

**THOMAS GRAY AND JASIMUDDIN: THE VOICE OF EXTREME AGONY IN
BOTH UNIQUE UNIVERSAL SOULS**

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ABSTRACT: *This paper attempts to evaluate the agony of Thomas Gray, an English poet, and Jasimuddin, a Bangladeshi rural poet. Thomas Gray is a transitional poet. He is generally considered the second most important poet of the eighteenth century. A deep pain of losing their loved ones through death is depicted in their writings. Gray is widely famous for- "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" that is one of Gray's most famous poems. He depicts the lives of the obscure rustics buried in the churchyard. Jasimuddin is also famous for his poem 'Kobor'. The grandfather has lost his wife, son, son's wife, daughter and grand-daughter. The aim of this paper is to discover the similarities between the two unique universal souls regarding the sufferings of losing their nearest and the dearest ones through their famous poems 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' and 'Kobor'/Graves respectively that gives the readers a reminder of mortality.*

KEYWORDS: lamentation, death, suffering, graves, kobor, elegy

INTRODUCTION

As we know, human sufferings started from Adam, the first man of the world. Every human being suffers on earth either in broader or lesser sense. As per our conscience we must have and feel it. The writers are the keys of social pen with a keen depiction of human misery. Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard and Bengali rural poet Jasimuddin's "কবর / Kobor/ Graves" are the depictions of the worst human suffering. In both poems there is agony of human as the writers feel and hear. Gray started writing the poem in 1742 and he worked on it for five years. He published it in 1751 and it proved to be an instant success. Although his literary output was slight, he was the dominant poetic figure in the mid-18th century and a precursor of the Romantic Movement. The writers' mental agony is same though they are the inhabitants of far distant. We get religious aspects among their poetry. Thomas Gray writes the elegy in a village churchyard depicting the miseries of the common villagers who could be Milton and Oliver Cromwell but faded away in the ground before blooming to spread their fragrance through such human depression having their bright and brilliant potentialities. Jasimuddin depicts the deaths and graves of the five dearest family members of old grandfather. He mentions Mosques/ Masjid in his poem that the caller (Muajjin) calls from the mosque with a pity/melancholic tone. Now the narrator's tension is that how much time he will be allowed till his personal dooms day (death hour).

“ওই দূর বনে সন্ধ্যা নামছি ঘন আবারিরে রাগে,
এমনা করিয়া লুটায় পড়তি বড় সাধ আজ জাগে।
মজীদ হইতে আজান হাঁকছি বড় সক্রুণ সুর,
মোর জীবনের রেণু কয়ামত ভাবতিছে কত দূর”

(কবর, জসীম উদ্দীনঃ পংক্তি ১১৩-১১৬)

“The warm-coloured sunset has kissed the fields
And great is my desire to hug the earth around me close today.
The call to prayer floats from the mosque;
Let us fold our hands, little grandson, and pray:
O come, eternal God, let Paradise descend for our loved ones.”
(Kobor/Graves by Jasimuddin, Last Stanza, Lines:113-116)

This world has become the worst tiresome place for him and he wants to escape in the house of religion as a true Muslim. It is evening and his time is almost over but unknown to him. Now he is only waiting for the moment of his death because to him it is almost difficult to bear the pain of death of his family members.

Similarly, in Thomas Gray’s elegy- -“Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” reflects the same feeling of agony and pain of death. Here the poet describes the universality of death and the sufferings of people by losing their loved ones. He memorializes others in his melancholic mode with the awareness of his own finitude. In this elegy, he not only shows the agony of losing the dearest ones but also compare the differences of grieve between social class and gender discrimination. The poem argues against the notion that the poor are less worthy than the rich. Thus it also point out how men and women from different social classes are remembered. Indeed, Gray suggests that all the human being deserve to be remembered equally and with same manner. All deserve the same emotion of grieve. There is no difference between the rich and the poor. All the wealth are given to us by the Almighty. We have not created anything and we are not the everlasting consumers of those wealth. Human are the transient dwellers or travelers on this earth and their final resting place or destination is the grave.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.

The paths of glory lead but to the grave...

(Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray, Stanza 9, Lines: 33-36)

In stanzas 8–18, Grey writes about the most sustained discussion of death as the great equalizer of social class, he explores the contrast between the wealthy classes and the common laborers, once who faced social discrimination while alive but now all of whom are made equal in death. Moreover, Stanzas 19–23 center on the village’s deceased rustic people and their inherent value as objects of memory. Hence like Jasimuddin, the poet is also waiting for his last decay that is

why in the last group of stanzas 24–32, he wrote his own epitaph which describes the speaker’s meditation on how his poetic life will be remembered.

