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Telephone: 0088-02-8000368
Fax: 0088-02-8000443
E-mail: fassinquest.journal@bup.edu.bd

Correspondence

All correspondence should be addressed to:

Chief Editor

FASS INQUEST
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
Bangladesh University of Professionals
Mirpur Cantonment, Dhaka-1216
Telephone: 0088-02-8000368
Fax: 0088-02-8000443
E-mail: fassinquest.journal@bup.edu.bd

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Editorial Office:

FASS INQUEST

Journal of Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences

Bangladesh University of Professionals

Mirpur Cantonment

Mirpur, Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh

Tel: +880-2- 88-02-8000368

Fax: +88-02-8000443

E-mail: fassinquest.journal@bup.edu.bd

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Message from the Chief Patron

It is my immense pleasure to know that the 3rd Volume, Issue-1 of *FASS INQUEST*, the journal from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) of Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) is going to be published very soon. I really appreciate the effort and endeavours of all who have contributed to the process of sharing knowledge, ingenuity and scholarly insights through this journal.

Ever since the dawn of civilization, humans have been inclined towards knowledge and the quest for the truths that govern the way of our societies and world. This journey that we have embarked on this ever-changing world wouldn't be possible without research, its findings and proper documentation. I believe it is now up to us, the educators, practitioners and students to continue this expansion of knowledge through innovative research and documentation.

Within a short period, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences has been able to make a mark in the realms of education and research. I am quite sanguine that the '*FASS INQUEST*' will surely add a new dimension to the growth of the faculty and the university.

BUP has been persistent in upholding its motto "EXCELLENCE THROUGH KNOWLEDGE" with unwavering efforts for augmentation of knowledge and enhancement of expertise.

I sincerely appreciate the editorial board of the '*FASS INQUEST*' for their commendable effort in making the issue a success. I also hope that this publication would continue to be published in the future days to come. I appreciate and congratulate all contributors/authors who have conducted quality research and published their works in this journal.

Major General Md Mahbub-ul Alam, BSP, ndc, afwc, psc, MPhil, PhD
Chief Patron, FASS INQUEST &
Vice-Chancellor, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP)

Chief Editor's Note

FASS INQUEST is a double-blind peer-reviewed, multidisciplinary journal covering relevant disciplines of Humanities and Social Sciences. It aims to be a leading peer-reviewed platform and an authoritative source of information for analyses, reviews, and evaluations.

The emergence of the current issue comes from a long process, hence, all essential steps to make it a high caliber scientific publication were taken. We rely on the alliance of all our writers, editors, and contributors to make it up-to-date, vibrant, and relevant publication. This current issue of the journal is a corpus of insightful contemporary research articles displaying diversified areas of research. All the articles project critical thinking, use of profound arguments and versatile creative writing of the authors. The topics of Volume-3, Issue-1, cover certain areas from English Literature, Comparative Literature, Cultural Studies and Sociology.

The responses by the authors to our request for contributions are highly appreciated. Through rigorous blind folded peer review process and exhaustive evaluation by the Editorial Board, the best ones have been selected for final publication from the submitted articles. I sincerely acknowledge the conscientious contribution of the respected reviewers and accolade their zero compromise to the quality of the journal. I also convey my best regards to the very competent and intellectual members of my Editorial Board for their thoughtful guidance and relentless effort in the process of publishing the journal.

The Editorial Board of the journal is really grateful to the Chief Patron of the journal and the respected Vice Chancellor of BUP, Major General Md Mahbub-ul Alam, ndc, afwc, psc, MPhil, PhD for his valuable guidance, active encouragement and tremendous support all along the process of publishing the journal.

I would also like to state that the research thoughts and opinions portrayed in the articles of this publication solely belong to the individual authors. We really hope to magnify better in the upcoming days and with that note, would like to invite quality research articles with international standard on thought provoking contemporary issues from the scholars, academicians, and researchers for the next issues. We would dedicate ourselves to improving and step further with each issue in order to reach to the vertex of perfection.

We would sincerely appreciate any constructive feedback or suggestion from our readers that could help us to improve the standard, achieve high impact factor and fulfil our long-cherished dream in future. Wish you all a good read.

Brig Gen Mohammad Shamsul Arefin, ndc, psc
Chief Editor, FASS INQUEST &
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Trans-corporeality in Human-Nature Relationships: A Posthuman Ecocritical Study of Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*

Rifa Tasnia¹
Fahmida Haque²

Abstract

This study aims to explore how trans-corporeality portrays human-nature relationships in the novel, *Sea of Poppies* (2009) by Amitav Ghosh (1956-) through the perspective of posthuman ecocriticism. Trans-corporeality depicts the material interconnections of humans and non-humans in the more-than-human world to unite human corporeality and non-human nature to posit that the environment is not separate, but rather the very substance of existence itself. The research is qualitative in design, utilizing the typology of exploratory and explanatory research with the data collection methods of content analysis and textual analysis to analyze Ghosh's work. The work, *Sea of Poppies*, provides a wide-ranging reflection on contemporary human experience and bodily expression to provoke new understandings of the planet in which human beings and nature are intimately connected. Under trans-corporeality, the novel promotes the epoch of the chthulucene, a spider-like or tentacular web, a multi-faceted, multispecies link of wayfarers. The posthuman and ecocritical ethics of trans-corporeality insist that even the most routine human activities impact human and nonhuman lives across vast geographic and temporal scales. In conclusion, from a posthuman ecocritical standpoint, Ghosh's novel highlights the necessity of meditating more on human/non-human ecological interaction and ecological destruction and how literary discourse has started to transform by such central concerns.

Keywords: trans-corporeality, human-nature relationships, chthulucene, posthuman ecocriticism

Introduction

Man is not opposed to nature; he is himself nature: matter and life submitted to the physical and biological laws that govern the universe. They penetrate him, cross through him, organize him. He coincides with them, or, at least, they are not separable (Caillois, 2008, p. 822).

¹ Lecturer, Dept. of English, Bangladesh University of Professionals, rifa.tasnia886@gmail.com

² Associate Professor, Dept. of English, Bangladesh University of Professionals, fahmida.haque@bup.edu.bd

Eco-critics (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996; Rueckert, 1996; Bateson, 2000; Alaimo, 2010; Iovino, 2012a, 2012b; Iovino & Opperman, 2014; Cohen, 2014) explore the relations between literature and the biological and physical environment conducted with an acute awareness of the devastation being wrought on the environment by human activities in the 21st century. Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, and Mulk Raj Anand are Indian writers who have explored distinct issues ranging from the environmental crisis, colonization, deforestation, the bleak condition of migrants and workers, predicament of captured animals, class discrimination, caste difference, unplanned development, consumerism, and social stratification in their works. In Ghosh's first book in the *Ibis* trilogy, *Sea of Poppies*, characters are shown attempting to protest against the established hierarchical structures in human-nature relationships through the material movement of bodies or trans-corporeality. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a study on trans-corporeality in human-nature relationships in the novel from a posthuman ecocritical perspective.

Background of the Study

The *Ibis* trilogy focuses on the intertwined lives of multiple characters, beginning with the first book, *Sea of Poppies* (2008). *Sea of Poppies* is set right before the First Opium War in the port city of Calcutta and it thematically depicts the colonization system behind the drug smuggling and human trafficking at the hands of the British in India and the less visible China. Characters such as Deeti, a housewife, Kalua, an untouchable, Zachary, an American sailor, Mr. Burnham, a British opium trader, and Paulette, a French orphan find themselves inadvertently connected to the ship, *Ibis*, a vessel used for the opium trade in this work. Ghosh's work, therefore, contains the multiplicity of material relations which affect each character through their dissimilarities and divisions.

Problem Statement

Trans-corporeality reaches out to the issues of divisive dichotomies and differences between humans and non-humans in the contemporary world, addressing environmental implications and power politics. Ghosh raises the problem of the inequality of humans and non-humans in the podcast, *Cultures of Energy*, stating that-

I mean, as we've retreated further and further into a completely anthropocentric world, we've also been destroying the world around us. So, the world itself, the Earth itself has risen now as a

protagonist. Yes. And all our means of representation are means of depiction are incapable of recognizing this protagonist in a way that was not true of earlier civilizations in a way that is not true to this day of people who live in villages and, you know, around the world and who experience the world in different ways (Boyer & Howe, 2017).

The problem of differences between humans and non-humans is broken down to include the materiality of bodies that transcend rigid societal and systematic conventions in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*. Trans-corporeality proposes a new dimension of the human after the Human, which is not formulated from detachment, dualisms, hierarchies, or exceptionalism, as it does not, according to Val Plumwood (1993, p. 69), "background" nature. Instead, the material focus of all bodies highlights human as well as non-human performance, agency, and activity under posthuman ecocriticism in the aforementioned novel.

Rationale of the Study

Posthuman ecocriticism offers new ways to analyze language and reality, human and nonhuman life, mind and matter, without falling into well-worn paths of thinking. Bringing ecocriticism closer to the material turn, the material forces and substances, the agency of things, processes, narratives, and stories under trans-corporeality attempt to make meaning out of the world to extricate human beings from the center of narratives. Accordingly, the study of trans-corporeality under posthuman ecocriticism is required as Ghosh's work provides a wide-ranging reflection on contemporary human experience and bodily expression to provoke new understandings of the planet in which human beings and nature are intimately connected.

In different twists and turns, humans encounter physical objects (nature) that are reconfigured into human schemes in *Sea of Poppies* whose imperatives structure the daily routines for existence. The posthuman and ecocritical ethics of trans-corporeality insists that even the most routine human activities, such as extracting poppy seeds and travelling across the sea, take human and nonhuman lives across vast geographic and temporal scales, extending even to a ship, making it sink due to the wildness of waters in the sea. The bizarre enormity of the effects of the minutest everyday actions underscores the urgent need for rethinking ethics and politics in the realm of the chthulucene in posthuman ecocriticism - an epoch in which interlinked webs of human and non-human relationships have profoundly altered the planet.

Literature Review

A literature review is presented on relevant books, articles, and dissertations published between 1988 and 2022 that deal with posthuman ecocriticism and analyze the research on Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*. Different books and critical writings of Sada (1988), Ruekert (1996), Crutzen (2005), Alaimo (2010), Haraway (2015, 2016), Moore (2016), Vergès (2017), Hummel (2018), Ameen (2018), Jasmine and Davis (2018), Davis et al. (2019), and Alam (2022), are essential for the progress of the study. These works focus on trans-corporeality, Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene, and the research on *Sea of Poppies*. In all of these works, common threads are found in the human relationships with other characters and the environment that shows the interconnection between human lives and ecology. This study analyzes these previous works to find a gap in the research to identify substantial potentiality for further research.

Trans-corporeality is connected to how humans formulate their relationships with the environment. In ecocriticism, the environment is defined as “a system within which living organisms interact with the physical elements” (Sada, 1988, p. 29). For Ruekert (1996), an eco-critic judges the merits and faults of writings that depict the effect of culture upon the environment with the view of celebrating nature, presenting its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political actions (p. 107). Expanding on the idea of society's inclination towards hierarchy and domination, Alaimo (2010) establishes the idea of trans-corporeality as “the time space where human corporeality in all its material fleshiness [culture] is inseparable from ‘nature’ or ‘environment’” (p. 238). In this sense, trans-corporeal issues are related to the human destruction of nature as well as the bodily interactions of different components in society under ecocriticism.

Within ecocriticism, the Anthropocene plays a major role in connecting the human condition to the realm of nature. Crutzen (2005) attributes the term, Anthropocene, a human-dominated, geological epoch to the present, starting from the latter part of the 18th century due to the global increase of carbon dioxide and methane hampering the environment (p. 14). The Anthropocene places the blame for environmental degradation entirely on all human action, distancing all of humanity from nature, failing to challenge anthropocentric humanism as well as species individualism since all humans cannot be blamed for the environmental crisis.

Due to the limitation of the Anthropocene in viewing human society to be separate from nature instead of a part of it, the concept of the Capitalocene was developed by Donna Haraway (2016) and Jason Moore (2016). They point

out how the capitalist system is to be blamed instead of humans for ecological destruction. Anthropocene and Capitalocene, therefore, exclude all other systems that have contributed to the downfall of human-nature relations.

Alternatively, Janae Davis et al. (2019) have supported the Plantationocene epoch as a more suitable designation to point out the position of plantation agriculture where racism as a whole is a foundation of human-nature sufferings. The Plantationocene concept traces the ways that plantation logic persists across space and time with sociological consequences in organizing modern economies, environments, bodies, and social relations through the colonization system perpetuated by greed and racism (p. 2-3). Plantationocene takes what Vergès (2017) has suggested as “racial Capitalocene” to underscore how colonialism, slavery, and “the global use of the color line” have led to a contemporary devaluation of both human life and the nonhuman world (p. 77). So, racism is a major point of contention for the Plantationocene.

