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The Good Muslim as a Quest for *Jus Post Bellum* in a Nation in Transition

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Abstract

This paper explores the search for justice after the war in Tahmima Anam's novel, *The Good Muslim.* The novel deals with the aftermath of 'the Liberation War of Bangladesh' in the 1970s and early 80s, when the country was gravely suffering from famine, consecutive murders of their prominent leaders, political upheavals, natural disasters, and paralyzed democratic norms in the hands of a Dictator Hussein Muhammad Ershad. In such a context, Maya Haque, the protagonist of the novel, and an erstwhile freedom fighter continues writing and fighting for modern education, justice for the rape victims of the war, and democracy in the country. The study analyzes narrative data from the novel to see how the female characters struggle for justice after the war. For this purpose, it uses Larry May's insights on 'jus post bellum'. May has proposed six criteria for post-war justice, including 'reconciliation' and 'rebuilding', to maintain lasting peace in a post-war society. The novel entails these conditions and brings transitional justice to the fore of discourse through the literary creation. The paper claims that the protagonist is not only raising her voice for certain characters in the novel, rather she is constantly contributing to the broader issue of jus post bellum, which has been the most important, yet the most 'neglected' topic in just war theories. The article concludes with the idea that a fictitious work like *The Good Muslim* can be a good voice for the voiceless and a loud and clear advocacy for justice after the war. It can contribute to maintaining law and order and build up lasting peace preventing further violence in a postwar society.

Keywords*:* Jus post bellum, citizen's trial, democracy, struggle, meionexia

Introduction

Tahamima Anam has written the Bengal trilogy: *A Golden Age* (2007), *The Good Muslim* (2011), and *The Bones of Grace* (2016). They all deal with the Haque family in the historical-political backdrop of late twentieth-century Bangladesh. The second among them, *The Good Muslim* is a story of two siblings, Maya and Sohail Haque, who actively participated in the Liberation Movement of Bangladesh in 1971.

The Good Muslim intertwines the Haque family's story with Bangladesh's post-war crisis in the 1970s and 1980s. During the two decades, Bangladesh witnessed various types of catastrophes. The country's prominent leaders like Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Tajuddin Ahmad, and Ziaur Rahman were assassinated one after the other. Huge floods and cyclones devastated the lives, properties, and infrastructures. Unfair replacements of rulers and 'coups' challenged the country's stability, peace, and order. Ultimately, the government was trapped in the hands of a Dictator Hussein Muhammad Ershad who had hindered the democratic institutions and practices. In such a chaotic setting, the protagonist, Maya, struggles to educate women and children, takes care of rape-victim women of the war, and challenges the Dictator for incapacitating the democratic system. She joins the teams of women like Jahanara Imam who demand "a citizen's trial" in which "the killers and collaborators would be tried and sentenced" (Anam, 2011, pp. 213, 212). Side by side she struggles with her brother, a religious fundamentalist who has sent his son Zaid to madrassa for his education, and insists Zaid be admitted to a modern school.

In such a context, Maya's struggle can be seen as 'a war' after a war. In a war, women have to undergo unearned suffering. The armed war has been over, but Maya still fights 'the war' for justice and basic human rights. What can be the broader academic relevance of Maya's quest for justice in post-war society? This paper attempts to seek an answer to this question concerning just war theory.

Literature Review

The Good Muslim is a widely acclaimed novel, which has been analyzed and studied from various perspectives. In her analysis, Farzana Akhter (2018) shows her concerns about the subordination of women in the aftermath of war where their voices have been silenced and their real contributions have been ignored (p. 94). She shows how Maya, the protagonist, challenges the status quo, reverses the role, and takes her agency. As the title suggests, she focuses on "Women's Role in War and Nation-building" (p. 93). Women like Maya and Piya "have contributed to the birth and rebuilding of Bangladesh in different ways" but "has been overshadowed by male heroism" (p. 94). She ends the article with a note, "Genuine revision of the national narratives that gives voice to women's contributions in war and nation-

building, along with gender-sensitive reforms, will pave the way for women's empowerment and promote gender equality in public and political arenas (p. 105). Literary texts like *The Good Muslim* can recognize such voices and help maintain women's agency.