For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate...

...No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
The bosom of his Father and his God.

(Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray, Stanza 24, Lines:93-96)

Both Thomas Gray and Jasim Uddin can be considered as the universal humanitarian character because of their feelings and characterization of universal thought for humanity. They love themselves, thinking for others, their family members, their rural people and the people of the universe. The narrator of Kobor/Graves says:

“□□□□□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□, ‘আয় □□□□, □□□□□□,
□□□□□□ নসৌ□□ □□□□ সকল □□□□□□□□-□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□!’”

“Let us fold our hands, little grandson, and pray:

O come, eternal God, let Paradise descend for our loved ones!”

The prayer of Jasimuddin in “Kobor” is equivalent to the prayer of Mauriya in “Riders to The Sea” by

John Millington Synge.

Rationale

This paper is an attempt to naturalize the writing of the two different authors of different ages, countries, and cultures but dealing with the same thought of lamentation. Therefore, the primary purpose of this paper is to find out the vivid expression of sorrow depicted in Jasimuddin’s Poem ‘Kobor (Grave)’ and to detect the exact nature of mournfulness in Thomas Gray’s Poem ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’. This paper also aims to find the similarities between Thomas Gray’s Poem ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’ and Jasimuddin’s Poem ‘Kobor (Graves)’ from various point of view. Moreover, Jasimuddin lived in Bangladesh and Thomas Gray lived in England. In spite of that how the bonding of their great souls think and feel the same suffering in various ways, how it is composed as their intellectual minds output; that is the question to find out for the readers. All the great souls think and feel the same in different ways.

Objectives

The purpose of the paper is to discuss about the soreness of human emotion. The eternal pain of losing people close to their heart through death. The loss of death cannot be paid off, no one can remove it nor can replace the place of the dead person. People get a sudden shock during the death of someone but the pain remains though fade away by the waves of time. People get traumatize not only with the death of their family members but also of those whom they knew for very long time or had a close relation without any blood connection. It could be the death of a friend, a relative, a neighbor, a colleague or any other person. We can relate ourselves with such tenderness through these two poems of Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" and Jasimuddin's "Kobor". Since, these two poems had been written in the literature of two different culture but still we can find the similarities of human sorrow, emotions and feelings. It does not matter how far people live in this world but the feeling of love, life and death remains the same. For instance, if we see Jashimuddin's famous poem "kobor", the very first two lines start with the great agony of the death of his wife which he is caring since last thirty years. Along with whom he tells about the incidents of the death of his other family members gradually.

“এইখানে তোর দাদীর কবর ডালমি গাছের তলে,
তরিশি বছর ভজিয়ে রেখেছি দুই নয়নের জলো।”

“Here, under the pomegranate tree, is your grandmother's grave;

For thirty years my tears have kept it green.”

(Graves by Jasimuddin, Stanza 1, Line:1-2)

In this poem, we can learn about the sad and inevitable truth of human life. This poem shows us how cruel and miserable this life is when we our family members depart from the world keeping us behind.

Similarly, Gray's poem depicts death as a leveling force that brings all people of his village where he used to live. "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" describes about the buried inhabitants of a country churchyard and a meditation on the inevitability of death for all. It does not matter how rich or poor someone, which social class one belong or whether the person is male or female, everyone has to take the bitter taste of death and the people who are close to them has to suffer from the tenderness of losing their loved ones. In stanza- 9, it clearly shows about what the speaker wants to express-

“The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

(Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray, Stanza IX, Line:36)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jasimuddin was one of the famous Bengali poet, writer, lyricist, folklore collector and a radio personality. The main subject of his poem was the lives of the people of rural Bengal their simplicity, serenity, suffering, and various other aspects. That is why he is known as the 'PalliKabi'/'Rural poet' of Bangla literature. Kobor (Graves) from Rakhali is an exceptional poem, probably the best ever elegy in Bangla verse. Written in the dramatic monologue style and unparalleled in its deep melancholic tone, the depth of sadness of an old man narrating the story of losing all the loved ones is just woeful manner. Through Kobor, Jashimuddin soothingly describes an ignored village tale with magnificent nobility.