The Chthulucene exists as a critique of the Anthropocene, the Capitalocene, and the Plantationocene. According to Haraway (2015), the Anthropocene, the Capitalocene, and the Plantationocene are all to be blamed for the human crisis of the plantation and slave plots, the ecological achievement of the slaves despite “the harshest circumstances” acknowledge biodiversity and the role of the plantation in global movements of multiple forms of plant and animal life (p. 162). This is why challenging the epochs of the Anthropocene, Capitalocene, and Plantationocene is necessary to include the Chthulucene epoch, a multispecies movement of all forms of human and non-human existence.

Being applied to Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*, the multispecies movement in human-nature relationships is acknowledged by different scholars. In “Materializing the Improbable”, for Hummel (2018), *Sea of Poppies* focuses on how the body functions as an intuitive protagonist within political encounters connected to the rise of the Opium trade through Deeti and Neel (p. 580). Deeti’s renewed understanding of poppy seeds and her own body’s regenerative potential embodies a future beyond colonial capitalism alongside the material capacities of poppy seeds (p. 569). In his dissertation, “Eco-material Rifts in South Asian Anglophone Fiction”, Alam (2022) adds that Deeti’s rescue by an “untouchable” man and her subsequent union with him in *Sea of Poppies* allows Ghosh to offer an interesting shift from the imposition of sati on the body of women to a natural, “earthly” idea of the body (p. 97). Even Neel’s break from caste boundaries acts as an event that works against established narratives of opium’s commodification. It is an attempt to recuperate the effects of addiction and enact unusual, affective bonds through ethical care of the body (Hummel, 2018, p.

573). This offers a multifaceted representation of how colonial opium cultivation and trade in South Asia created a massive amount of material rifts that completely transformed the ecology of local farming and plantations and instituted a discriminatory capitalist system of trade. For these scholars, Ghosh validates the political significance of capitalism and caste boundaries in the *Sea of Poppies* with the movement of bodies. In this case, the force of agency of both humans and non-humans can be added as another element of the bodily nature through trans-corporeality.

Ecology gets a relatively strong voice in the *Sea of Poppies*. Ameen (2018) claims that the novel serves as evidence of “the widespread cruelty against nature for the petty self-interest of the colonial powers” (p. 41). Ghosh’s fictional story based on the Opium War untangles the horrid consequence of environmental degradation leading to a cataclysmic apocalypse. This cataclysm is also connected to postcolonial elements in the novel. Jasmine & Davis (2018) study how *Sea of Poppies* embodies significant themes of postcolonialism and environmentalism (p. 11). The novel skillfully outlines the migration, multiculturalism, displacement, diasporic and subaltern identity of the colonial time. In this case, the work takes the reader on a journey to craft the story of the East centered on its ecology in contrast to the hegemony of the West.

This review analyzes various contributions to the field of posthuman ecocriticism as well as the first novel in the *Ibis* trilogy, *Sea of Poppies*. The literature review reveals that different scholars have evaluated trans-corporeality, Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene, and research on Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies* in various ways. They have connected their works to human and non-human identities by recognizing the trials of nature under human domination, and hierarchical ways of thinking. However, the ways through which trans-corporeality highlights the problem of trans-corporeality in human-nature relations and environmentalism under the authoritarian hierarchy of Anthropocene, Capitalocene, and Plantationocene are not explored. There is also no mention of how a new epoch, Chthulucene can be constructed by including all three epochs. Besides, not many studies have been conducted on how the material conditions of human and non-human bodies function in the novel. A research gap exists as it is possible to connect human-nature relationships to that of posthuman ecocriticism which highlights the issue of trans-corporeality in the novel. So, a posthuman ecocritical study of *Sea of Poppies* uncovers hidden nuances in the elements of trans-corporeality in human-nature relationships as well as the positioning of the Chthulucene epoch in the novel.

Research Objectives

The general objective of the study is to explore how trans-corporeality portrays human-nature relationships in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* through the perspective of posthuman ecocriticism. The specific objectives are:

- to explore the trans-corporeal elements in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*.
- to explain how trans-corporeality promotes the Chthulucene epoch in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study are as follows:

1. What are the trans-corporeal elements in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*?
2. How does trans-corporeality promote the Chthulucene epoch in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*?

Theoretical Framework

Trans-corporeality and the Chthulucene

Trans-corporeality portrays the material interconnections of humans and non-humans in the more-than-human world to unite human corporeality and non-human nature. This is done in order to posit how the Chthulucene functions based on how the environment is not seen as separate, but rather the very substance of existence itself.

Trans-corporeality

Trans-corporeality is a term developed by Stacy Alaimo in *Bodily Natures* (2010), related to the movement across bodies and nature, and defined by its changeability between material and theoretical bodies that oppose dualities and dichotomies. Alaimo uses trans-corporeality to hypothesize "the often unpredictable and unwanted actions of human bodies, nonhuman creatures, ecological systems, chemical agents, and other actors" (p. 3). This refers to "the material interchanges across human bodies, animal bodies, and the wider material world" as it is a concept that has engendered "a new materialist and posthumanist sense of the human as substantially and perpetually interconnected with the flows of substances and the agencies of environments" (Alaimo, 2012, p. 476). Hence, trans-corporeality contains some key issues such as posthumanist performativity, vital materialism, assemblage, and bodies politic.

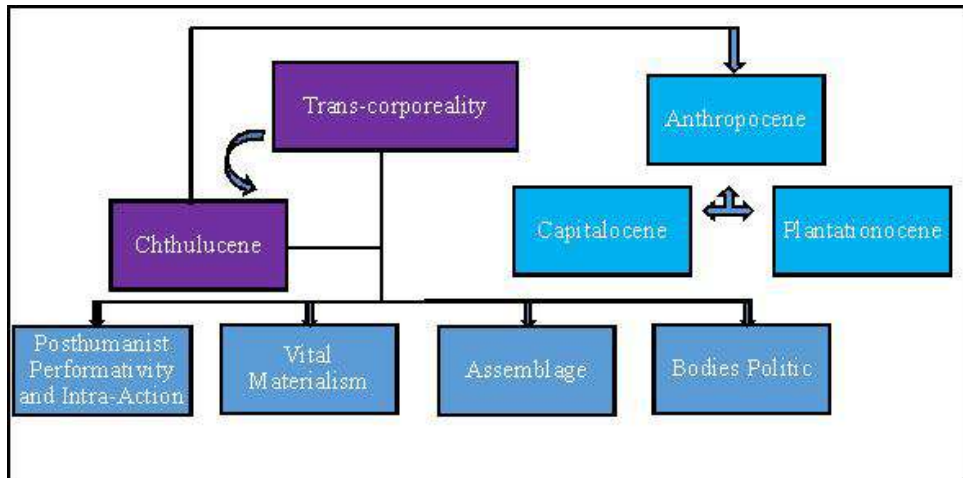


Figure 1: concept mapping

Posthumanist performativity and intra-action are components of trans-corporeality that rely on human action. Karen Barad (2003) believes that the posthumanist materialist account of performativity challenges “the positioning of materiality as either a given or a mere effect of human agency” as human beings are part of the world in its “ongoing intra-activity” (p. 827-828). Here, the subject cannot be separated from networks of intra-active material agencies. The actants’ performances or movements in relation to human thoughts and norms indicate posthumanist performativity only when they decenter the human from the centre of narratives to highlight the significance of nature in the human world.

Trans-corporeality deals with the process of becoming, rather than being to include the trans-corporeal element of vital materialism in human-nature relations. Jane Bennet’s concept of vital materialism illustrates how matter itself has vitality and a life, no matter how lifeless it may appear to be (2010, p. 99). In vital materialism, “an anthropomorphic element in perception can uncover a whole world of resonances and resemblances”, a play of the senses that echoes and resonates far more than would be possible were the universe to have a hierarchical structure. In this way, objects and things are described as having agency, putting pressure on human self-proclaimed uniqueness to consider the ways humans are affected by the things around them.

For Deleuze & Guattari (1988), in the assemblage theory, assemblages (or relationships) between strata regulate “the differential relations and relative movements”, requiring a whole organization to articulate formations of power

under material existence (p. 56). This encapsulates “a distributive vision of agency”, the awareness that humans and non-humans inhabit a dimension interwoven by vibrant forces that hybridize them (Iovino & Oppermann, 2014, p. 5). This means that assemblages or relationships between humans and nature are never one-dimensional as they involve hybrid bodily interactions.

The consequences of the movement of actants are matters of concern for bodies politic as they showcase how trans-corporeality can both enhance and diminish human-nature connections. Bodies politic combines the social and the somatic: the facsimile of social systems requires producing a certain bodily flow of materiality, affecting human-nature relationships. In *Political Affect*, Protevi (2009) claims that bodies politic is “embodied, with individuated physiological and psychological somatic dimensions” which means they are embedded in multiple and overlapping socio-political relations with other bodies politic, relations which can be both physiological and psychological (p. 72). This means that the interaction of the individual cannot be separated from the group setting (e.g. other humans or the environment). These interactions, in turn, are patterns in material behaviour.

By applying the notion of trans-corporeality to Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*, matter and meaning are identified. They are identified through the trans-corporeal elements (posthumanist performativity and intra-action, vital materialism, assemblage, and bodies politic) of human-nature relationships.

Chthulucene

The chthulucene is created when material interconnections challenge the essentiality of the Anthropocene, the Capitalocene, and the Plantationocene while creating the epoch of the chthulucene, a spider-like or tentacular web, a multi-faceted, multispecies link of wayfarers. Tentacularity or tentacular thinking functions as a counter-term, for Donna Haraway (2016) in *Staying with the Trouble*, to evaluate the visually dominated, anthropomorphic form of thinking (p. 31-33). The tentacles symbolize the other, the non-human, and showcase how the view that is many-armed and many-brained can generate other forms of knowledge instead of the fixity of the two-armed, two-eyed, two-eared, and one-brained perception. Haraway keeps the tentacular thinking in mind while coining the term, Chthulucene to critique Anthropocene to describe the Earth’s current age (p. 99-102). For Haraway, the Anthropocene does not provide the necessary narrative to break out of thought patterns and actions that are destructive to all living things. It only emphasizes the supremacy of humans, their individualism, and self-invented exceptionalism. The Capitalocene is also rigid in signifying “capitalism as a way of organizing nature” under a situated, “capitalist world-

ecology” while disregarding other systems (Moore, 2016, p. 6). The Plantationocene attempts to create a new narrative epoch from Capitalocene by including colonialism as a perpetrator of ecological destruction but it mostly looks toward the past, not the present. This is why Haraway proposes the idea of the Chthulucene to be inclusive of all bodies, all systems that are a part of trans-corporeality in formulating human-nature relationships.

Being distinct from the Anthropocene, the Capitalocene, and the Plantationocene, the Chthulucene comprises a continuation of histories and cross-species practices of becoming with one another (Haraway, 2016, p. 80). So, the promotion of Chthulucene constitutes tentacular thinking in Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*.

Regarding trans-corporeality, the theories of Alaimo (2010, 2012), Haraway (2016), Barad (2003), Bennet (2010), Deleuze and Guattari (1988), and Protevi (2009) intersect. In the current study, trans-corporeality has been connected to Chthulucene from a posthuman ecocritical standpoint. Alaimo, Haraway, Barad, Bennet, Deleuze, Guattari, and Protevi’s ideas highlight how firstly, there is a connection between matter and meaning in the human and non-human world that renders obsolete the distinctions between human and environment, moving beyond the construct of ‘nature’ altogether; the second is the idea that the shared materiality of humans and nature suggest that both have agency; the third is the ethical and political challenges the complexity and hybridity of these material connections suggest. Accordingly, this study has taken trans-corporeality and Chthulucene as independent variables to showcase the effects of socially conditioned human behaviour against nature.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research is qualitative in design, utilizing the typology of exploratory research in which the major emphasis is on gaining insights and ideas to help define the research problem. The study also utilizes explanatory research as it investigates patterns and trends in existing data of trans-corporeality in human-nature relationships that have not been previously explored. The research used content analysis and textual analysis to analyze Ghosh’s work. The study uses both primary and secondary sources. The primary source is Amitav Ghosh’s novel, *Sea of Poppies*. This work is a part of the *Ibis* trilogy and is chosen because it encapsulates the issue of trans-corporeality in both human and non-human existence. The secondary sources are various books, journals, articles, websites, podcasts, and dissertations relevant to the study. This paper follows the posthuman ecocritical genre-based approach. The posthuman ecocritical study

focuses equally on both humans and nature in order to challenge the anthropocentric hierarchical systems in Ghosh's work.

Content Analysis

The research used content analysis as a method of determining the presence of certain themes or ideas such as trans-corporeality and the Chthulucene in particular documents. This method helps analyze and explore patterns in the meaning of relationships (e.g. human-nature relationships) in specific novels (e.g. Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*).

Textual Analysis

Often, the target of analysis is to associate the text with a wider social or political context. In this study, textual analysis in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* is based on a particular theoretical lens (posthuman ecocriticism) and is connected to the context of the Opium War.

