said to kill his owner, what about that? Were not they bluffing? The oppression of the military men and on the other hand, the mischief of Imam Uddin had left Lal Mia extremely distraught.

Surrounding the slum, the military men found a rifle, S.M.G, and some grenades. The members of that house had already escaped. Being failed to catch them, the military men beat all the girls, aged people, and children. The twelve or thirteen year old brother and the father of Imam Uddin had been severely injured and taken to the military lorry. After beating and apprehending people sincerely, they set fire to the slum and started to fire randomly. They seemed to enjoy the indiscriminate firing to the houses, which were on fire. After all, they were the best armed force in the world, was there any other happiness for them than using their weapons? With the melody of brush firing, the rattling sound of Imam Uddin's old grandmother

rang, “Allah will not tolerate it, never. You will have to face the wrath of Allah, will have to face it!” Everyone was anxious and annoyed at the same time: why was her grandson killed by this random firing, would the dead body be found or not, and the old dame was inviting further perils. The Military men along with Najir Ali were the target of her curse, “Hey Najira, son of a bitch, son of a harlot, today, being a pimp of the military men, you have entered in the area with Azrael*. You have come to help the military men to catch more of our people. Listen pimp, you should let your sisters and mother to be fucked by the military men.” Najir Ali was always ready to obey the order of Imam Uddin’s grandmother. The absence of his mother had made his three sisters quarrelsome and since his sisters’ sons, one or more than one had joined with the miscreants, making it very dangerous, difficult, and impossible to obey her recent order. Imam Uddin’s old grandmother pleaded to Allah for immediate wrath upon Najir Ali, but before fulfilling her prayers, the old lady was laid on the ground forever by the bullets of a valiant military man. On seeing the fallen skinny body on the ground, the women in the slum began to run and some came before the military jeeps. One of them was Imam Uddin’s wife; she was shivering with the son in her lap. A military man asked her. “What is your name?” After looking at the Imam Uddin’s grandmother’s fresh dead body on the ground, she gasped. Again the military man asked, “What is your name?” She was gasping in spite of the repetition of the question. After much gasping, she answered with a speedy breath, “Bullet!”

Imam Uddin’s wife uttered the name of her son instead of her own name to hide herself and her name or having panicked, she might have forgotten her name, or after giving birth to her son, she had become popular in the area as Bullet’s mother. After Aqeeqah* the son had been named Mohammad Kashem. His father had given the name, Bullet. How? After a few days of his birth, the urine of his son soaked Imam Uddin’s chest. Imam Uddin woke up and being

satisfied by the force and speed of urine, he remarked, “It seems that he is firing bullets.” This incident created laughter with pride between the husband and wife. Imam Uddin used to call his son Bullet only before his wife. But, Imam Uddin went to war before hearing the response of his son. It was natural that Imam Uddin’s wife could have forgotten the name within these six months. But, amidst random firing, she had lost the courage to remember the real name of her son and without much effort, she had only uttered the name.

But, hearing this name, a man like sahib laughed, “Is this baby a Bullet? Very good.” Suddenly, he became sober and asked, “Your baby? It has come out from your belly, so you are a rifle!” A bullet comes out of a rifle”. Having used this sharpened logic and satisfied with his astuteness, the military man demanded reward for his talent, “Seize this rifle.”

Preempted by the military man, Imam Uddin’s wife was taken to the car and at last, Bullet was transferred to the lap of his grandmother. At the same time, the senseless body of Imam Uddin’s father was thrown from the lorry, and Lal Mia was taken into the lorry.

Within two weeks Najir Ali freed Lal Mia from the clutches of the military men. But, it was beyond his ability to free Imam Uddin’s brother and wife. Imam Uddin was killed after injuring a military man, “Someone has to suffer for his crime!” Najir Ali explained to Lal Mia “Why are you behaving like this? If they detain you again, I cannot set you free. On that day, our leader said, Allah has given at least ten eyes to each military man. They hold some one after proper justification. Why should I plead for the enemies?”