Sharma and Bhavya (2020-021) make a feminist interpretation of the novel and raises the issues of "sexual exploitation and social injustice" (p. 1). Akhtar mentions the tag of *birangonas* ('war heroines') a tag given by the Father of the Nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to the rape victims of war as "intended to honour all women – political activists, freedom fighters, rape survivors and so on – who participated in the national struggle" (Akhtar, 2018, p. 97). However, "the tag soon became a signifier of shame and humiliation" and "turned out to be a mark of dishonour and disgrace" (p. 97). Sharma and Bhavya echo the same predicament of the wartime rape victims that "these *birangona*s received public humiliation and societal disowning" (Sharma & Bhavya, p. 4). Both of these authors raise issues of severe injustice committed to rape-victim women.

Ahmed (2020) also takes up the feminist perspective to read the novel. She concentrates on how South Asian "feminist interventions" to "religious fundamentalism" have paved the way to open avenues for the making of "The South Asian New Woman" (p. 186). Ahmed ends the discourse with the contributions of South Asian female authors like Tahmima Anam whose "secular ideals can be instrumental in leading the path towards framing a discourse of liberal Islam on the global map" (p. 195).

In Ruvani Ranasinha's observation, "Anam interleave[s] issues of Islam, secularism and female emancipation in […] Bangladesh" (Ranasinha, 2016, p. 129). Ranasinha "explores the overlapping, gendered parameters of Islam, agency, piety and secularism in the feminist fiction" written by contemporary South Asian women authors including Tahmima Anam (p. 129). Ranasinha discusses the tussle between the rising "religious fundamentalism" and secularist idealogy carried by both of the siblings and shows how fatal the former is from the example of the death of Sohail's son, Zaid.

Majid and Jalaluddin (2018) entitle their article, "The Conflicts between the Secular and the Religious in Tahmima Anam's *The Good Muslim*". As is clear from the topic they raise the conflict between the secular and religious ideologies represented by the siblings in the novel. They later comment on the duality, "Anam's writing demonstrates the faults in thinking of the secular and the religious as a form of binary" (p. 30). Majid and Jalaluddin refer to one significant point about Maya's 'attempts for reconciliation'. Sometime in the 1980s in the plot, Maya is haunted by the

> memories of the war that she had initially tried to push aside. In a secret meeting with survivors of the war, Maya controversially says: "I think – I believe – that the first thing we must do is admit our own faults, our own sins. So much happened during the war – we were not just victims. She is also haunted by her actions soon after the war when she used her medical skills to help abort babies conceived through the rapes of approximately 200,000 Bengali women. (pp. 35-36)

This 'reconciliatory' role of Maya is in line with Larry May's principles of *jus post bellum*. For reconciliation maionexia, "demanding less than one is due" (Stahn et al., 2014, p. 20).

Kulkarni (2020) remarks that "*Good Muslim* is also overloaded with the incidents of rape and abortion" (406). He is concerned about the theme of "gender-based violence and domestic violence" in the novel (p.406). He concludes his article with the assertion that "a literary work must represent the true picture of society in which it is created" (p. 407).

Lal (2019) analyzes "the troubled relationship between empathy and silence" (p. 1). She associates Maya and Sohail's relationship with empathy and silence and the "negotiation of their irreconcilable differences over religion illustrates how their inability to accept gaps in empathy prompts them to adopt conflict-eschewing silences that lead to the complete breakdown of empathy" (p. 1). She concludes her article by summing up the idea, "The novel shows how the refusal to acknowledge the co-existence of empathic connections and dissonances often leads people to either embrace oppressive forms of empathy that violate others' silences or to forego empathy completely by adopting evasive silences" (p. 15).