Discussion and Findings

Trans-corporeal Elements in *Sea of Poppies*

"And there is to the earth and the structure of matter a kind of resonance. We were meant to hear one another, to feel. . . . We are connected not only by the fact of our dependency on this biosphere and our participation in one field of matter and energy, in which no boundary exists between my skin and the air and you but also by what we know and what we feel" (Griffin, 1989, p. 17). The interrelationships between the material and immaterial bodies of the earth, atoms, matter, nature, and humans bring forward the embodied ecological conception of trans-corporeality. The changing patterns of bodies (both human and non-human) address epistemological, ontological, and political issues simultaneously in Ghosh's novel, *Sea of Poppies* where the interaction among them brings insight into the consequences of human as well as ecological degeneration.

Matter and Meaning in *Sea of Poppies*

Material agents (both human and non-human) contain agency and carry meaning through the trans-corporeal elements in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*. From the onset, the novel challenges the basic conception of the human world about human agency and its counterpart, the non-existence of nature's agency. This includes the human "material practices, such as the ways we labour on, exploit, and interact with nature" (Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 4). These material practices increase the chasm between the human and the non-human world in terms of

agency and performance. Ghosh's character, Deeti's livelihood revolves around nature, specifically that of poppies and its opium production as "the lateness of her poppy crop" gives her anxiety in the added belief that "the pods were of "no more value than the blossoms of a weed" compared to its "priceless sap" which "flowed only for a brief period" in the plant's lifespan (Ghosh, p. 3, 5). Still, Deeti uses poppy-seed paste to cook potatoes, poppy-seed oil is massaged into her daughter, Kabutri's hair and her own, and poppy-petal discs are taken as canvases for familial drawings in her alter. Here, poppies gain agency in the life processes as a substitute companion: "Animate or inanimate, our relatives are all around us, lighting the sky, rushing through a riverbed, thrusting upward through Earth's crust" (Spretnak, 1999, p. 183). Yet, poppies are taken for granted due to their valuable transformation into opium.

The *Ibis* is a ship used for the transportation of opium. Aside from poppies, Deeti's connection to the distant sea is reinforced by her vision of the *Ibis*. The chasm of the darkness of the "Kala-Pani, 'the Black Water'" where "the holy Ganga disappeared" offers her an image of the *Ibis* which will serve as an escape for Deeti from her troubled life (Ghosh, p. 3). This ship contains the character, Zachary whose travels strengthen the agency of nature. An example of this is when he visits a plantation in Mauritius where "The surrounding hills and crags were of strange, twisted shapes; they sat upon the plains like a bestiary of gargantuan animals that had been frozen in the act of trying to escape from the grip of the earth" (p. 21). Here, the fields contain rotted sugar canes that make it difficult for the colonizer as if the sugar canes themselves are rebelling against the concept of slavery i.e. the slaves used for looking after the colonizers' crops. This gives material agency to those non-humans who cannot speak as they are silently speaking out against the dichotomy of human/nature and colonizer/colonized for the plight of the inferior slaves. The dichotomous ontology only reinforces other common misunderstandings, including the "break-it-and-fix-it mentality, a mentality informed by the assumption that human agents (knowingly or inadvertently) create ecological problems, but can readily solve all of them at will with the right technology" (Phillips & Sullivan, 2012, p. 446). This is a false assumption as humans endowed with mind and agentic determinations consider the material world—a world that includes "inanimate" matter as well as all nonhuman forms of living (i.e. ships, seas, crops, etc.)—has always been considered as passive, inert, and unable to convey any independent expression of meaning.

The ship, *Ibis* is seen as a passive vessel and its vibrancy is taken away when it is equated with the trade of slavery. Mr. Burnham, the owner wishes to use it as "a slaver" while Zachary offers his criticism of it: "if slavery is freedom,

then I'm glad I don't have to make a meal of it. Whips and chains are not much to my taste" (Ghosh, p. 79). Zachary seeks to remove the "disenchantment of nature" through his idea of freedom against the slavery of both humans and non-humans. The ship used to propound slavery means "the denial to nature of all subjectivity, all experience, all feeling", which created alienation and instrumental positioning of human practices and discourses against nature and other humans (Griffin, 1988, p. 2). David Bohm (1980) calls this phenomenon the fragmentary perception of reality where fragmentation "is an attempt to divide what is really indivisible", whereas the experimental confirmation of the true nature of reality is that "both observer and observed are merging and interpenetrating aspects of one whole reality" (p. 9, 15-16). Zachary and his attachment to the ship, *Ibis*, and its disenchanted history of slavery across the seas merge his reality with that of the past sufferers under the human domain. According to Spretnak (1999), this is Zachary's ecological orientation that "acknowledges our constitutive embeddedness in subtle bodily, ecological, and cosmological processes" (p. 73). Therefore, Zachary aligns himself with the non-human entity, the ship, and nature's sanctuary for sailors in the seas to portray the trans-corporeal bodily inter-relationship of humans and non-humans.

The character, Paulette acknowledges the vibrancy of the material processes and the living world through her affinity with nature. Her very birth signifies this connection as she was born in a dinghy in a windy and dark setting of a river. As her father, Pierre Lambert was the curator of the Calcutta Botanical Gardens, she grew up around nature. This is why she interferes with the *malis* (gardeners) around her foster family's garden after her father's death. She plants "a chalta tree" similar to what she had in the Botanical Gardens whose fruit she used "to make into chutneys and pickles. She loved them so much that she even ate them raw, to the disbelief of others" (Ghosh, p. 102). As Paulette spends her time painstakingly watering the sapling and taking care of it, her actions indicate her value of the nonhuman. "Nonhuman" here denotes "a community of expressive presences" not only sentient animals or other biological organisms but also impersonal agents, ranging from water to storms, from trees to bacteria, from power plants to information networks (Abram, 2010, p. 173). Through Paulette and her relationship with the nonhuman, a hidden aim is introduced i.e., the theorization of a vitality intrinsic to materiality" and "material vitality" of all nonhuman forces (Bennett, 2010, p. xiii, 55). This reveals how Paulette acknowledges the performative quality of the nonhuman within the realm of humans and nature.

On the deck of the *Ibis*, the human and non-human collective collide with the vessel's motion through the Black Water. The migrants gave in to "a

pregnant, fearful stillness” as “they were moving, they were afloat, heading towards the void of the Black Water; neither death nor birth was as fearsome a passage as this, neither being experienced in full consciousness” (Ghosh, p. 371). As they were devoid of the human connection as well as the spiritual connection to nature, they were prone to be “desperate” and “suicidal” on board a ship, devaluing the “Ganga-Sagar Island”, “the last of the holy waterway’s many pilgrimages” (p. 373-374). This is where agential realism, the phenomenon that results from the intra-actions of material and discursive practices and agencies fails to merge for the migrants, thus constituting the world “in its ongoing becoming.” This becoming process is complete only when matter and meaning (human, nature, and their intra-action) are “inextricably fused together, and no event, no matter how energetic, can tear them asunder. . . . Mattering is simultaneously a matter of substance and significance” (Barad, 2007, p. 3). Thus, the meaning of material relations is an ongoing performance of the world (both humans and non-humans) in its differential agency.

On land, the migrants realize the necessity of nature and its agency in the polluted atmosphere of populous towns. One such town is that of Hooghly where the migrants “fell into a silence that was in equal measure awestruck and appalled. How was it possible that people could live in the midst of such congestion and so much filth, with no fields or greenery anywhere in sight; such folk were surely another species of being?” (Ghosh, p. 277). In contrast, the water induces darkness and horror for the migrants like Deeti: “Deeti stared in stupefaction: it was impossible to think of this as water at all - for water surely needed a boundary, a rim, a shore, to give it shape and hold it in place? This was a firmament, like the night sky, holding the vessel aloft as if it were a planet or a star” (p. 395). This detects the power of matter to build dynamics of meaning in and across bodies in the biosemiotics assumption that “the natural world is perfused with signs, meanings, and purposes which are material and which evolve”, making life an embodied process of understanding (or, in Barad’s terms, “differential intelligibility”) that engages all beings from the humblest forms of single-cell life upwards (Wheeler, 2007, p. 279). This shows how land, water, and humans are all a part of the natural world, creating meaning across bodies.

Unlike the rest of the migrants, the watery labyrinth of the Sundarbans receives the meaning of happiness through Paulette as it reminds her of her time with her father in helping him catalogue the flora of the forest. Paulette is “glad to seize every opportunity to gaze at the river’s mangrove-cloaked shores. The waterways here were strewn with mudbanks and other hazards, so the navigable channel followed a twisting, looping course, occasionally drawing close enough to the banks to provide clear views of the jungle” (Ghosh, p. 380). She finds

kinship within nature as it entwines with her past experiences: “these were more than plants to her, they were the companions of her earliest childhood and their shoots seemed almost to be her own, plunged deep into this soil; no matter where she went or for how long, she knew that nothing would ever tie her to a place as did these childhood roots” (p. 381). This coincides with Wheeler’s perspective as she says, “What goes on inside an organism, and between an organism and its environment (the two processes being intimately connected) always involves what . . . we must call interpretations—however minimal” (2007, p. 271). In other words, the borders between meaning and matter are constitutionally porous for Paulette, making the “intimate” material-semiotic connection between the “inside” and “outside” of organisms recognizable at smaller as well as larger levels of organization. Such dynamics are visible in the complex pathways of trans-corporeality—the transits of substances and discursive practices within and across bodies like the Sundarbans. In the first novel of the *Ibis* trilogy, *Sea of Poppies*, non-human material agents such as poppies, ships, and water gain agency alongside the human characters, Deeti, Zachary, Paulette, and other migrants.

Trans-corporeality transcends the limits of the individual body to include a multitude of bodies to formulate human-nature assemblages that give both humans and nature agency. The inter- and intra-connections of humans and nature challenge the power structures and body politics in the *Ibis* trilogy. The elements of trans-corporeality do not exclude any living creature and place all embodied beings as intermeshed in *Sea of Poppies* to redefine what it means to be a subject under posthuman ecocriticism.

Tentacular Thinking in *Sea of Poppies*

Tentacular thinking in *Sea of Poppies* relates to the unequal power structures in society. Unequal power structures such as caste, class, and race are major issues under the Chthulucene. One such issue is that of caste in *Sea of Poppies* which begins with Kalua, the driver of an ox-cart who is a member of the leather-worker caste. Deeti’s husband, Hukam Singh, a high-caste Rajput avoids looking at his face and prevents coming into direct contact with his belongings in the belief that it will ruin his day and bring him misfortune. The assumption that Hukam contains a higher material position than that of Kalua is to ask for something more with the assumption that “what *you* are is something *else*, some Cartesian *res cogitans* in addition to all this brain-and-body activity”—is to “betray a deep confusion,” because what you are “just *is* this organization of all the competitive activity between a host of competences that your body has developed” (Dennett, 1996, p. 155-156). To “ask for more” is to

remain captive to what Dennett calls “the Cartesian theater,” the specter of a disembodied, free-floating “central knower” or “self” who stands aside from and above these processes, at once the product and appreciator of them. This theatrical position contains the artificiality of caste and racial relations that govern illusive material interactions.

The racial relations that make humans and non-humans’ products in the capitalist and colonial system are that of the history of slavery. The ship, *Ibis* carries this history with “the ‘tween-deck, where the schooner’s human cargo had been accommodated, was riddled with peepholes and air ducts, bored by generations of captive Africans” (Ghosh, p. 12). Even a colonizer, Monsieur d’Epinay claims that “Now that we may no longer have slaves in Mauritius, I must have coolies, or I am doomed” (p. 21). The plantation of sugar cane and the transportation of opium sustains the colonial enterprise where the colonized Indians suffer under them as human slaves, entrapping nature’s elements for capitalist gain. The colonial enterprise also continues the legacy of racism, bigotry, and violence in an effort to preserve their rule, claiming that the surrounding nature of India is “filled with marrons and desperadoes and escaped slaves. A gentleman on his own must be careful” to make sure that a gun is never far from his hands (p. 22). However, life should not be reduced to the organic or the inorganic matters from which a person of any race or caste came to be. As DeLanda (2000) notes, freedom within nature “made new forms of movement control possible ... freeing them from the constraints and literally setting them into motion to conquer every available niche in the air, in water and on land” (p. 26-27). The freedom from the shackles of race and class is prevented by the advent of colonization and classist relationships between humans and nature.

The effect of colonial rule ruined the relationship that colonized people had with nature as it transformed natives, forcefully, from winter-crop growers to poppy growers, effectively making them into indentured servants. Deeti’s family suffers under the colonial system: “The hut’s roof was urgently in need of repairs, but in this age of flowers, thatch was not easy to come by: in the old days, the fields would be heavy with wheat in the winter, and after the spring harvest, the straw would be used to repair the damage of the year before. But now, with the sahibs forcing everyone to grow poppy, no one had thatch to spare” (Ghosh, p. 29). The export of opium from Calcutta was a lucrative business for the British colonizers, oppressing the Indian peasants who were forced to grow it. This combines the human-centric, capitalist, and racial dimensions of the Anthropocene, the Capitalocene, and the Plantationocene. This is a signature combination of power and doom that generates complex emotions for Deeti and other colonized people: Emmett & Nye (2017) mention “grief, fear,

doubt, uncertainty, morbid curiosity, lethal rage” (p. 108). These tonalities express a sense that humans have reached a moment of maximum accumulation that inevitably precedes a trajectory of terminal decline for the environment.