But, it was not that Najir Ali had not pleaded for making them free. Imam Uddin’s injured father died within a month and his mother prepared to repair the burnt house after forgetting the sorrow of being a widow. Lal Mia gave her money for mending the house. Before

that, they used to live with Lal Mia's mother for some days. Having landed on the house, she pledged, "Son, please free Imam Uddin's wife from her captors. What should I do with this suckling baby?" In spite of Najir Ali's scolding, he whimpered before Najir Ali, "How can the innocent baby remain alive without a mother?" That was true. Although, Imam Uddin's wife was black, she was good looking. – No, no, forgive me Allah, Najir Ali did not have any amorous desire. He had a virtuous wife and six sons, he would be thankful to Allah, if the sons would run his shops well. The military men should have some physical demands since they are sacrificing their lives coming from thousands of mile for our religion. It would be unfair, if they cannot fulfill this only desire. Najir Ali wandered from pillar to the post and pleaded to many, but, he was unsuccessful to find out the whereabouts of the girl. There were also selfish people among the military men. Najir Ali became upset to see the selfish greed in some of their eyes for having wealth, money, and women alone. He never disclosed this grief to anyone. But, Lal Mia realized the grief of his owner to see the mixed glow behind the beard of his cheek.

About the end of that year in winter, the boys of the area returned with the mist of fire. Nobody knew where Najir Ali had disappeared. The college boys, whose instigation influenced Imam Uddin to take part in the war, had secured Najir Ali's occupied shop of Nobendu Bashak for Imam Uddin's mother's dwelling. Having got the new house, Imam Uddin's mother could not realize whether she should be happy or feel sad for her son and husband. Lal Mia was heavily beaten by them for Najir Ali's location. But, Imam Uddin's mother held the legs of those boys carrying rifles, "Sons, this Lal Mia did a lot for us. If Lal Mia was not with us, Najir Ali would have handed all of us over to the military men." Imam Uddin's mother kept Lal Mia with her and Lal Mia started to believe that he had saved the lives of his friend's mother and son. Was there any alternative not to believe it? On the other hand, the sons of the owner had taken

possession of the laundry shop after returning from India. The clothing store of Dhanonjoy Saha was also lost because one M.P had made a hardware shop there. Everything was supposed to be distributed among the poor and Lal Mia was also supposed to be a poor man but he did not get anything. He did not even get the opportunity to enjoy a movie for free in the Naj Cinema Hall of Gulistan. He was in doubt whether he got the bottles of foreign drinks if Imam Uddin would not die. Lal Mia had to believe many things if he wanted to maintain the shop and lived with Imam Uddin's mother and son.

Imam Uddin's mother made him work hard, though Lal Mia maintained the shop, he had to give the estimation of everything to her. But, as a human being she was quite good, she cared about Lal Mia's meal, and handled any situation if someone tried to say anything regarding the relationship between him and Najir Ali during war. A human being like Imam Uddin's mother was rare. She possessed every good quality except only one flaw that was she used to talk a lot. The heroism of Imam Uddin was the main part of her gibbering. Day and night, she related the tale of Imam Uddin's heroism. She proclaimed that her son was a great hero, who had killed hundreds of military men at every nook and corner in the country. Military vans had been overturned and annihilated by his grenades. After finishing two lorries of military men at Rathkhola, he targeted the electric transformer. He also held Najir Ali. Najir Ali, the pimp of the military man always at their beck and call. Military men used to travel by vans, Lorries, jeeps and he had to on foot. On that day, after killing the military men, Imam Uddin was going to attack the Bongshal police outpost. He came into contact with Najir Ali on his way and was about to kill him with the stroke of the bayonet but the dog held his legs. After all, he was the man of the same area and to some extent, a senior that was why Imam Uddin kicked his ass and

started to proceed forward. The time wasted in forgiving Najir Ali gave the military men the opportunity. Otherwise, which military had the ability to kill him?

Imam Uddin's mother is not a woman who is used to talking in a low voice, she always talked in a high pitch. Lal Mia can hear all the stories, which were told to her grandson. He was used to paying attention to the stories of others throughout his life though he was intervened by Imam Uddin while telling the stories of cinemas and deprived from telling the stories. He did not dislike listening to her stories. But, sometimes the stories made him impatient. To some extent, it is not safe to discuss. Najir Ali is still alive and it is assumed that he is in a good condition. If he hears everything, nobody knows, what will he do? Lal Mia hears rumors about him; Najir Ali may be doing business in Chittagong or Khulna or Comilla remaining into the hide. The partner of his business is a minister's brother who also went to war. Some have said, he has flown to Saudi Arabia with his party leader, now he has bags of gold and will return to the country if he gets the opportunity.