Bhattacharya (2017) connects the rise of religious fundamentalism to overshadow the trauma of the freedom war,

> It shows how the nexus between politics and religion tries to impose an Islamic identity erasing the traumatic past, and thus hindering the process of healing from the scars of trauma and how individual acts of resistance function to challenge such acts of imposition and erasure. […] in the matrix of the novel the conflict between the linguistic and religious identity gets articulation in the microcosm of the family and […] individual resistance to the erasure of the past helps the nation to take its first step towards a process of healing. (p. 186)

Interestingly, Sohail is devoted to proselytizing orthodox Muslims, and the then-dictator is committed to imposing political authoritarianism. Both of them are so rigid that they hinder the roads to justice Maya wants to pursue at the level of family as well as nation. Both of them are trying to impose a Muslim identity.

Salim (2021) tries to "locate through Maya and Sohail Haque, (the two major characters of the narrative) the doctrines of Islam that get entwined with their Bengali origin" (p. 31). She probes into the psychology of the characters to see their "transformations contributing to the identity of the 'Good Muslim'" (p. 31). She analyzes the issues like secularity and fundamentalism, language and identity politics, postcolonial identity, and the troubled gender and identity of a 'good Muslim'.

Zubair et al. (2018) explore the novel through the lens of transnational feminist theory. He asserts that the "novel successfully highlights the patriarchal and national interventions in the formation of the woman's reality in the early days Bangladesh" (p. 8). Like the scholars above he also sees the feminist agenda as more significant in the novel. Madhurima Sen reads the novel along the lines of memory, identity, and gender roles. Sen presents "a discussion of the gendered construction of national identity and the complexity of gender roles in the novel" (Sen p. 1).

As we look closely into the pattern of the literature cited above, it is clear that most of the scholars have contributed productively to the study of the fictitious society of the novel along the lines of gender roles and identities. They have raised other genuine issues from the novel as well. However, as Amrah Abdul Majid has indicated above, the scholarly conversation has left space to use the lens of just war theory, especially *jus post bellum*, for the study of the novel. This research article has been written to fulfill that glaring lacuna.

Theoretical Framework

War has three phases: beginning, middle, and ending. Just war theorists have named their discourses as *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello,* and *jus post bellum* respectively. Since *Jus ad bellum* deals with the first phase of war, it is concerned with the reasons to fight, the appropriateness of the situation to fight, the authority of the fighters, and so on. It discusses why and when a country or a community can enter a phase of war from a phase of peace. The second, *jus in bello* guides how to fight, who should (or shouldn't) be fought against, what kinds of weapons should(n't) be used, etc. The last among them *jus post bellum,* that is, "justice after war*"* deals with maintaining long-lasting peace with mutual respect and harmony between the victors and the defeated party so that a sense of revenge, humiliation, and hatred would not be cherished in the minds of the defeated party which are likely to lead to perpetual violence whenever they got an opportunity.

Despite the newness of the term, the concept *jus post bello* "has deep roots" (Iverson, 2017, p. 12). Scholars on just war theories like Surya Subedi, Paul Robinson, J. M. Iverson, Carsten Stahn, Larry May, and others maintain that just

war theories, in general, are "dualist" in nature since they focus on only the two aspects of the theories: *jus ad bellum*, and *jus in bello* (Iverson, p. 19, Stahn et al., 2007, p. 921, Robinson, 2003, p. 1). The third stage of the war and the discourse on *jus post bellum* have largely been "underdeveloped", "under-theorized", "sidelined", and "neglected" in international law, politics, and moral philosophy (Iverson, p. 3, Brough et. al., p. 36). Eric Patterson confirms this situation that the "traditional just war theorists largely ignored *jus post bellum*, or just end to war" (Brough et al., p. 35). Recently, *Jus post bellum* has been "receiving fresh attention in just war theory scholarship" and has become, what Easterday et al. claim, "one of the most cutting-edge issues in today's ethics of war and peace" (Stahn et al., pp. 1, 5, 15; Iverson, p. 8). Besides, whatever work has been done on *jus post ballum* is related to, as Immanuel Kant asserted, a 'duty' of a victor towards the defeated (Stahn et al., p. 935). Mark Evans echoes the same idea that *jus post bellum* is "depicted as an account of what just victor can and should do in securing the goal of a just peace which is the ultimate aim– the basis of the just cause– of a just war (Stahn et al., p. 27). Scholars like Kant, Evans, and others point out victors' responsibility to the defeated in the aftermath of a war. Eric Patterson names the peace after the war as "victor's peace" (Brough et al., p. 48). In this discourse, the agency of the victims, the issues of post-war management, and "successful transition from armed conflict to a just and sustainable peace" are "largely ignored" (Iverson, p. 13, Brough et al., p. 36).