To retain power, the colonizers equate slavery to freedom to justify their rule over the so-called uncivilized people. Mr. Burnham, a colonizer, tells Zachary, “It’s sad but true that there are many who’ll stop at nothing to halt the march of human freedom” (p. 79). This human freedom is the mastery of the white race over the “lesser” races: “As I see it, Reid, the Africa trade was the greatest exercise in freedom since God led the children of Israel out of Egypt. Consider, Reid, the situation of a so-called slave in the Carolinas - is he not freer than his brethren in Africa, groaning under the rule of some dark tyrant?” (p. 79). According to the tentacular thought process, the gulf between Europe and Africa and Asia shows how “we humans never experience ourselves as a species”, only ever as participants of smaller communities such as white or black (Chakrabarty, 2009, p. 220). Whatever sense of universality there is “arises from a shared sense of a catastrophe”; it is less a shared global identity, but only a negative identity, “a placeholder for an emergent, new universal history of humans that flashes up in the moment of the danger that is climate change” (p. 219-220). It is only ecological disasters that unite humans but when it comes to preserving power, there is a divide between humans and other humans as well as nature.

In the preservation of power, the native is reduced to being ignorant, naive, and innocent in the eyes of the colonizer. Even though the zamindar, Neel Rattan Halder, contains a powerful position among the natives, he is a mere tool under the grasp of the colonizers. This is why Mr. Burnham sneers at him for his lack of knowledge about a war on opium breaking out in China: ““Why indeed should a man like you concern yourself with such matters? You have more than enough to occupy you, I’m sure, with all your palaces and zenanas and budgerows.”” (Ghosh, p. 110). To Mr. Burnham, natives like Neel, despite his privilege, are interchangeable in the game of capitalist and racial control: “Free Trade is a right conferred on Man by God, and its principles apply as much to opium as to any other article of trade. More so perhaps, since in its absence many millions of natives would be denied the lasting advantages of British influence.”” (p. 115). This indicates the freedom of the white master in control of whomever he considers to be his inferiors under the slave plantation system. In Donna Haraway’s words, this system “was the model and motor for the carbon-greedy machine-based factory system,” and it is “continuous with ever greater ferocity in globalized factory meat production, monocrop agribusiness, and immense substitutions of crops like palm oil for multispecies forests and their products”

(2016, p. 206). This means that the globalized production of opium was used as a weapon for the colonizers to rule over natives like Neel and gain profit in countries like China.

Captain Chillingworth recognizes the truth about the hierarchical power structure of humans that devalues other humans and nature. He says, “The truth is, sir, that men do what their power permits them to do. We are no different from the Pharaohs or the Mongols: the difference is only that when we kill people, we feel compelled to pretend that it is for some higher cause” (Ghosh, p. 262). The pretension associated with a higher cause for the British colonizers is attached to the fear of losing power. The aim is to keep white colonizers and colonized natives separate and under control: “For this you should know, gentlemen, that there is an unspoken pact between the white man and the natives who sustain his power in Hindoosthan - it is that in matters of marriage and procreation, like must be with like, and each must keep to their own” (p. 482). The doom of British rule is connected to the loss of faith in the hierarchical structure of white/non-white, human/nature, and master/servant. This also removes the privilege of the role of the British Industrial Revolution and acknowledges that it was only possible in the context of preexisting transatlantic trade networks in slave labour and opium (Malm & Hornborg, 2014, p. 63-64; Bonneuil & Fressoz, 2016, p. 232-233). Thus, tentacular thinking unveils the hypocrisies of race, caste, and class under the system of anthropocentrism, colonization, and capitalism.

The Chthulucene epoch calls for putting the ecological doom-and-gloom attitude to rest in order to embrace a more positive attitude about the prospects of bodily natures on a humanized planet in *Sea of Poppies*. The focus of the Chthulucene is on how human-nature relationships should be embraced as human destiny and even as salvation. In doing so, attempts are made towards finding fixes that may be implemented for sustaining the climate and all material life forms.

Conclusion

DeLanda claims that “Inorganic matter is much more variable and creative than we ever imagined” (1997, p. 16). All forms of matter (both humans and non-humans) are dependent on each other in the interactive bodily movements in *Sea of Poppies*. This means that the consequences of failing to respect or even to notice the elemental, non-human medium in which humans are immersed is because of taking the material existence and bodily interactions of humans and non-humans for granted. There is the capacity of narratives like *Sea of Poppies* to produce enlivened, and enlivening, accounts of the agency and

creativity of natural phenomena, and the complex and intimate interrelationship of humans with diverse “earth others.” Plumwood (2007) describes this as a “critical green ecological writing project” that can challenge “the experiential framework of dead and silent matter entrenched by the sadodispassionate rationality of scientific reductionism” (p. 17-18). This takes a more precise account of how the characters’ ways of representing nature “are susceptible to the qualities, events, and forms that are in the world, how other selves represent the world, and how we interact with these other selves” (p. 18). The characters lack awareness of the danger fraught in “provisional, and highly tenuous attempts at communication—in short, the politics—involved in the interactions among different kinds of selves that inhabit very different, and of-ten unequal positions” (p. 18). By taking inequal positions as starting points, posthuman ecocriticism removes humans from the centre of the universe or the center of narratives to give value to the agency of both humans and non-humans. This highlights that the narratives of characters like Deeti, Paulette, Zachary, and Kalua are, accordingly, shaped by the meaning of their material interactions with nature in Ghosh’s work.

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Exploring Awareness regarding Personal Hygiene and Preventive Practice among Low-Income Households during Pandemic: A Cross-sectional Study

Tahmina Sultana¹
Muhammad Kawsar Mahmud²

Abstract

COVID-19 is regarded as one of the most severe pandemic and lethal diseases in human history that grapples the world. It broke down health structures in many countries. COVID-19 was an infectious disease that spread through droplets, close contact, or contaminated surfaces. The World Health Organization (WHO) instructed everyone to follow certain health hygiene rules to curb this pandemic. At the same time, various governments took strict measures to prevent transmission and imposed health hygiene to follow. The main purpose of this study was to explore how low-income household people practiced COVID-19 health protocols in their day-to-day life and were prepared to mitigate COVID-19 transmission. A simple random sampling method was followed in this study. To fulfill the target, a self-structured questionnaire was constructed to collect data from the low-income households' people of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC). Both primary and secondary data were used to fulfill the objective. As the primary data, a questionnaire was provided to the respondents to fill up the required information and conduct the in-depth interview. As the secondary data, various articles, books, and reports were reviewed. SPSS, Version 22, and Smart PLS software were used to analyze the data. This study found that people are often reluctant to follow the COVID-19 hygiene rules. The study also identified that sometimes they show reluctance to comply despite having that ability. The study recommends that if everyone follows hygiene rules properly, it will be possible to stop the transmission of this virus.

Keywords: pandemic, preventive practice, awareness, COVID-19, hygiene

Introduction

The impact of COVID-19 had been triggered since 2019 in Wuhan, China, which gradually spread worldwide (Wadood et al., 2020). WHO identified the coronavirus disease as an outbreak and defined it as a public health

¹Assistant Professor, Dept. of Business Administration in Management Studies, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP).

²Assistant Director, Public Relations, Info and Publications, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP).

emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020 and a pandemic on 11 March 2020 (Almaghrabi, 2021). This pandemic brought devastation in every sphere of life and made the world a deadlock. It is considered one of the most lethal pandemics because of its pathogenic and rapid infectious nature. It spreads person-to-person transmission through droplets of saliva or discharge from an infected person's nose when she or he coughs or sneezes, touching contaminated surfaces. WHO stated that some effective measures to curb transmission for every individual such as to wash hands with antiseptic regularly, avoiding touching the eyes, face, nose, or mouth without washing or sanitizing hands, maintaining physical distancing, staying at home, avoiding crowds, keeping rooms well ventilated, wearing the mask, etc. (Wadood et al., 2020). This virus is highly contagious, has been mutated several times, and has arrived with new ferocity globally. The world health structure had been trembling, and no research was efficacious to pull the reins on the virus. The active participation of all classes of people was very important to the restraint of COVID-19 through some preventive actions such as social distancing, self-quarantine, and personal hygiene (Almaghrabi, 2021). In public health, social distancing is a non-pharmaceutical measure to prevent the spreading of an infectious disease by maintaining physical distance between people. Social distancing is also known as physical distancing. It discourages close contact from limiting transmission (Laura, 2020). It generally maintains a certain distance from others (the specific distance varies from country to country and may change over time) and avoids gathering in large groups. The CDC defined social distancing as a set of actions that reduce close contact between people to lessen the risk of transmission, which had been identified as a very practical step to curb its transmission (Levine, 2007). Again, quarantine had been significantly emphasized and was considered one of the most effective steps to minimize COVID-19 spread. It was usually applied as a movement of restriction or isolation from the rest of the population of healthy people exposed to the virus and to assess their symptoms for early detection. On the other hand, personal hygiene and public health practices were very important to curb its transmission, including handwashing, physical distancing, touching contaminated surfaces, and so on (Almaghrabi, 2021). Handwashing with soap or any other chemical is one of the most important issues in slowing human-to-human transmission of COVID-19 in communities, homes, and other public spaces. Besides, this practice prevents many other communicable diseases that cause millions of deaths a year, such as cholera, diarrhea, and typhoid (Chase & Andres, 2020). Since the outbreak of COVID-19, it had been strictly recommended to keep hands always clean and to make it a

regular practice. However, this facility was unavailable in many countries, especially developing or third-world countries (Bhuiya et al., 2021).

The importance of awareness among low-income households was crucial in mitigating the propagation of the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals residing in socioeconomically disadvantaged families frequently encounter a multitude of obstacles in accessing healthcare services and resources, rendering them disproportionately susceptible to infection and adverse health effects. It was imperative to enhance the knowledge and understanding within these communities on preventative measures, including the utilization of masks, adherence to proper hand hygiene practices, maintenance of social distance, and the importance of vaccination. This would enable these communities to effectively mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Numerous scholarly investigations underscore the importance of health awareness and education within socioeconomically disadvantaged communities amidst the ongoing pandemic, hence accentuating its favorable influence on adherence to preventive measures. The implementation of effective communication strategies and the development of targeted public health campaigns aimed at low-income households have the potential to not only mitigate the transmission of the virus within these communities but also to make significant contributions to the broader efforts in controlling the pandemic (e.g., Liao et al., 2020; Nagata et al., 2021). Besides, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the critical importance of personal hygiene and preventive practices in curbing the spread of infectious diseases. Low-income households, however, frequently need help with particular difficulties that could limit their access to the knowledge and tools required for good hygiene and preventive measures. Understanding the degree of awareness and adherence to preventative measures and personal cleanliness among low-income households has become a crucial public health priority in the wake of the global COVID-19 outbreak. The spread of the virus was intricately linked to individual behaviours and practices, making it imperative to investigate how individuals in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities perceive and engage in personal hygiene and preventive measures (Gupta et al., 2020). Moreover, as developing countries failed to ensure basic human right's needs, good healthcare services, and weak governance, the poor would face uncertainty in life (Paul et al., 2020). Restrictive preventive actions and strategies were required to curb the COVID-19 outbreak. Increasing people's awareness was one potential action in this aspect. The sooner people know about this issue, the sooner they can take measures by changing their regular habits and taking measures to lessen its expansion. Changing people's behaviours and responses during a disease outbreak is efficacious and can be attained using various means

like media, lectures, or public talks (Bonyan et al., 2020). However, public awareness is essential to limit the damage of this pandemic with any degree of success (Daily Star, 2020). Again, they live in densely populated area where maintaining distance is challenging, do not have basic amenities, and stay in multi-generational households that increase the infection rate (Truong & Asare, 2021).