Basically, it is a monologue of a farmer who is standing in front of the graves of his wife, son, daughter and daughter-in-law. He along with his only grandson was asking for god's forgiveness for the people who were lying in the graves. At the beginning of the poem the farmer brought his grandson near the grave of his wife telling him that his grand-mother is lying under the pomegranate tree. Whose grave he kept fresh with his tears for last thirty years. Then the farmer describes his wife who was a simple and innocent woman who was very content with her life and deeply loved her husband. The emotion of the poet burst out from first to last the lines of the poem. The farmer's nature is a reflection of a loving and caring a husband and a father. Such love and devotion is a rare quality in the present day world.

At last the elderly told his grandson tearfully to fold their hands to God and pray for them so that He grant Paradise for their eternal life of death.

*“জোড়হাতে দাদু মোনাজাত কর, ‘আয় খোদা, রহমান,
ভসেত নাজলে করিও সকল মৃত্যু-ব্য়থতি প্ৰাণ।”*

“Let us fold our hands, little grandson, and pray:
O come, eternal God, let Paradise descend for our loved ones.”

(Kobor/Graves by Jasimuddin, Last Stanza, Lines:117-118)

On the flip side, Gray did not produce a great deal of poetry but the “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,” has earned him a respected and deserved place in English literary history. The poem was written at the end of the Augustan Age and at the beginning of the Romantic period. That is why the poem has characteristics of both literary periods. On the one hand, it has the ordered, balanced phrasing and rational sentiments of Neo-classical poetry. On the other hand, it tends toward the emotionalism and individualism of the Romantic poets; most importantly, it idealizes and elevates the common man.

Thomas Gray's “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” was first published in 1751. Gray may, however, have begun writing the poem in 1742, shortly after the death of his close friend Richard West. An elegy is a poem which laments the dead. Gray's “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” is noteworthy because it mourns the death not of great or famous people, but of common men. The narrator of this poem sees a country churchyard at sunset, which impels him

to meditate on the nature of human mortality. The poem invokes the classical idea of 'memento mori', a Latin phrase which states plainly to all mankind, "Remember that you must die." The speaker considers the fact that in death, there is no difference between great and common people. He goes on to wonder if among the lowly people buried in the churchyard there had been any natural poets or politicians whose talent had simply never been discovered or nurtured. This thought leads him to praise the dead for the honest, simple lives that they lived. He wrote the poem with the sad truth that at the end all of us have to be buried under the same way no matter how rich we used to be while alive. Therefore, at the last he finished the poem by writing his own epitaph which he wished to use over his grave after his death.

THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own...

(Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray, Stanza-30, Lines: 117-120)

METHODOLOGY

The researchers have developed the paper researching from the books, articles. Data is also collected using information from different websites. The information comprised papers regarding classroom presentation as well. It analyzes different types of situational sufferings-studying insides of the writers through their poems. Most of the data is obtained from primary thoughts and the secondary data is used for the ornamental design of the paper. Lectures of different scholars are listened on this perspective.

FINDINGS

The present piece deals with the major aspects of lamentation of Thomas Gray and Jasimuddin. Both poets deal with rural people with their pains and gains, emotions and passions, occupations and professions, problems and prospects in their respective poems. Both of them were deeply concerned with the unavoidable ill fate of the commoners who are deprived of modern amenities. Both the poems 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' by Thomas Gray and 'Kobor' by Jasimuddin are in the forms of elegy where the speakers lament for the death of near and dear ones. Gray laments over the death of common fellows in general whereas Jasimuddin here presents an old grandfather who cries out before his grandson with heartrending tears because of the premature demises of his family members. Gray repines that the dead rural fellows may achieve name and fame if they were given opportunities but Jasimuddin's poem is just saturated with ceaseless pathos for the loss of kin.

DISCUSSION

The main theme of this paper is to explain the soreness of similarity of these two narrators (Jashimuddin and Thomas Gray) through their writings. Though both of them are different individual, both of them are from different background and of different culture but felt the same grieve of loss, the pain of losing their near and dear ones. In Bangla literature, of the Bangla poems that touch the heart of the reader, *Kobor (Graveyard)* occupy a special place. It is one of the most famous works of Jasimuddin, the Rural Poet, the poem is a monologue of an old man to his grandson, which describes the idiosyncrasies of the deceased in loving detail, and narrates the tragic circumstances of their passing. More than a poem of bereavement, *Kobor* is also a window into the life in rural Bangladesh- framed with love and sadness. It is a reflection of their mournful life that are deeply attached with their family members and feel sad to their death. As Bangladesh is a family oriented country, the poet makes this poem a must read for every Bangladeshi's. According to interpretation of some scholars the following famous lines are written regarding the mourn for the farmer:-