Iverson (2017) defines *Jus post bellum* as "establishing a just and lasting peace" the function of which is "the successful transition from armed conflict to a just and sustainable peace" (p. 4, 13). Brian Orend takes *jus post bellum* as "justice at the conclusion of a conflict" and "transition from violence back into a better peace" (Stahn et al., 2014, p. vii).

Highlighting the importance of *jus post bellum* Easterday et al. contend that "successful transition from armed conflict to peace is one of the greatest challenges of contemporary warfare" (p. 1). They define *jus post bellum* as "the process of ending war and building peace" (p. 1). May and Forcehimes (2012) note, "*Jus post bellum* concerns societies that are trying to regain peace after a period of war or armed conflict. In this sense, there is considerable overlap between transitional justice and *jus post bellum* (pp. 1-2). May introduces the notion of meionexia regarding post-war reconciliation and writes that "justice for Aristotle lies between the extremes of taking too much (pleionexia) and taking too little (meionexia), and context matters, except for the fact that Aristotle does not directly mention meionexia – perhaps it is one of the unnamed vices. But he clearly does hold that justice involves taking only what is one's due (p. 34).

As May and Edenberg put it:

> It is not merely peace that is at issue, but a just peace, where mutual respect and the rule of law are key considerations. […] The *jus post bellum* literature focuses, as one might expect, on the achieving of peace. […] While *jus post bellum* theorists want a just peace, not merely any peaceful settlement of hostilities, they focus on the stopping of hostilities. *Jus post bellum* principles all are aimed at securing a just and lasting peace at the end of war or armed conflict. Discussion of these principles has been standard fare in the Just War Tradition for several thousand years, even if *jus post bellum* principles are not usually given the status afford to *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* principles. (cited in Iverson, 2017, p. 5)

Peace after war is normally an oppressive concept. Eric Patterson calls it a "victor's peace" (Brough et al., 2007, p. 48). An enduring peace is maintained based on mutual respect and harmony.

May proposes "at least six *post bellum* principles: retribution, reconciliation, rebuilding, restitution, rebuilding, restitution, reparation, and proportionality", what we might call 5R & P" (Stahn et al., 2014, p.15). Retribution is "bringing those to account who committed wrongs either by initiating an unjust war or by waging war unjustly" (p. 16). May sees complexities in the implementation of retribution because "holding criminal trials and then punishing often popular state-leaders" is a challenging job (p. 16). After making the wrongdoers accountable for their crimes proportionate to the offense committed the next step is reconciling the victim and the perpetrator. A balance between retribution and reconciliation is to be made cautiously. May believes that parties come to a lasting peace where mutual respect for rights is the hallmark" (p. 17). May points out that reconciliation is taking the "center stage" these days (p. 17). To maintain just peace it is significant to "call upon all those who participated in devastation during the war to rebuild" (p. 17). May refers to the different views of scholars about the notion of reparation. He sees there should be "duties of reparation" of the victors towards "the unjust vanquished" (p. 18). The last principle of *jus post bellum* is proportionality. While applying the above principle there should be proportionality between offense and punishment. Care should be taken about "not to impose more harm on the population of a party to a war" (p. 18).