Bangladesh is one of the worst COVID-19 hit countries in South Asia and is a populous country. Its density is very high compared to the land. So, the challenge became more difficult to limit its transmission. However, the government formulated various rules, imposed health protocols on the people, and worked restlessly to create awareness among the people by using mass media to strengthen personal hygiene practices. Despite people were reluctant to practice COVID-19 protocols (Islam et al., 2020). In Bangladesh, marginalized people like street vendors, day labourers, transport workers, rickshaw pullers, domestic workers, and construction workers were already facing unemployment and hardship due to the lockdown, and they are the worst sufferers of this outbreak. Furthermore, the lockdown hit low and middle-income people hard, who lost their jobs and sources of income, which caused psychological pressure and anxiety. According to a study, the average earnings of daily breadwinners in cities and rural areas of Bangladesh decreased by about 80% since the coronavirus outbreak. Despite the daily outbreak of new infections, many people were unwilling to comply with the government's health safety rules (Islam, 2020). However, low-income people suffered much as they did not go outside to manage their livelihood. They were not financially well off and had to think regularly about the next day's livelihood, making them upset. A report shows that lower-income and Lower-middle-class households experienced a 29% drop in revenue due to COVID-19, and the highest decline was in the Dhaka metropolitan area. Again, the report shows that 6% of income dropped in the first ten days of the lockdown imposed by the government, and 50% of households lost at least a third of their income because of the COVID-19 crisis. On the other hand, about 40% of inhabitants in Dhaka live in overcrowded slums, and others live in public places where conducive housing facilities were inadequate. Families huddled together, which resulted in maintaining a certain distance, which was a nightmare. At the same time, the elderly were more vulnerable in this case (Kabir et al., 2021). The study analyzed various health hygiene practices. It is expected that the outcome of this study will be able to extrapolate the findings for the concerned area in Bangladesh.

Research Objectives

RO1: To examine the awareness level of low-income households about health hygiene and practice during COVID-19.

RO2: To assess the degree of knowledge level related to personal hygiene and preventive practices among low-income.

RO3: To explore how those people can acquaint themselves with changing COVID-19 rules and practices.

Research Questions

RQ1: How much awareness grows among lower-income people regarding health and personal hygiene?

RQ2: What is the present condition of practicing COVID-19 health hygiene among low-income households?

RQ3: What factors influence them to practice health hygiene or to be reluctant to practice rules?

Literature Review

The coronavirus originated from an unknown source in Wuhan, China. Over time, this virus spread worldwide and became a pandemic. The virus infected tens of thousands of people and killed millions globally (Paul et al., 2020). The coronavirus is an emergent infectious pathogen causing an acute respiratory disease called coronavirus disease 2019. It transmitted by person-to-person contact, droplet, airborne, or via contaminated surfaces. Symptoms of this virus include fever, diarrhea, vomiting, coughing, fatigue, chest pain, difficulty breathing, and so on (Hosen et al., 2021). This virus transformed into a global pandemic that became the most significant challenge after the Second World War. WHO recommended some protective measures to practice daily, like wearing masks and gloves, washing hands, regularly using antiseptic solutions, following health hygiene, maintaining physical and social distancing, and so on to reduce the transmission rate. However, any proven remedies were badly needed to uproot the spread of this virus (Islam et al., 2021). All classes of people were at risk due to COVID-19, but low-income people were the most vulnerable in this aspect (Paul et al., 2020). Hygiene is a series of actions a person takes to maintain good health. According to WHO, "Hygiene is the conditions and practices that assist in preserving good health and preventing the spread of diseases" Personal hygiene indicates maintaining one's body safe and sound. It includes personal hygiene, food hygiene, home and everyday hygiene, medical hygiene, and so on. However, regular hygiene practice is a virtue as it protects oneself from various diseases. Some types of hygiene include personal hygiene,

sleep hygiene, medical hygiene, food hygiene and home and everyday hygiene (WHO, 2020). On the other hand, Personal hygiene can be described as a set of habits by which a person takes care of his body. It includes washing hands, brushing teeth, taking a shower, and many more practices in daily life. In the medical and public health arena, this concept is very familiar. A major concern is that diseases arise due to a lack of personal hygiene practices (Rahman et al., 2020). Personal hygiene is considered a necessary precautionary action against numerous infectious diseases. Its significance is further reiterated during a global pandemic and this need was felt extensively (Rahman et al., 2020). However, to reduce the outbreak and its effects, many countries followed measures like strict lockdowns, restrictions on movement, maintaining health protocols, and so on. However, effectiveness highly depends on support and cooperation from all classes of people. Every person can contribute to curbing the transmission of this virus by knowing about this virus and regular practicing. The more a person knows about this pandemic and practices accordingly, the more he will be able to protect himself and society (Azlan et al., 2020). Hence, poor hygiene might increase the infection rate (Paul et al., 2020). Again, Social distance is very effective means to curb transmission. However, social, or physical distancing indicates staying 2 meters or 6 feet away to curb transmission. The WHO and USCDS recommended social distancing as the only effective step to lessen the spread of COVID-19. Prevalent social distancing can provide much-needed time to prepare for the production and allocation of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), testing kits, and ventilators and would ‘flatten the curve’ by delaying and reducing the peak number of cases. Social distancing is a public health action aimed at lessening social interaction between people based on touch or physical proximity. It is a non-pharmaceutical intervention to reduce the spread of this virus in the communities (Mishra & Majumdar, 2020).

Research Gap

Many articles have been reviewed for this study written from different perspectives. The researchers found a few articles on various aspects of COVID-19 but did not find any article in Bangladesh highlighting health hygiene practices among low-income households. So, this indicates a clear gap in this field of study. Thus, this paper has attempted to meet the research gap by addressing personal hygiene and preventive practices of COVID-19 protocols among low-income households in Bangladesh.

Research Framework

After reviewing various literature, a conceptual framework has been designed to explore Awareness of Personal Hygiene and Preventive Practices among low-income households amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The framework is given below:

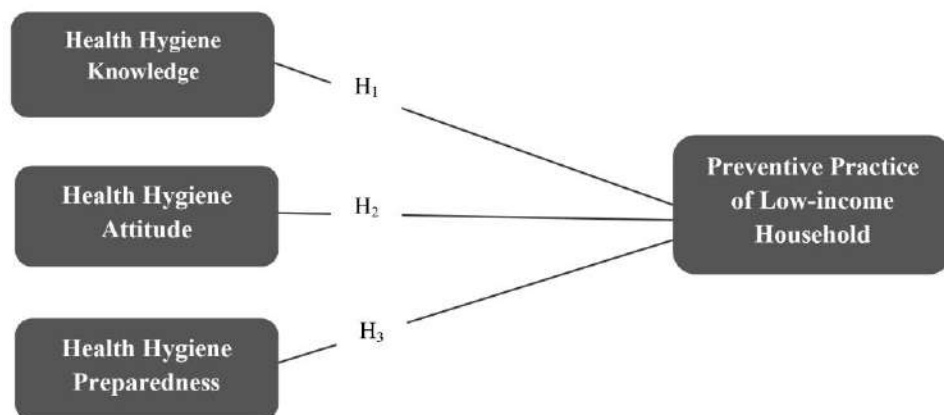


Figure 1: study framework

Hypothesis Development

Health Hygiene Knowledge and Preventive Practice

The global pandemic disrupted lives globally which originated in China. This virus was more contagious and formed from time to time. The epicentre rapidly moved from China to Iran and then through Europe and the US within a few weeks. In the meantime, it had been transmuted several times. That is why it was quite tough to hold the reins. All governments enforced various measures to curb transmission of this virus. Many people lost their lives due to the coronavirus globally (Paul et al., 2020). Thus, the virus was an emergent infectious pathogen causing an acute respiratory disease called coronavirus disease 2019. It transmitted through person-to-person contact, touching a contaminated surface, coughing, or sneezing (Bazaid et al., 2020). Good hygiene practice is crucial in this context to curb transmission. It keeps anyone clean, protects them from infection, and stops spreading the virus. On the other hand, poor hygiene habits and poor sanitary conditions greatly play a significant role in the increased burden of infectious diseases within developing countries.

H₁: Health hygiene knowledge is positively related to preventive practice.

Health Hygiene Attitude and Preventive Practice

Attitude is a feeling or opinion about something or someone or a way of behaving this causes that. During COVID-19 pandemic, it has been instructed to follow some health rules to curb transmission. However, many people were roaming during this time and seemed indifferent to following health protocols. The concerned authority has stated frequently that if we can avoid mass gatherings and not do handshakes, using a chemical to sanitize hands would help limit transmission (Bonyan et al., 2020)

H₂: Health attitude knowledge is positively related to preventive practice.

Health Hygiene Preparedness and Preventive Practice

To reduce the outbreak and its effects, many countries followed strict lockdowns, stopped unnecessary movement, maintained health protocols, and so on. But effectiveness highly depends on support and cooperation from all classes of people. So, everybody will have to know and will have to practice precisely. The more a person knows about this pandemic and practices accordingly, the more he will be able to protect himself and society (Azlan et al., 2020). The WHO has instructed some health measures like maintaining social distancing, self-quarantining, avoiding mass gatherings, washing hands with soap or any sanitizers, putting on masks and gloves, etc. and instructed people to practice such rules (Paul et al., 2020).

H₃: Health practice knowledge is positively related to preventive practice.

Research Design and Methodology

We conducted a cross-sectional self-administered survey from April 1 to 30, 2021, when the effect of this virus has been somewhat reduced so that real experiences of the people can be obtained. The study will be empirical. This study was conducted at Dhaka North City Corporation.

Questionnaire Development

Thirty questions into two segments were designed to collect the information. The questionnaires were developed by reviewing various kinds of literature. All the questions were closed-ended, and the survey instrument was a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire survey. The first segment comprised various introductory information. The second segment was designed with five-point

Likert-type questions with the scale 5 = Very Often, 4 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 2 = Rare and 1 = Never to cover the objectives.

Sampling Technique

The present study used random sampling method. The sample size (n) was calculated according to the formula (Cochran, 1977):

$$n_0 = \frac{z^2 p(1 - p)}{e^2}$$

$$= \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.49 \times (1 - 0.49)}{0.05^2}$$

$$= 384$$

Finite population correction factor,

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{(n_0 - 1)}{N}}$$

$$= \frac{384}{1 + \frac{(384 - 1)}{888423}}$$

$$= 383.96$$

$$\approx 384$$

The sample size (with finite population correction) is equal to 384.

Here, n is the sample size, z is the selected critical value of the desired confidence level (which is 95%), p is the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population, e is the desired level of precision, and N is the size of the population.

Statistical Tools

The authors have used IBM SPSS 22 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and Smart PLS for data analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The data collection team obtained the respondents' verbal consent before the interview. It tried to motivate the respondents to take part in the survey instead of applying any coercion. It was assured that the respondents strictly maintained the study's confidentiality. It also assured them that this interview would apply only to this research.

Table 1: response rate

Questionnaire	Number
Distributed Questionnaires	550
Returned Questionnaires	530
Usable Questionnaires	460
Unusable Questionnaires	70

Table 2: profile of the respondents

Demographic characteristics		Frequency (N=460)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	235	51.1
	Female	225	48.9
Age	20-29	65	14.1
	30-39	119	25.9
	40-49	118	25.7
	50-59	94	20.4
	<60	64	13.9
Marital Status	Unmarried	109	23.7
	Married	351	76.3
Education	Secondary or Lower	46	10.0
	Higher Secondary	96	20.9
	Vocational School	153	33.3
	Bachelor or Masters Higher	100	21.7
		65	14.1

Reliability Test

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.901
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	15960.241
	Df	190
	Sig.	.000

While analyzing the results of the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity in Table 3, it is seen that approximate chi-square statistics is with 190 degrees of freedom, which is significant at 0.05 level. This means that null hypothesis of the

population correlation matrix is an identity matrix, which is rejected by Bartlett’s test of Sphericity. So, the result of Bartlett’s test of sphericity is significant suggesting that the population was not an identity matrix. Therefore, the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity is significant.

Dimension Correlation

Table 4: values of correlation coefficient among the variables

		Correlations			
		HHK	HHA	HHP	PP
HHK	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
HHA	Pearson Correlation	.938**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
HHP	Pearson Correlation	.933**	.925**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
PP	Pearson Correlation	.605**	.565**	.623**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Goodness of Measurement Model:

Hair et al. (2011) expose that reflective measurement model should be evaluated to interpret their reliability and validity. Thus, the goodness of the measurement model perfectly stipulates an assessment of reliability and validity (Chin, 2010). Considering all the issues, the measurement model is assessed by examining the internal consistency, composite reliability, individual loading, outer loadings, communalities, AVE, and discriminant validity, which have also been suggested by Hair et al. (2011). This study used both convergent and discriminant validity to assess the measurement model.