Who knew that this time would come so early? Lal Mia is completely in fear before everything inversed. The fresh dominance has begun by the new type of military men. One day, Lal Mia sees a spy of Najir Ali's party in front of the Baitul Mukarram Mosque and this man is selling beads, surama, and otto after arranging these on a table. Lal Mia's heart begins to pound. During the end of war this Satan along with some others and the military men slaughtered the jewels of the University and Medical College with their own hands after taking them to Rayer Bazar. – Is this dog still alive? – Lal Mia runs breathlessly to inform Imam Uddin's mother about this terrible news but he finds that the old woman is crying alone in her room. But, it does not bother him. Nowadays, the old woman's spirit to talk a lot is lessening and she cries at least two days in a week, having stopped telling the heroic stories of Imam Uddin. The heroism of Imam

Uddin does not come during her lamentation but she remembers the daily activities of her husband and son.

Bullet does not have any interest in his grandmother's lamentation. Bullet goes outside when the old woman starts to cry; he knows it well when his grandmother will stop crying and coming home, he finds his grandmother wiping her tears from her nose and neck so she can resume telling the stories of Imam Uddin. He cannot sleep without grandmother though he does not respond to her bawling. The boy bed wets five or six times in a month. Then, there is no end of troubles that Imam Uddin's mother has to face because she has to wash the bed sheet, pillow cover, and curtain. She babbles while washing these clothes, "Do you pass water through a pipe? You have wetted the whole bed, there are the marks of your urine in the pillow, bed sheet, cushion, curtain, and the cover of the quilt!" Apart from this, he possesses many other faults, sometimes, he blabbers in his sleep and shouts at his grandmother. One day, she gets the opportunity and asks, "What makes you scared at night? Do you dream of any one? Do you see your father in your dream?"

"No, I do not see father."

Imam Uddin's mother becomes thoughtful - if he dreams of his father, would he recognize him? But, the son should not fear, if he dreams of his father? On his grandmother's insistence, Bullet says after much thinking, "I dreamt of an old man in my dream who has asked me, whether I will bring some dalpuri* for him?"

"Are there any marks on his face?"

"No. I have already said that an old man. His face is full of beard."

“Your father used to favor dalpuri a lot.” While saying this, Imam Uddin’s mother wonders if Bullet’s grandfather comes in his dream to see his grandson. Bullet is the only heir of the family. But, dalpuri was not his favorite. He used to eat sweets. He used to spoil half of the income to eat sweets in Sitaram’s shop. He might not have the same taste for sweets after his death or he might have become inclined to dalpuri to give respect to the taste of his martyred son. While thinking of feeding some beggars, she says, “Boy, if you dream of an old man, you have to give respect. You have to listen to his words by dreaming the dream again and again.”

“How? How can I dream?”

“How can you dream?- After being woken up, you have to reverse the nearest pillow and go to sleep on the right side after laying your head on that pillow. Then, he would appear in your dream again.” His grandmother recites a verse to make this thing clear:

I dreamt of a saint who was a virtuous servant of Allah.

He prayed to Allah innumerable times.

If you want to dream the same dream again.

Sleep after reversing the nearest pillow.

But, Bullet has not dreamt of any saint. The old man of his dream is feeble, black, and sufficiently tall; he has filthy beard and wears torn lungi. After hearing this, Imam Uddin’s mother cannot but cry because the man could not be anyone but her husband. Her husband was not that tall, did not have long beard and never wore torn lungi. But, after death, human beings might face multifarious troubles. Bullet goes outside when she begins to cry for her husband.

Bullet learned to talk from hearing his grandmother's stories about his father. Within a few years, he began to speak. But, he used to waste a large portion of his speech outside with his classmates of 1913's Rahimuddin Sarkari Prathomik Biddaloy, who used to come to the grocery shop known as Lal Mia's shop to buy marbles, mango bar, prickles, and candies. He used to tell the stories of his father but instead of his father, he was the hero of those stories. He had blown away the military lorries a thousand times. He did not know who was Najir Ali, even did not know the meaning of pimp. Despite this, he had killed the pimp Najir Ali at least 500 times.