Methods and Procedures

This research work applies the qualitative research method. It takes narrative data from the novel *The Good Muslim* written by Tahmima Anam and analyzes them focusing on the post-war situation of Bangladesh as represented in the novel. For

the analysis, it applies the post-war theory of May as discussed in *Jus Post Bellum*: *Mapping the Normative Foundations* (2014). In the book, May presents "six *post bellum* principles: retribution, reconciliation, rebuilding, restitution, reparations, and proportionality, what we might call 5R&P" (Stahn et al., 2014, 15). Tahmima Anam's novel *The Good Muslim* exposes these elements effectively. Also May discusses the concept of meionexia, meaning "demanding less than one is due, or perhaps not demanding all that is one's due" (p. 20). If both victors and victims demand less than they deserve, that can open an avenue for respectful harmony and a long-lasting peace process. May is concerned about transitional justice' which is related to the change of the regime after the war. In postwar Bangladesh, the regime of West Pakistan changed and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman took responsibility for the newly-born nation.

In May's opinion, "Meionexia does not simply call for compromise or settling for less. Instead, meionexia requires that in some cases people not demand what they are due as a way to gain a more secure and lasting peace (p. 20). For the sake of lasting peace, it is necessary. May further writes,

> On the assumption that all people strive for a just and lasting peace, there is no loss of integrity involved even when the parties decide to give up what is morally important to them. In the sense that all parties will equally get what they strongly desire, a just and lasting peace, there is a sense in which meionexia as a jus post bellum principle is closely related to justice understood in distributive terms. (p. 20)

To justify this May gives an example of South African TRC in which both former victims and former perpetrators had to come to a compromise to maintain harmony and prevent further violence.

Results and Discussion

Tahamima Anam's novel *The Good Muslim* (2011) is an advocacy for 'justice after war' (*jus post bellum*). Through the narrative of the fiction, it criticizes the dictatorship of the Post-war Bangladesh of the 1970s and urges for *jus post bellum*, that is, "the successful transition from armed conflict to a just and sustainable peace" after the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 (Iverson, 2017, p.13). The six *post bellum* principles proposed by May– "retribution, reconciliation, rebuilding, restitution, reparation, and proportionality" are supposed to maintain just peace after severe armed conflicts (Stahn et al., 2014, p. 15). May sees legal and moral aspects of these principles.

Justice is what Maya strongly stands for. She wants to contribute to the newspaper by writing about war. She likes the idea of Jahanara Imam calling for a

trial for all the war criminals because she believes that it is "never too late to seek justice" (Anam, 2011, p. 222). She begins her article "I am here to tell you a few truths about our war" (p. 226). This is the role of a truth-teller. In her brief document, she makes people aware of their "responsibility […] to acknowledge the criminals" who were living among them (p. 226). The "Dictator" seems to let "the crimes of the past to go unpunished" (p. 226). Whether it be the Dictator or the people, not to stand for the trial against the crimes is to be "complicit in those crimes" (p. 226). She has a firm idea that the "Dictator isn't going to hold a fair election" (p. 222). Fair elections are the basics for maintaining law and order in the country. So, Maya wants "to get him out" of the power (p. 222). She talks about setting up a "citizen's trial" in which the traitors, "the killers and collaborators would be tried and sentenced" (pp. 213-212). Talking to Shafaat, she expresses her wish to write about the Razakars who, she thinks, "should be tried" (p. 223). She comes to know later that Aditi and Shafaat lacked "a sort of moral core" (p. 224). Maya was imprisoned because she wrote an article criticizing the Dictator for not bringing justice to the victims of war. This is an example of the protagonist's efforts to seek for retributive justice.