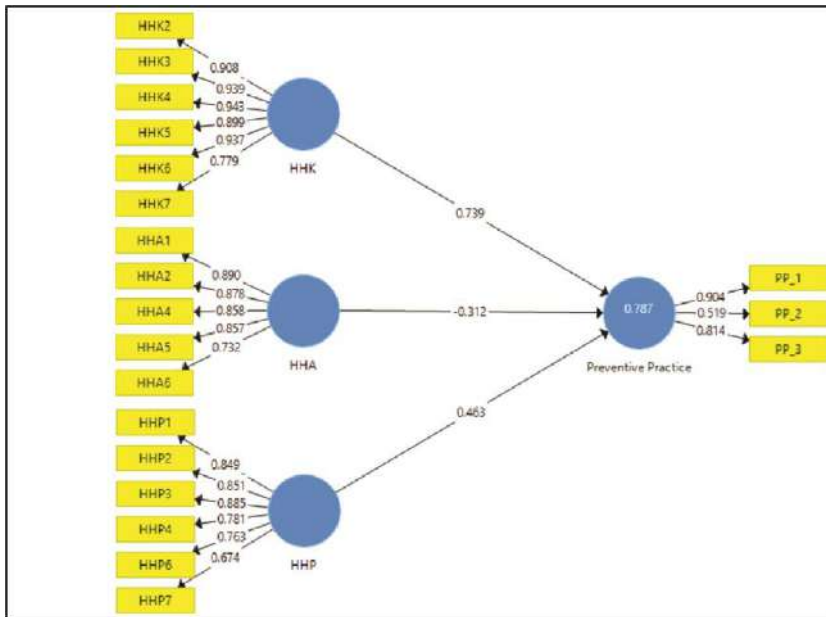


Figure 2: output of PLS-SEM

Convergent Validity

Factor loading of each item, average variance extracted (AVE) along with composite reliability (CR) help to assess the convergent validity (Hair et al., 2015). The outer loading/factor loading/item loading of the indicators, which is also called reliability/commonality, is a parameter to measure convergent validity. Hulland (1999) prescribed that outer loading should be 0.70 or higher. Indicators with very low outer loadings, i.e., below 0.40 should always be eliminated (Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2011). The reliability of the data has been examined to check the consistency for all questions of this study through the conventional way of testing internal reliability, that is, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The commonly used threshold of $\alpha=0.70$ (Hair et al., 1995) was employed to evaluate the scales. Here, from table 3, after considering all the items, it is found that the value of Cronbach Alpha coefficient of Health Hygiene Knowledge ($\alpha = 0.955$), Health Hygiene Attitude ($\alpha = 0.900$), and Health Hygiene Practice ($\alpha = 0.889$) that give an idea that three independent variables are significantly correlated with dependent preventive practice variable. This study employed the cut-off value for measuring the factor loadings as 0.5 based on the reference of Chin (2010). In this study, three items have been deleted from 20 items due to the loading lower than 0.5. Composite reliability is also a

measure of construct reliability, the degree to which items are free of random error and render consistent results. It is also accepted that the composite reliability for all constructs is higher than the cutoff point of 0.70 to be considered adequate (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Another parameter for measuring convergent validity was the average variance extracted (AVE) which is the tool that measures the quality of the measurement model. The AVE for each factor is more than 0.5, which further ensures convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Therefore, the convergent validity for all the assigned constructs is justified and verified.

Table 5: output of the measurement model

Constructs	Items	Loading	Outer loadings	Cronbach Alpha	AVE	CR
Health Hygiene Knowledge	HHK_2	0.846	0.908	0.955	0.815	0.963
	HHK_3	0.862	0.939			
	HHK_4	0.875	0.943			
	HHK_5	0.860	0.899			
	HHK_6	0.871	0.937			
	HHK_7	0.760	0.779			
Health Hygiene Attitude	HHA_1	0.828	0.890	0.900	0.714	0.925
	HHA_2	0.727	0.878			
	HHA_4	0.848	0.858			
	HHA_5	0.789	0.857			
	HHA_6	0.725	0.732			
	HHA_7	0.725	0.732			
Health Hygiene Preparedness	HHP_1	0.824	0.849	0.889	0.646	0.916
	HHP_2	0.744	0.851			
	HHP_3	0.815	0.885			
	HHP_4	0.664	0.781			
	HHP_6	0.745	0.763			
	HHP_7	0.650	0.674			

*Note: Factor loading less than 0.50 have not been considered/reproduced.
 AVE (Average Variance Extracted), CR (Composite Reliability)

Discriminate Validity

Two ways were used to assess discriminant validity under the construct validity of the study. At first, cross-loading of the indicators was used to indicate discriminant validity by examining the cross-loadings of the indicators where outer loading should be greater than cross-loadings. In our study, the outer loadings were greater than the cross-loadings of the constructs, which are listed

in the table of a rotated component matrix. Secondly, in table 6, discriminant validity was examined with the comparison of the correlations between a construct and the square root of the AVEs for the Construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Coroline (2010), encapsulates that discriminant validity is established when the diagonal elements (square root of the average variance extracted) are greater than the off-diagonal elements (correlations among the constructs). For this study, the discriminant validity is found to be acceptable. So, according to the analysis of the measurement model of this study, the result found is acceptable. The items and dimensions used in the study were reliable and valid.

Table 6: discriminant validity

Construct	HHK	HHA	HHP
HHK	0.903		
HHA	0.944	0.850	
HHP	0.921	0.925	0.804

Note: Diagonals (in bold) value represent the squared root of the AVE while the other represents the correlations of the other constructs.

HHK= Health Hygiene Knowledge, HHA= Health Hygiene Attitude, and HHP= Health Hygiene Practice

Model Fit: Structural Model

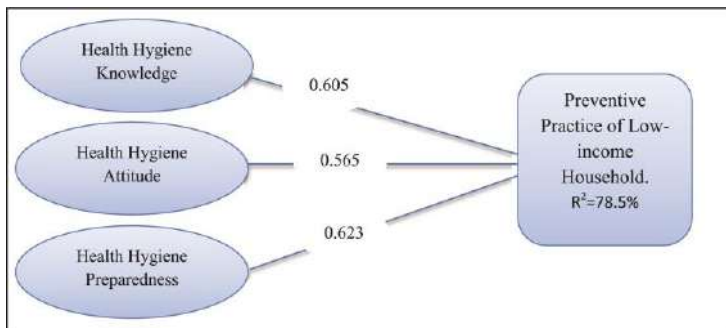


Figure 3: structural model

In the research framework, the relationships among the variables that have been hypothesized can be assessed through the structural Model (Hair et. Al. 2015). The variances of the dependent variable due to the influences of independent variables can signify the estimated path in the conceptual framework that is known as R^2 which can acknowledge and demonstrate the variance in the dependent variable explained by the measured independent variables in the study

(Hair et. Al. 2015). In this study, 78.5% variance of preventive practice is explained by those variables.

The Outcome of Hypotheses

According to the result, it can be said that all three dimensions have a significant relationship with preventive practice. This Table depicts the result of hypotheses. The effect of health hygiene knowledge has positively significant, and it is ($\beta = 0.605, p < 0.05$). The effect of health hygiene attitude has also positively significant, and it is ($\beta = 0.565, p < 0.05$). Lastly, the effect of health hygiene practice has also positively significant, and it is ($\beta = 0.623, p < 0.05$).

Table 7: the outcome of hypotheses

Hypothesis	Path	Standard Beta	Standard Error	t-Value	P Value	Decision
H ₁	Health Hygiene Knowledge > Preventive Practice	0.605	0.062	16.255	.000	Supported
H ₂	Health Hygiene Attitude > Preventive Practice	0.565	0.068	14.647	.000	Supported
H ₃	Health Hygiene Preparedness > Preventive Practice	0.623	0.065	17.063	.000	Supported

Discussion and Findings

The study set some objectives to examine the awareness level of low-income households about Covid 19 health hygiene practices, to assess the degree of knowledge level, and to evaluate how people are prone to practice healthy hygiene in daily life. To analyze this, the study set three dependent and one dependent variable. After analyzing the data, the researchers found that health hygiene knowledge, attitude, and preparedness have a significant relationship with preventive practice.

The effectiveness of these mitigation measures is highly dependent on the cooperation and compliance of all members of society, which has been defined as significant by previous researchers (Azlan et al., 2020). Through the study, it has been identified that people have enough knowledge about COVID-19 health hygiene rules but are not highly motivated to practice them daily. The message of Do's and Don'ts during the pandemic has been reached to the people precisely from the concerned authority. But people are indifferent to following the rules. The study also identified that people mentioned some impediments to practicing health hygiene rules. Still, practically, their will is, in most cases, a dominating factor not to follow those rules. Factually, they have some barriers like enough space in their room, available soap or hand sanitizer, food facilities, savings and so on that make life more challenging. Another issue in this study is that when they want to follow the COVID-19 hygiene rules, they first have to think about themselves and their families about how they will manage their livelihoods amid this adverse situation.

Another finding suggests that public awareness campaigns emphasizing the youth and individuals with low education and income are required to improve general practice (Bazaid et al., 2020). Previous research also suggests that COVID-19 prevention measures should be widely known and used. This can be done through public education campaigns, which should be planned based on how communities and countries feel about COVID-19. Collaborative efforts between concerned authorities and residents of every country should be implemented (Bonyan et al., 2020). According to the findings of this study, the government disseminated health hygiene rules among the people successfully and made them understand that a collective effort is badly needed to limit the spread of this virus. But some limitations and the lack of proper will of the common people hinder taking collective action to prevent this virus.

Recommendation

This study has made some recommendations based on the challenges of this study. The broad objective of the study was to examine the awareness level of low-income households about COVID-19 health hygiene and practice those protocols. Considering those broad and specific objectives, the study set some recommendations, which are given as follows.

- Develop and implement targeted knowledge-sharing campaigns that particularly address the needs and challenges of low-income households. These campaigns should focus on simple and actionable steps for personal hygiene, mask-wearing, social distancing, and vaccination.

- Enhance community engagement through the active participation of local leaders, social workers, and community organizations. These entities have the potential to significantly influence the distribution of knowledge, provision of resources, and successful implementation of preventive measures in low-income households.
- Distribute resources to facilitate equitable access to key hygiene goods, including masks and sanitizers, for low-income households. This may entail collaboration between governmental entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and philanthropic institutions to offer these resources without charge or at a reduced cost.
- To enhance healthcare accessibility in low-income communities, it is recommended to implement mobile health clinics or telehealth services. These initiatives aim to facilitate the provision of preventative practices and vaccines by healthcare experts.
- Promote the formation of social support networks within low-income communities, enabling individuals to share information, and assist one another in adhering to preventive practices.
- Continuously monitor and evaluate the impact of awareness campaigns and interventions. This will enable the essential adjustments and enhancements to guarantee the efficacy of these initiatives.
- Recognize that the issues highlighted by this study are not limited to pandemics and should be addressed to promote long-term health equity. Comprehensive strategies for improving living conditions and healthcare access in low-income communities are essential.

Conclusion

The study attempted to explore the key features of awareness, knowledge, and practices linked to personal hygiene and preventative measures among low-income households during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study has presented a comprehensive grasp of the awareness levels, knowledge, and habits related to personal hygiene and preventive measures among low-income households. The findings of this study underscored the importance of tailored public health initiatives and educational campaigns particularly designed to address the exclusive challenges faced by low-income households. It is evident that greater awareness and access to information are important in empowering these communities to adopt and maintain effective preventive measures. Given the ongoing worldwide challenges posed by the pandemic, the findings derived from this research possess the potential to provide valuable guidance for implementing specific treatments. Consequently, these interventions can play a

significant role in mitigating the transmission of COVID-19 and advancing health equity within the context of Bangladesh.

Acknowledgement

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Imageries of Existence in Jibanananda Das and John Donne's Poetry: Surreal and Existential Perspectives

Rifa Tasnia¹
Jarrah Mahzabeen Fatima²
Md. Mohoshin Reza³

Abstract

This paper explores the surrealistic dimensions of poetic expression in the works of two literary giants, John Donne and Jibanananda Das, who belong to different temporal and cultural landscapes. This study analyzes their distinctive poetic styles, rich symbolism, and thematic convergence and finds the surrealistic undercurrents that connect Donne's metaphysical poetry of the 17th century and Das's modernist Bengali verses of the 20th century. The paper elucidates how both poets engage with the elusive boundaries of reality, employing vivid imageries and intricate wordplay to challenge conventional perceptions. By investigating the interplay between dream-like scenes, desires, and existential quandaries in their poetry, it underscores the enduring relevance of surrealism as a bridge across ages and cultures for the exploration of the profound enigmas of existence. This research also analyzes the unconscious desires, anxieties, fears and conflicts of Das and Donne through the lens of Martin Heidegger. Through comparative study and close reading of the selected poems of Das and Donne, this paper locates surreal imageries that reflect both poets' existential philosophy on death. This paper finds that Das's poetry conveys authenticity in the acceptance of death while Donne's poetry reveals the wish to conquer death due to the inability to accept human mortality. In conclusion, Das and Donne's works contain the timeless beauty of surrealistic imageries which contain the capacity to illuminate the intricacies of the human experience.