Lal Mia feared for the boy ten times more on hearing Bullet's narration of the stories. Will this boy have to endure the same fate like his father? The father was killed after injuring military men and this chap will be killed for his fibbing. What will Lal Mia do with this boy?

By this time, one Friday, after the Jumma Prayer, Najir Ali is greeted by salaam while standing at the door of the mosque, "Assalamualikum brothers, are you in sound health and mind?" His known and unknown people are looking at his white beard, the glow of light in his reddish cheek, the napkin hanging around the neck with astonishment, and the cloak is too large that he does not need to wear pajama. After his greeting to everyone, he embraces everyone. After that, for a few days, he visits every house of the area and fills those houses with the fragrance of otto. He had been in Mecca for a few years and has the blessings of inhaling the air which was once Rasul Karim's abode. Now, he is bestowed with immense peace and does not have any desire for anything except the blessing of people. If he wants to get the blessing of the people, he has to do something for his livelihood and that is why he has opened a small jewelry shop in front of the Baitul Mukarram Mosque. He does not need anything, if he can stay at Baitul Mukarram. With this desire he has made arrangements for his earnings near the mosque.

Lal Mia has a long discussion with Najir Ali. No, he does not demand a single pie from Lal Mia, Allah will bless him with goodness because in Najir Ali's absence he has protected at least a house of him. Najir Ali smiles sweetly to hear that the occupied house of Najir Ali has been allotted to the family of the martyred Imam Uddin. It is alright, they can stay there, nobody will take their houses with them. Imam Uddin's mother is a childless Muslim widow and her grandchild is an orphan. They can stay as long as they want, he will be blessed, if he can do anything for them. But, Imam Uddin's mother suddenly dies without giving him that opportunity. Now Bullet will stay and it also makes him happy.

But, Bullet does not have any impulse for staying at home. He wanders outside. A secret place to watch movies in V.C.R has opened somewhere in Siddique Bazar and Bullet stays there day and night. Along with enjoying movies, he has started to sell tickets standing at the door of the thatched by hiding himself from the police. Within two years the government has withdrawn the ban from keeping V.C R at home. Then, those secret places vanish and Bullet returns to Lal Mia again. By this time, the Chicken-Pulao* hotel of Najir Ali has been replaced by that grocery shop. What will Lal Mia do with Bullet? Fearful of Najir Ali's notion regarding Bullet, Lal Mia manages a job for him in a big hotel at Stadium Market. The hotel is quite big, whatever the salary is but the boy will be able to manage from meal to everything with the tips. After about three months, Lal Mia goes there to inquire about him and finds that he has already disappeared from there. The owner of hotel informs him that the boy is a very bad lad. He used to steal food, but the owner did not take this into his consideration because almost every employee was used to doing so. The problem is, if he finds noise outside, he goes there. He finds excitement in breaking vehicles through pelting stones and burning tires amidst agitation. On a hartal* day, he threw a yellow casket aiming at the police car which was filled with gunpowder. Another police

car came behind Bullet and arrested him. After about a month, he was released and returned to the hotel but the owner refused to give him the job. What a trouble! What Lal Mia will do with him? His father was the traitor. Had he told him while leaving, “Lal Mia I am leaving the son behind, take care of him.” Then he would have taken over the responsibility of taking care of Bullet. Now, what is the reason to enquire about the doings of Bullet? Or, is he doing all these troubling deeds to compete with his dead friend? By that time, he had heard that Bullet was working as a helper of number 6 bus traveling on the Motijheel-Banani route, the cook of the chicken-pulao has seen him to call passengers while smacking on the bus. This time, Lal Mia has not gone to bring him even after hearing all these. After about 7 or 8 months, the boy himself appears before Lal Mia. There are some empty tiffin carriers in his hands. What is the matter? He wants to sell all these. Lal Mia understands everything though Bullet does not disclose anything.

After leaving the job as a helper of number 6 bus, he took another job in an office of Motijheel. But, it was not an official work, he had to bring lunch in the tiffin carriers from the houses of officials. After taking some rice and curry from the tiffin carrier of each official, he had been having a great lunch for a few days. He had gained some weight by doing so, but to meet the demand of his body, he used to take out a little bit more rice and curry but the officials began to suspect him for this. That is why, he disappeared with rice, curry, fish, meat, and pulse of different tastes of different houses, even with the chilies and salt of the same taste of the tiffin carriers. After finishing rice and curry three times in day, he comes with the empty tiffin carriers to the hotel of Lal Mia, which is also known as their house. Lal Mia takes the tiffin carriers to sell them and says, “Son, stay and work here. At night, you can sleep at my house.”