She works voluntarily at the Women's Rehabilitation Centre. Women like Piya arrive crying and say that they were 'thrown out' from her home because she is a rape survivor. Rehana easily allows her shelter. Women like Piya are increasing in the Rehabilitation center; some of them "had been raped in front of their husbands and fathers" (Anam 69). Maya tells these women that their lives will soon go back to normalcy, and a reunion with their family members will take place. Although it is a false promise, she goes on consoling them. Sheikh Mujib called them "heroines, war heroines", "Birangona" and "had promised to take care of them" (p. 70, 142). Maya is strictly against this labeling 'Birangonas' because "calling them heroines erases what really happened to them" (p. 223). Neither do they fight on the battlefield for any medals, nor is there any prestige with that tag. Rather, Maya contends that those women are "the damage" or "the war trophies", who "deserve for them to remember" (p.223). With these raped women, Maya has witnessed and helped them in "abortions", and saw them terror-stricken "to file a police report" and/or tell their husband or father (p. 223). Within these traumatic memories, Piya keeps coming into her eyes. Women's Rehabilitation Centre has taken responsibility for rehabilitating them. Those "abandoned" women respond that they don't want to be "heroines", as was declared by Mujib because they are "ashamed" and want to "leave [their] shame behind"(p. 70). Maya talks to her mother, "Isn't it better, ma, to erase all traces of what happened to them? That way they can start to forget" (p. 142). By doing this, the activists are attempting to rebuild the damaged lives, families and the women's raped bodies. Also, it can be interpreted as

The process of rebuilding is another principle of *jus post bellum*. While visiting the parliament building with her mother, too, On Independence Day, the Dictator lay wreaths at Shaheed Minar, the Martyr's memorial. Shaheed Minar is an icon of shared memory. It was "the first thing the Pakistan Army destroyed in the war [… and] "the first thing to be rebuilt", but Maya wished they had left it broken, because now, shiny and freshly painted it bore no signs of the struggle" (p. 44). He even "tried to change the name of the country to the Islamic Republic of Bangladesh" (p. 42). He makes speeches "on the importance of regional unity" saying "nothing about the killings" (42). He is "[e]ager to befriend the old enemy" (p. 42). In Avishai Margalit's opinion, it is unethical. While visiting with her mother at the parliament house, Maya hears people shouting "the Dictator's corruption" (p. 104). Questions are raised about the Dictator's lawlessness and impunity. Ironically, Maya hears that people are telling that "the Dictator is a great leader" (p. 58). But she uses this nickname often and doesn't mention the name of the 'dictator'. It shows that she doesn't like him. She wants to overthrow the dictator and reinstitute democracy, by restoring people's power in their hands. Side by side, she wants to reinstate the lost dignity of rape victims. So her efforts are centered on restitution.

Maya has seen death, especially her patients', passing from close. She reflects, "Death had even skirted past Nazia, leaving scars on her legs but allowing her to live" (p. 131). These 'scars' have made memory traces for Maya, too. As Mohona asks them how many of them present there have in the meeting hall lost their dear ones to the war, they raise their hands and mention the date and details of the incident. Their confessional narratives touch Maya and leave her "shivering" (p. 97). Voices are raised by "the wounded souls" to collect the data about the atrocities and "identify all the killers" (p.97). Maya opines to see their own faults, their own sins, too. Her line and lane are clear about maintaining justice. She intends "the cruelty of the country" to be 'resolved' and "the collaborators that ran free and never went to jail for murder and rape" to be brought into legal action (p. 99). She is in favor of law and order.

When Maya asks Rokeya about President Zia's death, she shows her ignorance and indifference. Maya is shocked. She is surprised that "it didn't matter" to people even the two of the Presidents of the country were murdered and now they are living "in the throes of irony, with their very own Dictator, their injustices, their dirty little war down south" (p.157). Despite all this, people are not concerned about maintaining law and order. Maya's view of justice is boldly reflected in her speech in the court. In front of the judge, she defends the content of her article "as a plea to try the war criminals, not as a slight against the Dictator" (p. 286). In her opinion depriving people of their "right to protest is a serious offence" in a democratic state

(286). Her lawyer highlighted her family legacy of freedom fighting and appealed to the judge to stay bound to "the ideal of justice" (p. 287). Thus, as a freedom fighter, Maya is freed by the court.