“শত কাফনরে শত কবররে অঙ্ক হৃদয়ে আঁকি
গনগিয়া গনগিয়া ভুল করে গনসিঁসারা দনিরাত জাগি
এই মের হাতে কোদাল খরগিয়া কঠনি মাটির তলে,
গাড়গিয়া দিয়াছাঁ কতসোনা মুখ নাওয়ায়ে চোখরে জলো।”
“These wrinkled hands that hold the spade
Have buried so many beloved faces under hard earth
That I have come to love it, press it to my heart.
Come, kneel and pray, grandson;
Perhaps tears will relieve this pain.”

(*Kobor/Graves* by Jasimuddin, Stanza-8, Lines: 29-32)

Although most of the critics said that, the speaker or the farmer of the poem is the poet himself. Jashimuddin tried to show his own life history through the incidents of death of those family members as he also faced the equal sting during his whole existence.

In the same way, Thomas Gray, an English poet whose “An Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard” is one of the best known English lyric poems. His “An Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard”, meditative poem written in iambic pentameter quatrains by Thomas Gray, published in 1751. A meditation on unused human potential, the conditions of country life, and mortality, this is one of the best-known elegies in English Literature. It exhibits the gentle melancholy that is characteristic of the English poets of the graveyard school of the 1740s and '50s.

The poem presents the reflections of an observer who, passing by a churchyard that is out in the country, stops for a moment to think about the significance of the strangers buried there. The narrator is so obsessed with the mortal fact that he did not place too much value on this life because someday he too will be dead and buried. Thus the speaker of this poem goes

through a process of recognizing what is important to him and choosing how to live his life. He goes on to assert that Pride and Memory have no right to ignore them, and that Honor and Flattery will be as useless to the rich as to the poor when they are dead. The poem contains some of the best-known lines of English literature, notably-

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

(Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray, Stanza 14, Lines: 53-56)

Gray's life was also surrounded by loss and death, and many people that he knew died painfully and alone. In 1749, several events occurred that caused Gray stress. On 7 November, Mary Antrobus, Gray's aunt, died; her death devastated his family. The loss was compounded a few days later by news that his friend since childhood Horace Walpole had been almost killed by two highwaymen. The events dampened the mood that Christmas, and Antrobus's death was ever fresh in the minds of the Gray family. Eventually, Gray remembered some lines of poetry that he composed in 1742 following the death of West, a poet he knew. As a side effect, the events caused Gray to spend much of his time contemplating his own mortality. As he began to contemplate various aspects of mortality, he combined his desire to determine a view of order and progress present in the Classical world with aspects of his own life. Using that previous material, he began to compose a poem that would serve as an answer to the various questions he was pondering. With spring nearing, Gray questioned if his own life would enter into a sort of rebirth cycle or, should he die, if there would be anyone to remember him.

TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

Jasimuddin is a Bengali poet, writer, lyricist, folklore collector and a radio personality. Popularly known as 'Polli Kobi', or Folk Poet, who is famous for his depiction of rural life and nature from the viewpoint of rural people. In his autobiography, Jasim Uddin tells much more about village life as he knew it. He swam in the ponds and canals, fished in the rainy season, watched the sugar cane being made into treacle, and ate his fair share of this tasty sweet. The structure and content of all of his poetry carry a strong flavor of Bengali folklore. Jasimuddin was mesmerised by the natural beauty of Bangladesh. Nature and the day-to-day affairs of the rural people, the very heartbeat of the idyllic Bengal, came alive in his poems.

Although Jasimuddin was born in such an age when Tagore and Nazrul captured all the attention of the readers with their magical writings, and few even thought of going beyond their spell-binding charisma. In spite of all that, Jasimuddin walked his own way; a different individual who showed great penchant for originality that attracted the attention of both rural and urban readers. When he was writing, modernism was being cultivated by the then frontline writers of Bengal. Still, the poet managed to stick to his own school of thought, and that is due to his love and devotion for rural people. No other could equal his temperament and lyrical mode, which are so close to the weal and woe, loss and gain, laughter and sadness of everyday life of poor villagers. He matriculated from Faridpur Zilla School in 1921. Jasimuddin completed IA from Rajendra College in 1924. He obtained his BA degree in Bengali from the University of Calcutta in 1929 and his MA in 1931.

