জার্নাল অব ইএলটি অ্যান্ড এডুকেশন | JOURNAL OF ELT AND EDUCATION
ISSN: 2618-1290 (Print), 2663-1482 (Online), Volume 6, Issue 4, Page: 79-82
Published by, Center for Academic Research and Development (CARD)

[**Citation:** Shiblu, M. N. H. S., & Akter, L. (2023). A Comparative Study on the Flaws of Male Protagonists in English and Bangla Literature. *Journal of ELT and Education*, *6*(4), 79-82.]

Comparative Literature

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE FLAWS OF MALE PROTAGONISTS IN ENGLISH AND BANGLA LITERATURE

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Abstract

This research paper explores the flaws of male protagonists in both English and Bangla literature using a comparative analysis. Like English literature, Bangla literature is also known for its cultural and social depth. Several Bengali and English writings show the flaws of male characters who are somewhat not perfect and possess few habits that lead them to their downfall in the mainstream of the story. It looks at how their flaws affect their personalities, relationships, and growth as characters. In English writing, on the other hand, male protagonists also have flaws that add to their depth and complexity. But some problems keep coming up, like being too proud, not having enough emotional intelligence, and keeping toxic manhood alive. The way these flaws are shown can sometimes support gender stereotypes and stop characters from growing. The paper looks at the social and historical background of Bangla literature, focuses on a few flawed male characters, and compares them to similar characters in English literature. The results show how these flaws affect, how masculinity is shown, how characters grow, and how society affects them in each literary style.

Keywords: Male protagonists, Flaws, Bangla literature, English literature

1. Introduction

Bangla literature, known for its rich cultural past and diverse writing styles, has portrayed numerous flawed male characters throughout its history. These characters serve as reflections of Bengali society, highlighting its complexities and intricacies. In Bangla literature, male protagonists often exhibit flaws like arrogance, self-righteousness, and chauvinism. These flaws have significant implications for their personalities, relationships, and character development. Similarly, male protagonists in English literature also demonstrate a range of flaws that contribute to their depth and complexity. Recurring flaws can be identified, such as excessive pride, emotional intelligence deficiency, and the perpetuation of toxic masculinity (Williams, 2016; Van Rooy & Viswesvaran, 2004). These flaws not only shape the characters' behaviors and actions but also impact their relationships and societal roles. Moreover, the portrayal of these flaws can reinforce gender biases and limit the growth and development of male characters. By recognizing and addressing these flaws, English literature can create more nuanced and relatable male characters that resonate with diverse readerships. However, the researchers found the primary idea to develop the paper from the article of Akter (2023). The paper aimed at depicting the flawed male protagonists of both English and Bangla literary texts in a comparative analysis.

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2. Methodology

This research paper uses a comparative analysis method to look at the flaws of male protagonists in English and Bengali writing. A wide range of literary works from both traditions, from different times and types, have been carefully picked. An in-depth study of the male characters' actions, thoughts, and beliefs in the stories helps to figure out which ones are flawed. There is a deep study of the characters that look at their personalities, relationships, and how they change throughout the stories. The goal of the comparative study is to find similarities and differences in how English and Bengali literature show flaws, how they affect society, and how they affect the story. The study also looks at the historical backgrounds, social norms, and gender dynamics of the literary works in their sociocultural settings. Taking into account the differences between Bengali and English societies, the effect of culture on the growth of flawed male characters is carefully looked at.

3. Findings and Analyses

Bengali culture has always been authoritarian, which means that men have been given more power than women. Bengal's social structure has always been built on caste-based discrimination and a set of rules. Bengal's social system was changed in a big way by British colonial rule, with the educated class becoming agents of change. But not even the learned class was safe from the biases and prejudices of society. When social reform groups began in Bengal at the beginning of the 1800s, they changed the way people thought about and treated each other. In Bengali books, the men who are the main characters often have flaws like arrogance, self-righteousness, and chauvinism. Some of these comparison are depicted below with analyses.