Then, it is not even the house of Lal Mia? This means, it is the shop of Najir Ali. He has a strong document of his ownership and Lal Mia is just his manager. After hearing this he insists to sleep here at night. This is all right because at least he will be before him. He needs to take care of him, if he wants to take revenge on his traitor father.

No, Najir Ali does not have any objection. He is making arrangements to build a garment factory, there are many problems to do so, and he cannot depend on the sons entirely. Again, politics has mingled with his blood, how can he disown it? The meetings in front of the mosque become filled with people on every Friday. If he does not say something on religion and other things, the unbelievers will take control of the country. Whom will he trust except Lal Mia to maintain this shop? It depends on Lal Mia with whom he will maintain the shop. And, a son of martyred freedom fighter means an asset. Who knows what may happen in future? He will manage, if the boy behaves obstinately in future. Najir Ali had accumulated enough money by doing business with the then brother of the minister, but has he earned the money only for depositing in the banks? If he could start a garment factory, would he not be able to buy this area in no time? Then, he will not face any trouble getting rid of Bullet, even from his senior Lal Mia. These people are like the bubbles in urine that appear momentarily and then disappear. Najir Ali sees the disappearance of Lal Mia and Bullet in the yellow bubbles of the disappearing urine while passing water before commode. He cannot turn his eyes from there even after emptying his bladder; his closing eyes view the scene that he is at the helm in the mosque with a club in his hand.

Lal Mia has to face many troubles for Bullet. He had given up watching movies many years ago. Now, he does not get the scope to narrate the plot of the films. But, Allah makes him dream every night, if he cannot tell these to other people, the mucus crusts in the corner of his

eyes, how the new dreams will be congealed there after being crystal grain? Can chicken-pulao be like rice-curry; the dream should be revealed through any kind of hole otherwise, his whole body suffers from uneasiness. But, every time, when he tries to tell about his dreams, this naughty boy intervenes and doubts at every step. Though he interrupts a lot, he has a great ardor to know the details of Lal Mia's dream. If he spends money, will there be any dearth of listeners? Every night, a number of boys, carriers, and waiters come and stand before his counter to listen to his dreams. What is the benefit of it? Everybody dozes just after the beginning of stories. On the other hand, Bullet stimulates him by his incessant questioning.

Today, Bullet again asks, "Uncle, have you seen any mark on the face of that Muslim?" Without being angry, Lal Mia thinks for a little while and after closing his eyes, he says, "No son, he has a fair face and entirely white beard. A quite fair looking Muslim. If I see him, I cannot but respect him."

Has his father never appeared in the dreams of Lal Mia? It makes Bullet sad, but what is the fault of Lal Mia in this matter? Has Imam Uddin ever appeared in the dream of his son?

After two days, Lal Mia calls Bullet before closing the shop, "Hey Bullet, yesterday I was a bit late for going to sleep. After closing my eyes for sleep, I saw that Muslim who was saying his prayer. I was observing him standing somewhere. I think, Shah Sahib* wants to let me know something."

"What more can the reversed feet man tell you? Did he say about the problems of his feet?"

Lal Mia is annoyed at Bullet's audacity but on seeing his interest he cannot but tell, "Yesterday, I did not notice his feet. Today, I dreamt that the Muslim was praying after raising

his hands. The whole mosque was placed within his hands, but still there was enough vacant space, it seems-”

“Could our area fit there?”

“I do not know.”

On Friday night, Bullet approaches him and asks, “Uncle, have you dreamt any dream?”

Lal Mia becomes happy. Looking at Bullet’s eyes with affection, he says, “Yesterday was Thursday night, the night of Jummah. Before going to sleep, I said two rakats* of Nafol prayer.”

“Why?”