Keywords: surrealism, existentialism, John Donne, Jibanananda Das

Introduction

Surrealism, which developed as a 20th century art movement, is a compelling exploration of the modern psyche into the gust for meaning, placing considerable emphasis on mental investigation with key figures such as André Breton, Salvador Dalí, Max Ernst, and René Magritte. Human “gust is a gust for

¹ Lecturer, Dept. of English, Bangladesh University of Professionals, rifa.tasnia@bup.edu.bd

² Lecturer, Dept. of English, Southeast University, jarah.fatima@gmail.com

³ Associate Professor & Chairman, Dept. of English, Bangladesh University of Professionals, mohoshin.reza@bup.edu.bd

meaning...We are the only animal that has to decide from moment to moment, who am I? What do I have to do?" (Morgan, 1993, p. 5). What am I here for? What is life all about? These questions about the "meaning" of life are existential and also surreal. Surrealism works under a thoroughgoing acceptance of the forces at work beneath the veneer of civilization. Beneath this veneer is where existentialism, a 19th and 20th century philosophy, seeks to provide answers to life's deepest and darkest questions that deal with the meaning and the value of existence. Existentialists such as Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Søren Kierkegaard attempted to define the significance of existence in the encounter with hopelessness and meaninglessness of life. Through the combination of surrealism and existentialism, an analysis of Jibanananda Das's poems, 'Banalata Sen' and 'A Day Eight Years Ago' and John Donne's poems, 'Death be not Proud' and 'The Good-Morrow' have been investigated as they explore the conflict between life and death in human existence. As their imagination creates symbolic images that delve into the psyche, it is possible to explore how Das and Donne's works differ in their conceits about life and death.

Background of the Study

Poetry for Jibananada Das, was a "natural process" (Winter, 2003), wherein the sentences, wording, and dialects switch, merge, and "in the same instant settle in the mind, full of friction – in short, that almost becomes a part of the consciousness ticking" (Winter, Ibid). Das's poems, 'One Day Eight Years Ago' and 'Banalata Sen' are masterworks in poetic diction. 'Banalata Sen' was first published in 1934 and 1935 respectively (2022). Since then, the name Banalata Sen has become an insignia for love, beauty, loss and above all feminine mystery. John Donne's rich imagery and conceits in his metaphysical poems usually dealt with the themes of love, mortality, and spirituality. Most of his earlier love and sensual poems were published posthumously in the collection, *Songs and Sonnets* in 1633. Donne's famous love poem, 'The Good Morrow' is part of this collection. Although *Songs and Sonnets* focus more on "What love does to the mind than to the body" (Nutt, 1999, p. 46), 'Death be not Proud' and 'The Good Morrow' reflect the psychology of the poet through their diction and themes. For this reason, similarity can be found between John Donne's love poems and his holy sonnets from the *Divine Meditations* collection. Poems such as 'Death be not Proud' and 'The Good Morrow' reflect the psychology of the poet through their diction and themes. Das and Donne are poets from different timelines and different corners of the world. Yet both of

their poetry is rich with imagery and deals with almost similar themes of love, nature, time, and the existence of life and death.

Problem Statement

The problems of the human mind and human existence in surrealism and existentialism are broken down in terms of imageries and questions of existence based on the poetry of Das and Donne. The sub-problems involve the interplay of life and death in human existence and imagination involving the human psyche. The unconscious desires, fears, and motivations inspire poetry in terms of blending imagination with reality to highlight the issues of individual existence. Both poets portray creativity as a yearning for immortality in the poems, 'Banalata Sen', 'A Day Eight Years Ago', 'Death be not Proud', and 'The Good-Morrow'. Both poets reflect a development of courage to confront death through their poetry (May, 1975, pp. 31-32). The speakers of these poems rebel and struggle against death to confront life and through this act of rebellion, the surreal and existential creative act is born. Thus, this paper examines the problem of human psychology and the struggle between life and death through Surrealism and Existentialism.

Rationale of the Study

Like a dream, poetry "has the power to penetrate the unconscious" to bridge the conscious mind through the masterful use of language (Reiner, 2008, p. 601). Poetry, following the tradition of surrealism, with its unexpected analogies, spontaneity, dream-like imageries, and symbols better reflect the unconscious mind. Thus, through surrealistic poetry, readers get a glimpse of the unknowable unconscious desires, fears, and anxieties connected to the life and death of the poet. Such poetry serves as an excellent sample of research to better understand the human mind through theory and literature. Das and Donne's poetry are examples of such excellent samples of research that can give academics, literary scholars, and the common reader a better grasp of human psychology. This paper conducting a comparative study on Jibanananda Das's 'Banalata Sen', and 'A Day Eight Years Ago', with John Donne's 'Death be not Proud', and 'The Good-Morrow' reveals how the surrealistic imageries existing within the poems reflect the poet's unconscious existential conflict between life and death. Moreover, this paper not only attempts to reveal the existential dreads, conflicts, and confrontations of two imminent poets but also adds to the literature that previously no comparative study on Das and Donne had executed.

Literature Review

The study has reviewed previous works on Das and Donne ranging from 1965 to 2020. The works include books and articles from scholars such as Collmer (1963), Lago & Gupta (1965), Dimmock (1974), Dini & Dingming (2011), Jahan (2016), Ray (2015), Roy (2016), and Das (2020). These previous works are analyzed to find a potential gap for further research.

Das's imageries have certain patterns. Lago and Gupta (1965) analyze how the poem, "Banalata Sen" contains four important images: "darkness, the passage of time, moving water, and a woman" (p. 640). The poet uses these images repetitively, shaping and forming them and continuously guiding them from aloofness to connectivity, from obscurity to vividness, and from dissociation to unification. Jahan discussed how the poet was enamored with "the past enchantment and its abolished beauty and allurements" (2016, p.91) as geographical descriptions are used to transcend the confinement of time and space in the poem. The poet's interest, containing the conscious and unconscious mind, past and present, makes the poem surrealistic because the poet uses aesthetic and peculiar images. Silence and darkness resound in these images showing how surrealism unfolds a sense of beauty, astonishment, and wonder in the poem. However, these articles do not address how life and death are core aspects of existence.

Dimmock (1974) explored the treatment of death in Das's poem, 'A Day Eight Years Ago' indicating suicide in the work which in itself swarms with life as "the dead man wakes to realize death, the tree from which the body hangs is live" (p. 606). There is the paradox of 'life in death' and 'death in life' with the cyclical process of the struggle for sustenance: the owl seeking the rat, the mosquitoes thirsting for blood, and flies attempting to find the sunlight. This poem thus vividly portrays how life is transitory through the experience of death and the process of sustenance of life. Ray (2015) adds that there is negation in the idea of death where the "in-human" voices such as "that of the owl, the plague-rat, the moon, the branch of ashwattha (where the act of hanging was performed)" extend the mundane act of suicide to the world of nature (p. 167). The study attempts to find how in the realm of nature, the right to kill is the order of life that resists the dialectics of humanism in the act of negation or freedom or self-consciousness or/and if this negates the idea of negation itself in terms of death or how it really portrays the processes of existence.

There is also the interplay of imagination and reality in Das's poetry. Roy (2016) discussed how the "confounding mass of darkness" and silence take the form of "a camel's neck" and "the moon" takes the shape of "an old hag" to refer to the "primitive and primordial" essence within humanity's imagination in

‘A Day Eight Years Ago’ (Roy, p. 194). The study analysed how metaphysical conceits have been employed to create surrealistic images. Again, the human aesthetic desire is revealed through the reassurance found in “the sheltering eyes of a woman” for a weary traveler in ‘Banalata Sen’ (Roy, p. 196) that enunciates human yearning for togetherness. These instances of the two poems enunciate the human yearning for togetherness. B. Das (2020) highlights the motif of perception and reality in these poems in an attempt to show the poet’s awareness of “the unattainability of truth or fulfillment in the world of appearance” (p. 52). This constructs the poet’s escape to the world of imagination, centering either on the beauty of his beloved or that of the nature of Bengal. Nonetheless, these works do not focus on how the poet’s imagination can also create a process of healing through imagery.

The masterful use of imagery of death is quintessential in the poetry of John Donne. According to Collmer, “death is useful as a vehicle of expression and as a topic for meditation” in John Donne’s poem (1963, p.149). Donne’s use of death imagery such as “physical dissolution, grave descriptions, and mental agony” portray death as “an intruding force” (Ibid.). For example, in “Death be not Proud” Donne treats and personifies “Death” as an alien force he needed to battle. (pp. 151) Zhang and Wang similarly opined that Donne meditates about death in many poems, specifically in his holy sonnets. Zhang and Wang explored how Donne attempted to conquer death through his imagistic holy sonnets and Christian faith (2011). Through their analysis they found an “apparent image of death is a personified death” (pp. 862) in most of his sonnets in the *Divine Meditation* collection. Specifically, in ‘Death be not Proud’, Zhang and Wang stated that the imagery of death as proud is analogical to Satan and his downfall. As such, the poet conquers death through his imagery and Christian faith.

Donne connected imageries of death with spiritual and sexual love in ‘The Good Morrow’. Watson (1994) argued that while writing about sexual and spiritual love, Donne was also dreaming about death and immortality. Donne’s poetry reflects his “terror that body will take soul with it, into oblivion” after death and his search for a perfect lover reflects his search for immortality (Watson, p.157). According to Watson ‘The Good Morrow’ is a classic example of how Donne attempts to immortalize his existence through a romantic relationship. The imagery in the last stanza of ‘The Good Morrow’ provides an “abstract recipe for immortality” as an aubade is transformed into “an elegy that provisionally rejects dying” (p. 183).

According to Pritchard (1985), most critics analyzed the death imagery in the last three lines of ‘The Good Morrow’ as an analogy on the correct mixture of simple or compound elements, giving the poem a cosmic significance but his

exploration concluded that even though the use of death imageries referred to the “little death”, Donne purposefully did so to indicate a greater spiritual love rather than a sexual one. The study required to explore if Donne’s use of death imageries referred to the prelapsarian love of Adam and Eve since the speaker and the beloved finally achieved a form of prelapsarian lovemaking where “none can die”.

The previous works have not focused on how life and death are core aspects of existence, how the processes of existence outside of negation, and how the poets’ imaginations conceive of a world of healing through crafting imagery in their poetry. Therefore, research gaps in Das and Donne’s works can be identified through exploration from surreal and existential perspectives.

Research Gap

Research gaps lie in the problem of human existence and the totality of the human mind that deals with the conflict between life and death in Das and Donne’s poetry. Previous scholars have explored the patterns in imagery and surrealism, the treatment of death, and the interplay of imagination and reality in Das and the spiritual love, sexual love, and immortality in Donne. However, how surreal and existential elements contribute to the endeavors of the poets to confront the fear of death and the desire for love for a fruitful existence have remained unexplored. No exact study has conducted a comparative analysis of the same issues on Das and Donne’s poetry.

Research Objectives

The general objective is to conduct a comparative study of Jibananada Das and John Donne’s poetry from surrealistic and existential perspectives. The specific objectives are:

- To explore and analyze the surreal imageries in Das and Donne’s poetry.
- To explore how the surreal imageries, reflect the existential philosophy of Das and Donne’s poetry.

Research Questions

The research questions to meet the research objectives are,

- How surreal imageries have been employed in Das and Donne’s poetry?
- How do the surreal imageries reflect the existential philosophies in Das and Donne?

Theoretical Framework

Surrealism celebrates the role of individuality, extolling the uniqueness of the human mind. Existentialism praises individuality and emphasizes personal autonomy, dignity, free will, and creative endeavor. Surrealism transforms the individual into a human explorer who travels into the human imagination. The word ‘surrealism’ had “originally been coined in 1917 by Breton’s role model Apollinaire” and was given further “precision in Breton’s 1924 manifesto” (Hopkins, 2004, p. 17). For Breton (1969), surrealism is “based on the belief in the superior reality of certain previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dreams, in the disinterested play of thought” (p. 26). It is a guide for artistry with precedence given to “psychic automatism...by means of the written word, or in any other manner” (p. 26). This automatism involves the use of dream-like, symbolic images, and assemblages of bizarre objects. The surrealist exploration of symbolic and bizarre objects goes far beyond the creation of such objects because it involves the objectification of the very act of dreaming and its transformation into reality. This is where language obtains “a connected double function: it operates in the everyday waking world and it operates in the inner world of dream, the irrational, and the marvelous” (Stockwell, 2017, p. 38). For Breton, the dream world offers both “the possibility of being attuned to our experience of the world” and it gives individuals a responsibility to live in the fullest way possible (Groth & Lusty, 2013, p. 134). This defines the surrealists’ aim in this domain to combine imagination with reality and dreams with everyday life.

Poetry as the “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Wordsworth and Coleridge, 1909, p. 4) can be perceived as automatism, which André Breton defined as “the exclusive condition for surrealism” (as quoted in Stockwell, 2017, p.51). Surrealism involves techniques which articulate writing, painting, sculpture and other art forms spontaneously without any deliberate or intentional input from the artist or writer. According to Breton, such spontaneous techniques as dreams express the unconscious minds of the artists and writers. Even in the conscious process of creating, artists can merge the real and the imaginary.

Surreal juxtapositions or colliding images exhibit a reality that exists underneath the unconscious. Poetry full of uncanny metaphors, conceits and imageries can reveal the same reality. Metaphysical poetry in particular that deals with “a realm beyond of empiricism” (Walker, 1998, p. 45) can create a surreal effect through its unexpected juxtapositions of images.