From 1931 to 1937, Jasimuddin worked with Dinesh Chandra Sen as a collector of folk literature. Jasimuddin is one of the compilers of Purbo-Bongo Gitika (Ballads of East Bengal).

Jasimuddin deeply loved life in general. The nature cult of Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam, of course, got befitting treatment in his poetry, and like Tagore, Jasimuddin upheld humanity above all. His collection of folklore surely gave impetus to his rural-centric writing. Being sick of urban life, Jasimuddin sketched the real picture of rural life and showed how magnanimous it could be. He found peace of soul in rural Bengal, something we can hardly feel these days. So, the poems of Jasimuddin are invaluable treasures for us that remind us of our glorious past, uphold our culture and heritage and preserve our social roots. He has obtained President's Award for Pride of Performance, Pakistan (1958), DLitt. by Rabindra Bharati University, India (1969), Ekushey Padak (1976), Independence Day Award (1978)

Kobor (Graves) from Rakhali is an exceptional poem, probably the best ever elegy in Bangla verse. Written in the dramatic monologue style and unparalleled in its deep melancholic tone, the depth of sadness of an old man narrating the story of loss of all loved ones is just doleful. In Kobor, an ignored village tale is told with magnificent nobility. The first two lines say it all. How much literature can be close to life, this poem is ample evidence.

It portrays grief and reality of life burdened with misery of our village people. The drama of an old man losing all near and dear ones is vividly brought back to life here.

The poem, "An Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard" connects with many earlier British poems that contemplate death and seek to make it more familiar and tame, including Jonathan Swift's satirical Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift. It was not until "An Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard," a poem long in the making, was published in 1751 that Gray was recognized. Its success was instantaneous and overwhelming. A dignified elegy in eloquent classical diction celebrating the graves of humble and unknown villagers was, in itself, a novelty. Its theme that the lives of the rich and poor alike "lead but to the grave" was already familiar, but Gray's treatment—which had the effect of suggesting that it was not only the "rude forefathers of the village" he was mourning but the death of all men and of the poet himself—gave the poem its universal appeal.

There is a difference in tone between the two versions of the elegy; the early one ends with an emphasis on the narrator joining with the obscure common man, while the later version ends with an emphasis on how it is natural for humans to want to be known. The later ending also explores the narrator's own death, whereas the earlier version serves as a Christian consolation regarding death.

The first version of the elegy is among the few early poems composed by Gray in English, including "Sonnet on the Death of Richard West", his "Eton Ode", and his "Ode to Adversity". All four contain Gray's meditations on mortality that were inspired by West's death. The later version of the poem keeps the stoic resignation regarding death, for the narrator still accepts death. The poem concludes with an epitaph, which reinforces Gray's indirect and reticent manner of writing. Although the ending reveals the narrator's repression of feelings surrounding

his inevitable fate, it is optimistic. The epitaph describes faith in a "trembling hope" that he cannot know while alive.

The poem ends with the narrator turning towards his own fate, accepting his life and accomplishments. The poem, like many of Gray's, incorporates a narrator who is contemplating his position in a transient world that is mysterious and tragic.

Implication to Research and Practice

The readers and the researchers will tear and remember their transient life. Hence they will start doing good deeds. The researchers will be able to go in the depth of life that the paper will show and bound them to do. They will also learn life is not only to enjoy. Rather, life is the aspect of challenging the hardships and the resting place is 'Kobor' or according to Gray it is 'Church'.

CONCLUSION

The study may come to a closing stage by saying that both the poems, 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' and , 'Kobor' are successfully dealt with the common theme of lamentation. While Gray laments for the insignificant deaths of the rural commoners, Jasimuddin dramatizes the unbearable pains of the separations of a rural old man/old grandfather. Gray repines for their latent talents which did not find due opportunities to be bloomed. He consoles himself thinking that they are blessed by their ill-fates which also prevent them from committing murderous crimes whereas, Jasimuddin only issues forth the heart-rending grief caused by the unavoidable law of human mortality from very personal perspective. Though the two poets live in the separate pole their feelings toward humanity and human sufferings are same.

Future Research

I am optimistic that the paper will be helpful for the researchers of future on comparative literature between the writers of Bangladesh and the English writers. The authors will be blessed if anyone of the world gets benefitted from this paper in his or her study. The readers will also get pleasure, though in sadness, reading the paper and seeing the similarities between two writers of two different poles.

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