“Stupid!” In his fervor, Lal Mia’s feelings overflow with affection. He says that the personage who usually appears in his dreams is a sage, so it is better to keep himself cleansed. But, the dream of yesterday was fearsome. No, why did he dream of a skeleton? He did not even dream of a graveyard. Yesterday he dreamt that someone was standing near the betel-leaf shop. He was frightened and because of it he was shivering, but the reason of getting frightened was unknown, the scary part of the dream could have happened earlier or he had forgotten that part. Then, there was a small bench before the betel-leaf shop and three Maulanas* were sitting there. They were wearing long coats and had long white beards. Everyone’s head was covered with turbans. Having ordered the shopkeeper to make a betel-leaf with chewing tobacco, Lal Mia looked at the bench and said, “Assalamualaikum.”

“Wa’alaikumussalam warahmatullahi wabarakatuh ”, after hearing the chorus reply from the three, Lal Mia froze. He was very scared, but having lost the ability to realize his fear, he was standing there. He was not even standing there; it seemed that he was lying above the sky after keeping his feet on the ground. Had he died? Before whom had he appeared after death? Who

were they? The shopkeeper of the betel-nut shop handed him a betel-nut with chewing tobacco and he gained a bit of courage after inserting it into his mouth. The people sitting on the bench asked him, “What is the matter, son? Speak.”

Lal Mia with a little more courage said slowly, “Huzoor*, a respected person prays sitting close to me. He is very fair looking. But, I saw that his legs are reversed, actually the feet

Before finishing his sentence, the three Maulanas raised their long coats unto their knees and said in a chorus like before, “Like these? Are they similar?”

Lal Mia saw the feet of the three which were reversed too. The shopkeeper stopped to make betel-nut; extended his legs sitting awkwardly with the risk of falling and said, “Like these?” His feet were reversed as well. Meanwhile, people with reversed feet were coming in groups from the mosque and extending their legs before Lal Mia after raising their coats, lungi or pajamas, even pants unto their knees. On seeing this, Lal Mia shouted in his sleep and that woke him up.

The fear about his dream still makes him numb even he numbs in his dream. Looking at the cover of the big pan, Lal Mia feels nervous on the possibility of seeing the filthy face of the white beard person on the linen cover of the big pan.

May be, Lal Mia passed the next few nights without any dream or he is being warned in his dream that it is better to talk less regarding these things. Bullet asks Lal Mia in advance to see him starting for home for the last few days after closing the cashbox, “Uncle, why did you say that Shah Sahib who appears in your dream is very fair looking?”

“Yeah.”

“He is tall, plump, and his entire beard is gray. Am I not right?”

“May be.”

“Is he like our owner?”

“May be.” Having replied, Lal Mia becomes terrified. In this state, he notices that Bullet is looking at his eyes with wonder. After taking a glass of water in his hand, he gulps the water, Lal Mia snubs, “Customers are waiting. Go.”

Bullet is about to take pulao from the cooking utensil of the counter. After opening its cover, the aroma along with the white smoke emits from inside. Having looked there, Lal Mia suddenly sees the flowing beard of a man which makes him restless. How can he tolerate the oppression of his dream while he is awake?

Bullet stands before Lal Mia before closing the shop. He seems happy since afternoon. The scolding of Lal Mia did not impact in his happiness. Bullet affectionately calls him “Uncle”.

Bullet is not a man to call him in such a way! Then? Lal Mia’s heart melts on hearing the endearing term. The traitor did not say anything about his son, but when he came here for the last time before going to the war, he could at least say for once that I am leaving my son to you. No, after showing his courage, he left. Yet, they were childhood friends-both of them started to learn Ampara to Hafizullah Munsif in the Madrasha* of Raisabazar and terminated it in the middle of studies, started to watch movies in Mukul-Rupmohol-Nagor Mohol, and used to flirt before the Bangla Bazar School at 5 and 10- had performed all duties together! Yet, the scoundrel had not given him the respected duty to raise Bullet. It does not matter, see, your son is too much dependent on me, come and see, you the son of a martyr!

Lal Mia asks very affectionately, “What is the matter, son?”

“Yesterday night, I dreamt of the Muslim, Shah Sahib. He appeared in my dream. In which mosque did you dream of him? I dreamt that he was watching the street from the first floor of a beautiful mosque. The feet of the man were reversed. Uncle, I think that Shah Sahib is suffering from the legs malady.”