3.1. Jay Gatsby and Devdas

One of these is Devdas, from the book of the same name by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, which has been made into movies in many different languages. Devdas is a complicated and sad character who seems passive and unsure of himself, letting his circumstances and feelings decide what he does. Because he doesn't take charge of his own life and make good decisions, he feels useless throughout the whole story. Devdas's emotional problems are made worse by how much he drinks, which hurts both his physical and mental health. His poor communication leads to mistakes and wrong ideas, which play a role in the tragic events that follow. Devdas is a good example of failed manhood because he can't handle being turned down and is too possessive of Paro. He thinks Paro as his, and he can't stand for her to be with anyone else. His actions and ways of treating Paro can be seen as controlling and manipulative, which shows how little he knows about love and relationships.

One protagonist from English literature who shares similarities with the flawed character of Devdas is Jay Gatsby from F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*. While Devdas is a character from Indian literature, the flaws and tragic circumstances surrounding both characters make them comparable. Like Devdas, Jay Gatsby is flawed in his obsessive pursuit of a romantic ideal. Gatsby becomes infatuated with Daisy Buchanan, a woman he loved in his youth, and spends years accumulating wealth and throwing extravagant parties in an attempt to win her back. However, Gatsby's obsession with the past and his distorted perception of love ultimately led to his downfall.

Similarly, Devdas is characterized by his inability to move on from his childhood love, Paro. Despite his feelings for her, he allows external factors and societal pressures to drive a wedge between them. Devdas becomes consumed by his self-destructive habits, such as alcoholism, and fails to take control of his own life, leading to a tragic end (Akter, 2023). Both characters display a certain level of self-sabotage and a lack of agency in their lives. They are unable to make rational decisions or let go of the past, which ultimately results in their undoing. Additionally, both Devdas and Gatsby are depicted as being influenced by their respective societies and the expectations placed upon them, which further contributes to their flawed nature.

3.2. Charles Ryder and Nikhilesh

In Rabindranath Tagore's book *Ghore-Baire*, Nikhilesh is the main character. He is a complicated man with his own set of flaws and conflicting ideologies of a journey of self-discovery. Nikhilesh is

shown as a character with high ideals who strongly believes in love, equality, and freedom. Even though these are good goals, his optimism and naivety keep him from fully understanding how complicated the world and people are (Akter, 2023). He is afraid to take a strong stand or make hard decisions, which makes him easy for others to influence and control. Because he doesn't want to face difficult situations, he can't take charge of his life and the way things are going. Nikhilesh comes from a powerful family and is in a position of influence and power. But he doesn't always realize or appreciate the advantages that come with his position. He has trouble communicating well, especially when it comes to telling Bimala what he is thinking and feeling. He doesn't make it clear what he wants, what worries him, and what he expects, which leads to mistakes and bad communication. He doesn't show much emotion, especially when it comes to his wife, Bimala. He doesn't fully understand and care about her changing feelings and wants, which makes their mental distance grow. Their marriage has problems because he can't connect with Bimala on an emotional level.

While there may not be an exact equivalent in English literature, one protagonist who shares some similarities is Charles Ryder from Evelyn Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited*. Both Nikhilesh and Charles Ryder are characterized by their internal conflicts and struggles with their beliefs and identities. Nikhilesh, in *Ghore Baire*, grapples with his nationalist ideals, his initial aloofness from his own country, and his eventual embrace of social reform. Similarly, Charles Ryder experiences a conflict between his agnostic worldview and his interactions with the deeply religious Marchmain family. Both characters also encounter transformative experiences that challenge their existing beliefs and force them to question their choices. Nikhilesh's interactions with his wife Bimala and his friend Sandip push him to reevaluate his nationalist views and confront his flaws. Likewise, Charles Ryder's friendship with Sebastian Flyte and his subsequent involvement with the Marchmain family led him to reassess his values and reexamine his own identity. Additionally, both protagonists face the consequences of their actions and choices. Nikhilesh's initial detachment and idealism have unintended consequences, leading to tragic events in the story. Similarly, Charles Ryder's choices and moral compromises have far-reaching repercussions that affect his relationships and sense of self.