When the Pakistani prisoners are released and are flying back to Pakistan, a woman says, "They said they don't want us. Where are we supposed to go? What do we eat?" (p. 69). This reveals the traumatic state of the rape victims who were rejected by family as well as society. Some women are concerned that "[t]he new government had allowed a few of the enemy soldiers to return home to Pakistan, as a gesture of generosity in the face of victory", and many women went with them" (p. 69). The victims were not consulted and the narrator observes the soldiers "unshackled" (p. 69). It shows a state of 'impunity' because there was no realization of the atrocities committed by the Pakistani Army. The Pakistani "prisoners of war were released" and "no sorrys were exchanged" (p. 70). But the government is telling them to forgive. It is an awkward way of asking people to forgive:

> It was time they were told to forgive. Forgive and forget. Absolve and misremember. Erase and move on. The country had to become a country. Just as it had needed them, once, to send their brothers into the fighting, to melt their pots and surrender their jewelry, so it now needed them to forget. (p. 70)

This policy of 'forgive and forget' assigned by the Dictator is weird. He doesn't seem to have taken the consent of the victims, nor has he encouraged the perpetrators to confess their crimes. It appears to be like rubbing salt in the wounds of the victims instead of healing them. To erase the trauma without any proper address to the victims doesn't sound rational. In May's terms, it is the case of proportionality that retributive justice is left loose. The victims want the Pakistani soldiers to deserve the punishment according to their offense.

Jahanara Imam was called "Shaheed Janani, *Mother of Martyrs*", and "had written a book about losing her son in the war" (p. 95). Like others who had lost their family members and relatives in the war, she hadn't forgotten it. This is an ethical obligation. She questions that even thirteen years after the war "the men who committed murder" were still let "to run free, to live as the neighbors of the women they had widowed" (p. 96). In her observation, people like Ghulam Azam had betrayed the Bangladeshi revolutionaries assisting the Pakistan Army. She thought they shouldn't have been considered for Bangladeshi citizenship. She is in favor of justice. Maya assimilates Jahanara's statements and feelings with her own and so do the others when the latter is speaking about the crime and impunity related to the revolution.

Maya and Joy attend the second mass meeting addressed by Jahanara Imam in which she talks about "the war criminals" (p. 212). Jahanara goes on to speak, "Mujib and Zia had failed to punish the killers, and now the Dictator would never push for a trial. The collaborators will continue to live among us, […], if we don't do something" (p. 212). They had already waited for fourteen years for any action to be taken against the culprits. Now she decides to seek "justice" through alternative means if the state doesn't give (p. 212). She thinks of setting up a "citizen's trial" in which "the killers and collaborators would be tried and sentenced" (pp. 213-212). People like "Ghulam Azam, Nizami, and the Razakars who raped [their] country in '71" would be announced a verdict by "people's tribunal" (pp. 213-212). Her concern is for the boys who were killed, the women who were raped, and the nation itself that was 'raped' needed justice by punishing the culprit. She further says,

> Right now, across the country, thousands of women live with the memory of their shame. The men who shamed them roam free in the villages. No one reminds them of the sin they have committed. For those women, this trial. For them, Justice must be done. If the courts of this nation will not bear witness to their grief, *we* will bear witness. *We* will bring them justice. It is our duty, our most solemn duty as citizens, as survivors. (p. 213)

Jahanara Imam delivers this speech in 1985, February. Since 1971, these processes had to be started. 'Shame' is a form of painful memory. The men who committed the atrocities are 'roaming' around freely. They have not confessed their crime. It gives a picture of complete anarchy. In Jahanara's opinion, the state is indifferent to 'bear witness' on behalf of the victim women. She declared that they would do it to bring 'justice' for their fellow women.

In the post-war decades "religious and political orthodoxy" was growing in Bangladesh, and "war criminals ha[d] not been tried and many accused of collaboration ha[d] been reinstated into their former positions" (Sen, 2022, p. 189). The rape survivors were not fully integrated into society and the voice for secular liberal democracy was facing more challenges.

In 1992 a program was arranged in Sahrawardy Field where the victims of the revolution and their family members were gathered. The mass is full of "people who have come to bear witness and the ones who have come to tell their stories" (p. 289). Those who were observers or sufferers of the war tell their stories of trauma. Jahanara Imam, Piya Islam, and others tell their excruciating experiences in front of the masses. When Maya's daughter Zubaida asks her whether Ghulam Azam is going to be hanged, Maya answers that "he has to be tried first" (p. 192). This is another evidence of Maya's unwavering conviction on justice.