“Do not lie, boy.” Lal Mia becomes restless with annoyance, fear, and distress. What is the future of this orphan? The boy does not pray, fast, take water after urination, always remains sacrilegious; in spite of these, he dares to dream of Shah Sahib. What an audacity! Does he know the consequences of this kind of audacity? He has possessed the reckless attitude of his father. Is the fibbing attitude of his father finding root in him? He, somehow, closes the account of cash-box and stands up.

“Bullet, go to sleep, sleep right now.” Having told Bullet to sleep, he is about to go outside, but he cannot evade anxiety; he will dream those dreams again in his sleep.

Bullet feels restless lying on the mattress of the hotel. Actually, it is not restlessness, his chest, belly, and brain become weak. There is no fault of Lal Mia because the corners of his eyes twitch, if he cannot tell his dreams. Next to him, Hashem is sleeping deeply on the mattress. Next to Hashem, the cook is smoking lying on the mattress. Bullet calls him mildly, “Master.”

“Say.” The cook gives him attention as he is called master. Feeling assured, Bullet says, “Yesterday, I dreamt that one Maulana was observing people from the first floor of a mosque. The man had a long beard and wore a long coat. The feet were reversed under the coat. How could the man walk with these feet?”

“Shut up. Let me sleep. You have possessed the sickness of our manager, he always dreams in his sleep. He always fibs! Yesterday, he told me, I think there should be more livers

and gizzards. Today, he said, there are few customers today, how is it possible to finish this amount of rice? This fellow doubts me. The owner does not notice and check, cannot you see that he is gaining more and more pounds after embezzling money? Yet, he suspects me to be a thief. Manager, the son of a motherfucker.”

Bullet cannot convince the cook. Hashem turns in his sleep while muttering. Bullet can guess the dream of the boy, if he hears the muttering. Though he pays attention, he cannot find any meaning. After hearing a horrid sound in the highway crossroad, he sits up on mattress. This is the sound of a grenade! Then, has his father returned and blown away the transformer? Will he forgive Najir Ali after kicking on his ass? Will he forgive? This excitement and anxiety last for about a minute and makes him sad when he looks outside, how can the lights of the streets glimmer, if the transformer is already blown away? From the whistles of the busy policemen and conversation of the people, he surmises that it was the blasting sound of a truck's tire. After sighing, he tries to sleep. The sound of grenade is similar to this, then why was not it a grenade? The difficulty of the old man's legs, who was standing on the first floor of the mosque, could have been cured, if he threw a grenade at his legs. While he walks on reversed feet, he has to face a lot of difficulties and dangers. The long beard and the coat of the man hovers like the curtain above the bed, and after sometimes, Bullet's sleep entwines the curtain inside the beard and coat. The complexion of his body only glows in his face and the reddish glow of the face looks profound red in the light of afternoon. There are some benches beside the decorated gate of a square mosque and two or three persons are sitting on every bench. The person of Lal Mia's and Bullet's dream is sitting on a big chair. His gray beard flows like a stream of milk and the color of his expensive coat is off-white. The feet under the coat of the man are affixed to the

ground, fingers facing backwards as always. Bullet approaches him and says after bowing his head, “Assalamualaikum.”

“Wa’alaikumussalam warahmatullahi wabarakatuh”, having got the reply from the known and unknown reversed legged persons sitting on the benches, he asks them, “Huzoors, you are suffering from a problem with your legs for a long time; why do not you fix it?”

On hearing this, they become very angry and approach him. But, because of their reversed feet, the more they want to move towards him, the more they go backwards. Before their absolute disappearance, Bullet starts to dream another dream. Now, he finds himself on the high roof of the House Building Corporation. He does not find himself detached anymore, rather he sees many people down there. Is there any hartal today? Is there any meeting going on? These thoughts make him restless in his dream, just at that time, he sees the man standing beside a trellised wall wearing an off-white coat and beard which flows like the lake of milk. Under the direction of this man, a group of reversed feet persons rush towards him. Whether the incident is taking place in his dream or reality, where it is taking place, and when, he cannot remember any of this. But, this does not make him feel even a little bit worried or excited. The reversed legs of the man should be detached before fixing. Considering this, Bullet begins to think, which thing he will throw there. He searches both of the pockets of his pant and having found nothing, he becomes more perturbed. While thinking, he feels pressure of urine. There is no public toilet of the corporation or the municipal corporation or the government on the roof of this House Building Corporation. He feels more pressure of urination. Finding no other way, Bullet passes the flow of yellow urine below. By this time, he aims the flow at the reversed feet of the man who is wearing beard and long coat. If Imam Uddin and his rifle entitled wife were present here, they could say the accurate evolvement and intensification of the flow of seven days’ Bullet’s

urine. The velocity of the flow could be satisfactory, but having sensed the pungent scent, the reversed feet man starts to walk after crossing the terracotta wall and enter into their invisible place. On the other hand, because of gentle blow of wind much of his urine spread all around.