3.3. Pip and Shrikanta

Shrikanta is a four-part novel written by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, depicting the journey of the protagonist, Shrikanta. Shrikanta is portrayed as a complex and multifaceted character. He displays a certain moral ambiguity, particularly when it comes to his relationships with women. He engages in romantic relationships without fully committing or taking responsibility for the consequences. This behaviour demonstrates a lack of ethical clarity and raises questions about his integrity and commitment to his values. He tends to escape from his problems and responsibilities by frequently embarking on long journeys, both physically and mentally. This character is portrayed as naive, easily influenced by others, and susceptible to manipulation. He falls prey to the schemes and deceptions of individuals who take advantage of his innocence. Throughout the novel, Shrikanta exhibits a lack of self-awareness and introspection. He fails to critically examine his actions, motivations, and consequences. Like Shrikanta, One such protagonist is Pip from Charles Dickens's novel *Great Expectations*. Pip goes through a journey of self-discovery and faces various personal and moral challenges. Both characters struggle with their desires and ambitions, often making poor decisions that lead to negative consequences. Shrikanta, throughout the novel, finds himself torn between different paths and is easily swayed by external influences. Similarly, Pip also experiences a similar inner conflict as he navigates the complexities of social status, wealth, and love.

Both characters display a certain level of naiveté and idealism, which contribute to their flaws. Shrikanta, in his pursuit of truth and spirituality, often falls victim to manipulation and fails to fully understand the consequences of his actions (Akter, 2023). Similarly, Pip's desire for wealth and social advancement blinds him to the true values of love and loyalty, leading to a series of misguided choices. Furthermore, both Shrikanta and Pip undergo transformative journeys that involve coming to terms with their flaws and realizing the importance of self-reflection and personal growth. They learn valuable life lessons through their experiences and ultimately strive for redemption.

3.4. Charlie Marlow and Amit Roy

In *Those Days* of Sunil Gangopadhyay, Amit Roy is a broken man who struggles with his morals. Roy is shown to have no clear goals or sense of direction in life. He often uses books, movies, and fantasy places to escape from his own life. This behaviour keeps him from growing as a person and makes it hard for him to deal with the real world and its responsibilities. Amit Roy is emotionally fragile and has trouble dealing with hard feelings and experiences. He often keeps people at a distance and doesn't get close to them on an emotional level. Because he has trouble making real connections, he misses out on important support systems and life-changing events.

Like Roy, Charlie Marlow from Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* is a complex character with unique traits. Amit Roy and Charlie Marlow both embark on journeys that expose them to the darker aspects of human nature and society. They confront moral dilemmas and internal conflicts as they navigate complex environments. Amit Roy grapples with his inner demons, such as guilt and a sense of inadequacy, as he witnesses the tumultuous events of colonial India (Akter, 2023). Similarly, Charlie Marlow confronts the brutal realities of imperialism in the Congo, which forces him to confront his own biases and question his morality. Both characters also display a certain level of introspection and self-reflection. Roy engages in introspective musings about society, history, and his place in the world. Marlow reflects on his experiences and the nature of human existence, leading to moments of self-realization and personal growth. Furthermore, both Roy and Marlow experience a sense of disillusionment and wrestle with their flawed natures. They grapple with the consequences of their actions and the ethical implications of their choices. While the cultural and historical contexts of Amit Roy and Charlie Marlow differ, they share common themes of self-reflection, moral ambiguity, and a journey into the depths of human nature. These similarities make them comparable to flawed protagonists in English literature.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, the flawed male protagonists of English texts serve as a reflection of the complexities of human nature. By highlighting their flaws, authors challenge societal norms and offer opportunities for growth and self-reflection, ultimately creating more compelling and relatable characters for readers to engage with. Whereas in Bengali writing, there are many kinds of men, each with their strengths and weaknesses. These figures have had a big impact on Bangla literature and have given readers and writers alike ideas for many years. They aren't heroes in the usual sense, but rather unique people who are shaped by their surroundings. The way these people are portrayed is not meant to make their flaws look good. Instead, it is meant to show the contradictions and complexities of the society they come from. In Bengali writing, the flawed male main characters have become iconic figures that show how complicated human behavior is.

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