The plot oscillates between personal and political history, like movements in the Ludo game that Zaid, Sohail's son, plays. The newly 'born' country, Bangladesh, is in transition. The Pakistani army has recently retreated leaving painful memories to people and the country of Bangladesh. The narrator says, "The retreated army has left its traces" and the wound of war hasn't healed yet (Anam 4). They have left 'war children', raped and widowed women, orphans, and memories of atrocities. The new leader Mujib has started "printing the new currency and renaming all the buildings" (p. 26). In Dhaka, they have "changed the road numbers" (p. 51). Dhanmondi had been renumbered, even creating confusion for people. 'Paltan Maidan' has been changed into 'Shishu Park' (p. 232). This 'Maidan' is associated with historical memories. It is "the place where Mujib had made all his speeches, and where the Pakistan Army had surrendered, and where he had returned after his nine months in exile and inaugurated the country" (p. 233). With the change in power politics, these things have changed in Bangladesh and are efforts to rebuild the nation.

During the two decades in the plot, there have been so many changes in Bangladesh. However, the overall picture is still a gloomy one: the tanks appearing and disappearing in the street, leaders elected and defeated, two presidents already murdered, killing of tribal people in the south of the country, and not identifying and punishing the war criminals. Bangladesh is still in conflict. The narrative represents that conflict in two dimensions: secular humanitarianism versus religious orthodoxy represented by Maya and Sohail respectively; and the war criminals including the Dictator versus the moral witnesses and victims like Piya. Both of these conflicts are associated with war, religion, and ethical issues which shape and are shaped by memory.

The novel *The Good Muslim* ends with an assimilation of Maya and Sohail seeing "[a]ll that is good in her brother, and all that is good in her" in Piya and her descendants (p. 293). Maya has asked Sohail for forgiveness. She realizes that "[h]is wound is her wound. Knowing this, she finds she can no longer wish him different" (p. 293). This sense of integration evades earlier distance between the siblings. Maya seems to have come above anger or hatred with her brother. This reconciliatory vibes in the style of a speaker in TRC, Maya said, "I think– I believe– that the first thing we must do is admit our own faults, our own sins. So much happened during the war– we were not just victims" (p. 97). This is a call for reconciliation on the one hand make "not demand[ing] what they are due as a way to gain a more secure and lasting peace" (Stahn et al., 2014, p. 20). As Larry's notion of meionexia envisions "there is no loss of integrity involved even when the parties decide to give up what is morally important to them" (p. 20). Doing this "all parties equally get what they desire, a just and lasting peace" (p. 20).

Conclusion

Maya's role in *The Good Muslim* is that of a seeker of justice. Apart from her role as a crusading doctor, and a humanitarian activist, she has contributed significantly to raising the issue of post-war justice, which is called *jus post bellum*. Despite the long history, *jus post bellum* has been the neglected area of just war theory compared to *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* in international law, moral philosophy, and politics. The traditional just war theories focused more on why to fight and how to fight overshadowing the third stage of war how to build lasting peace and prevent the repetition of violence. More and more discourses are required to highlight the complexities and trauma of post-war management. The content of the novel *The Good Muslim* and the efforts of women like Maya have brought the issue to the fore. She writes and fights for justice for the victims of war like Piya Islam. She treated injured soldiers, children, and other needy people during the war. Despite this, Maya's role is often limited to the advocacy of women and their emancipation. This paper has attempted to correct the partial evaluation and discussed that her role is that of a humanist beyond any feminist agenda. In this woman-centric novel, Maya seems to be a moral witness exposing the real face of evil, and asking for a lasting and dignified peace for all people, especially for women in a war-ravaged nation.

Since the issue of transitional justice is yet to be addressed even after nearly two decades of the formal ending of the armed conflict in Nepal, the subject matter of novels like *The Good Muslim* and its discussion concerning post-war justice remains relevant for the audiences of countries like Nepal.

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