By this time, Bullet feels meager heat of water in his lungi and having awakened, he finds that his lungi as well as the half pant of Hashem is completely wet. Shit! What did he do? A long time ago, Bullet had stopped bedwetting when his grandmother brought an amulet for him, then, has the amulet become invalid because of Shah Sahib? But, the embarrassment of wetting the bedding suppressed under the immense sadness of missing the target. It was not right to miss the target. He takes two glasses of water forcefully and goes to sleep again. He properly turns over the near pillow, but he has to sleep turning to the left because the right side is completely wet.

Chapter 5

Conclusion:

Translation is a challenging work for which translators have to work with dedication and go through hardship to come out with the best translated copy. Translators should always keep in mind that there is no pleasure in translating anything without struggling with it. Therefore, they should not feel disheartened if their work receives criticism instead of appreciation rather they should try to overcome the faults critics point out to them.

In the first place, translators should know that they might be able to translate the sense precisely, but will not be able to maintain the expression all the time. So, while translating a story, they should keep in mind that the outcome of a good translated story will depend on how the story is expressing the stylistic quality of the source text, but this does not mean that they are obliged to sound like exactly the source text. A translator, who has creative skills, knows how to present a translated story to the target readers so that it looks like the translator's own creation; however, this does not mean that the translator is cheating. This simply implies the talents and creative skills of the translator. The contentment of the translator lies in readers enjoyment while reading a translated work and feel like reading an original piece instead of a translated work, it will not only let them enjoy the text but also help them appreciate the contents.

Additionally, the art of translation differs from translator to translator. Therefore, if someone else tries to translate any of his fictions, it will be a great help to Bengali literature. This dissertation, hopefully, will be a valuable resource for those who will need guidance to translate Akhteruzzaman Elias's fiction or any other contemporary writings in future. This paper will also

help Target Language (TL) readers to understand the contents of Source Language (SL) efficiently.

Moreover, the main objective of this paper is not to teach people how to translate but to introduce the writings of Akhteruzzaman Elias. It is to be hoped that when people will read this paper, they will be encouraged to read his works more and the library and the bookstores will be more interested to keep his literary works in their collection. Thus, this paper can be a good resource for the researchers who intend to do any research on him or his writings.

Glossary Terms

Aqeeqah: An Islamic tradition of the sacrifice of an animal on the occasion of a child's birth.

Azrael: In Jewish and Islamic Mythology it is the angel who severs the soul from the body at death.

Chicken-Pulao: Flavored chicken rice cooked with mild Bangladeshi spices and chicken.

Dalda: Dalda is a brand of hydrogenated vegetable oil popular in South Asia.

Dalpuri: Dal Puri (fried puffed bread), consists of puris filled with mildly spiced moong dal.

Hartal: A closure of shops and offices as a protest or a mark of sorrow.

Huzoor: An Bangladeshi of high rank, or a title of respect for such a person who usually teach religion.

Jummah: It is a congregational prayer hold every Friday, just after noon instead of the Zuhr prayer

Khuda: It is the Iranian word for "Lord" or "God"

Lungi: A sarong-like garment wrapped around the waist and extending to the ankles.

Madrasha: It is the Arabic word for any type of educational institution specially a school where people go to learn about the religion of Islam

Maulana: A Muslim man revered for his religious learning or piety.

Meoya: A kind of item made of milk and is used to increase the taste of food.

Rajakar- A member of a Pakistani Islamic militia who opposed the pro-Bangladesh forces in the Liberation War of 1971 in Bangladesh.

Rakat: Rakat consists of the prescribed movements and words followed by Muslims while offering prayers to God. It also refers to a single unit of Islamic prayers.

Shah Sahib- Traditionally is a word of Arabic origin meaning holder, master or owner.

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