Heidegger's conception of human existence is what he refers to as 'Dasein' which means being there or being in the world. Dasein is a "relation of being" which is a relationship that extends the unfolding of existence into a realm of possibilities (Heidegger, 1962, p. 12). The resolute 'Dasein' can become the 'conscience' of others (Heidegger, 1993, p. 298). This conscience seeks the position of 'Mitsein' (being with others) as humans find it difficult to survive without togetherness (Wahl, 2019, p. 48). So *mitsein* is essential to *dasein*. Accordingly, individuals suffer when they are isolated as humans need companionship to make existence more fulfilling. Humans live, by birth, in a state of being with others but they experience what Heidegger calls "falling". According to Heidegger, "falling" is not a "bad or deplorable property", rather it is inevitable (1962, p. 220). Individuals' choices are affected by others, but they solely hold themselves responsible for the lack of authenticity of life's choices. Authentic life entails, "a reclaiming of oneself, from the way we typically fall into our everyday ways of being" (Sherman, 2009). To achieve authenticity, despite being a social being, one must take a personal endeavor that tears them apart from falling. In everyday averageness, people experiencing the fall, live inauthentic lives being unaware of what or who is affecting their decision making. They can perceive the unity of their *dasein* only when they live authentically, gain personal autonomy, take complete responsibility for themselves, accept their own mortality and exercise free will. The study explored Das and Donne's poems having features of symbolic images, strange assemblages, unexpected juxtapositions, and spontaneity under surrealism and the characteristics of *Dasein* (existence), *Mitsein* (companionship), authenticity and unauthenticity under existentialism.

Research Methodology

This research utilizes a qualitative research design, incorporating close reading and comparative analysis methods. Close reading focuses on a detailed examination of individual poems of Das and Donne, while comparative analysis facilitates a broader understanding of the poets' works. Selected poems of Das and Donne are the primary sources, and the secondary sources are various books and articles. Das's poems 'Banalata Sen' and 'A Day Eight Years Ago' have been chosen for close reading. Donne's poems, including 'Death be not Proud' and 'The Good-Morrow' have been selected. Close reading involves an in-depth analysis of the chosen poems, focusing on elements like metaphor, symbolism,

and surreal imagery. After close reading, a comparative analysis has been conducted to identify commonalities and distinctions in the use of surreal imagery by Das and Donne. Themes related to existence, love, and death are compared. The typology of the research is exploratory and explanatory. Exploratory research investigates the questions of the human mind and human existence that have not previously been studied in-depth and explanatory research investigates how or why certain images create unexpected patterns to verify the authenticity of the individual outside the angst of death. The data collection methods are textual analysis (the study of texts) and document analysis (the study of documents). Patterns and themes related to surreal imagery and existential elements are identified through textual analysis and document analysis. The research instruments are surrealistic and existential concepts that contribute to formulating conclusive statements of the study.

Discussion and Analysis

Das's poem, 'A Day Eight Years Ago' handles the idea of dying in a distinct way through the concept of suicide. The speaker hears about a man who had the urge to die being taken to the morgue on a dark night:

Now, lying in the morgue, he sleeps.
 He had sought this sleep perhaps.
 Like a plague rat, mouth smeared with frothy blood, neck slack
 In the bosom of a dingy cranny, now he sleeps.
 Never again will he wake. (9-13)

The speaker compares the image of a sleeping man in the throes of death to that of a plague rat. This is characteristic of "*extra-lucidity*" that promotes "a magical causality" with the intervention of natural factors like the cycle of life of either humans or rats that have no logical relation with what is at stake i.e. one's existence, (Breton, 2008, p. 962–3). Thereby, it disconcerts and confuses the ordinary human thought process but has the strength to thrill the reader's mind through the speaker's out-of-body experience (e.g. seeing the vision of a dead man) (Neher, 1980, p. 194). This creates the image of the surreal psychological set favoring out-of-body experiences within the context of a 'real-life' situation, a man committing suicide.

The flow of life intervenes in the flow of the man's suicide through the symbolic image of the mosquito and flies, representing the light as well as the darkness of existence:

I sense all around me the unforgiving opposition
Of my mosquito net, invisible in the swarming darkness. The mosquito
stays awake within his
blackened monastery, in love with life's flow. Flies alight on blood and
filth, then fly again to sunlight.
How many times have I watched the play of winged insects on waves of
golden sunshine (25-29)

Here, the mosquito net thwarts the mosquito to protect the human while the mosquito revels in the darkness in search of sustenance. This is a deliberate attempt to lessen ego attachments through symbolic meditations and visualizations that stress “darkness, defeat, torture, mutilation, death and rotting,” followed by positive images of “growth, rejuvenation, fruiting, ripening, and rebirth” (Metzner, 1986, p. 146). This is why the darkness of the mosquito follows the image of the flies and other winged insects celebrating the golden sunlight. This is the speaker's expressive response to the “call of conscience” for the suicidal man that helps individuals like him reach authenticity i.e. to look for the light within the darkness of existence, (Carmen, 2003, p. 295). This form of “call of conscience” reorients Dasein or existence.

The call of conscience is the encounter with one's possibility, the fear of the possibility of death and the hopelessness of life as the possible loss of all possibilities. This is where the life force fails to control the suicidal man as he fails to heal from his death anxiety:

An intimate sky, it would seem—some pervasive life force
Controls their hearts.
The grasshopper's constant twitching, caught in the mischievous child's
grasp, Fights death.
Yet in that foremost darkness after moonset, you, a coil of rope in hand,
Had gone alone to the *ashvattha* tree, Knowing that the grasshopper's
life, or the *doyel* bird's, never meets with That of man. (30-37)

Here, the grasshopper who fights death is in direct contrast to the man who hangs himself on the *ashvattha* tree, devaluing the life of those who struggle to survive in nature e.g. the grasshopper, the *ashvattha* tree, and the *doyel*. For the suicidal man, “Anxiety individualizes Dasein and thus discloses it as ‘solus ipse’” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 188). In other words, anxiety comes from how the man views himself as an isolated individual within the crowd. This is where the

speaker criticizes how humans fall into the “they-self”, the *das Man*, a public identity where he loses himself in the meaningless nature of the crowd. As the suicidal man fails to distinguish himself from others, he gives into the state of Being-towards-death rather than easing into the path of Being-in-the-world like other nature’s creations.

The speaker distinguishes the suicidal man from non-humans through illogical and spontaneous imagery. The unexpected imagery of the owl being blind and the moon being an old woman provides a glimpse into the speaker’s thought process:

But every night I look and see, yes,
 A blind and palsied owl come sit upon the *ashvattha* branch,
 Blink her eyes and say: “Old lady moon has sunk in the flood, has she?
 Marvelous!
 Let's now catch a mouse or two!” (77-81)

Here, the owl is at the mercy of the moonlight, a temperamental old woman, as it must hunt “a mouse or two” before the sunshine interferes and the moon leaves. This creates a “royal path’ along which deep introspection of the mental field” as well as “fervent participation in the storms of the cosmos and of passion” become the same (Breton & Legrand, 1991, p. 241). For the speaker, in contrast to the suicidal man, being aware and open to the reality of death is linked to all that one values in human existence, including love, creativity, and togetherness (Mitsein) that the hopeless man shuns. So, through surreal and existential imagery, the speaker confronts death and reveals how one fights to live with the link between poetry and community, seeing in poetry the human realization of the spontaneous demand at the heart of companionship (Mitsein).

On the other hand, the encounter with death takes the form of a dreamscape in John Donne’s poem, ‘Death be not Proud’. The speaker evokes dream-like images as he appears to be conversing with death. Death enters the scene as a “poor” character for the speaker because unlike others, he does not view death as “Mighty and dreadful”:

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
 Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so,
 For, those, whom thou think’st thou dost overthrow,
 Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me; (1-4)

Here, the speaker asks death not to feel proud as he thinks that he is strong enough to overcome the fear of death to live his life on his own terms. Accordingly, death transcends the porous borders separating dreams and real life to emerge as a distinct entity that is powerless (“nor yet canst thou kill me”) in the face of the speaker's will to survive. This is the “double play of mirrors” of images in surrealism where death plays the role of the Freudian super-determinant in the speaker's reflection (Breton, 1960, p. 51). The double play involves multiple meanings and the overdetermination of thought (Rabaté, 2016, p. 51). This overdetermination is where death serves both as a weak figure as well as a figure of healing beyond the typical forms of good and evil.

Death is presented as a personified individual of comfort and relief, a restorative image that seeks to negate the terror of death through the poem:

From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
 Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,
 And soonest our best men with thee do go,
 Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery. (5-8)

The speaker mentions the “rest” and “sleep” that death provides, a soothing and pleasing picture of death where the “best men” serve as death's companions. This is a way of overcoming death by understanding the finiteness of one's existence as it urges individuals to remove unnecessary extrinsic roles and to devote themselves genuinely to living life as fully as possible (Feifel, 1961, p. 71; Kübler-Ross, 1975, p. 2). This is where the defining element of Dasein's potentiality-for-Being is displayed in the transformative nature of death that leads to the possibility of being authentic: “Dasein is authentically itself in [its] primordial individualization” where the “constancy of the Self...gets clarified” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 322). This means that humans like the speaker have the potential to reach authenticity if they accept their individuality (i.e. one is born alone, and one must die alone someday) outside of social beliefs (e.g. assuming that death is the enemy).

Through conversing with death, the speaker seeks to penetrate the mysteries of the external as well as the internal world in order to transfigure them and, hence, transform the world and change life. The assemblage of unexpected comparisons with death, on the one hand, and slavery, on the other, creates a strange situation that transforms death:

Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
 And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,

And poppy, or charms can make us sleep as well,
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then? (9-12)

Here, instead of men being at the mercy of death, death is at the mercy of men and destiny, existing alongside weapons of destruction like poison, war, and disease. In this case, the image of death exists as a juxtaposition of unrelated elements to constitute a new reality (Breton, 1969, p. 271-78; Chénieux-Gendron, 1990, p. 60-70). This new reality opens the speaker up to new possibilities of existence.

The illustration of death contains the essence of Dasein in the poem. Death serves as a metaphor for a short sleep that leads to eternal existence: “One short sleep past, we wake eternally,/And death shall be no more, Death, thou shalt die” (13-14). Here, the speaker as an individual has the ability to revoke the power of death by commanding death to die. For the speaker, the question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself” (Heidegger, 2008, p.33). In other words, Dasein chooses what human existence will be, and this is its essence. According to Andrew Harvey (1994), life “constantly” tempts people to identify themselves with it (p. 291). However, if the speaker attempts to identify himself with it, he will fall prey to the illusion of separation from other people and also fall prey to the illusion of time and the illusion that he is dying. Therefore, it is only by dying to that illusion of death that he enters reality in the poem.

The acceptance of death, therefore, brings the speakers of both Das and Donne’s poetry to the threshold of life. They demystify the death experience by making it self-transcending and life-transforming in how Donne gives his speaker power over death and Das gives his speaker the awareness of the necessary fight for survival in the cycle of life and death. This emerging consensus invites readers to speculate that perhaps “we harbor functional matrices in our unconscious mind that contain an authentic encounter with death” (Grof & Halifax, 1977, p. 9). This means that human beings (e.g. Donne’s speaker who rebels against death and Das’s suicidal man who gives in to death) not only know intellectually that they will die, but they also possess subliminal knowledge of what it feels like to experience death through surreal and existential elements.

The spirit of spontaneity and logic defying imagery that is characteristic to surrealism is often found in the poetry of Jibanananda Das. The poet, himself was aware of the how people viewed his poetry as surreal. In the introduction to his, *Srestha Kabita* (Best Poems) collection, Das stated, “Someone has judged the pieces as solely symbolic, completely subconscious, and surrealistic. I have also noticed some other explanations of my poems. Almost all the comments are

partially true” (Banu, 2020). His poem, ‘Banalata Sen’ with its unconventional imageries of beauty, nature and death is a prime example of Das’s surrealism.

According to André Breton, surrealism attempts to determine a certain point at which, “life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, the communicable and the incommunicable, the high and the low, are not perceived as contradictions” (Breton and Rosemont, 1978, p.129). Such a point defying the contradictions of life and death can be found in Jibanananda Das’s ‘Banalata Sen’. In the first stanza of the poem, presented dream like scenes of an immortal traveler passing through different time periods of ancient India. The immortal speaker finds himself surrounded by “life’s frothy ocean” (5) when he meets Banalata Sen. The juxtaposition of life’s confusion and absurdity with that of ocean foam, creates a surreal image that merges the real with the imaginary. Moreover, the literal image of the immortal traveler passing through ancient Indian cities and ending up in an ocean in itself has a dream-like surreal effect.

The imageries in ‘Banalata Sen’ are highly unconventional and thus, surreal. The imageries used to describe Banalata Sen in the second stanza such as “bird’s nest like eyes” are unconventional and unexpected. Similarly, the imagery of “A hawk wipes the scent of sunlight from its wings.” is also unexpected and unconventional. Such unexpected imageries of nature play with the senses and create dissonance which is a part of surrealist writing. It is the chord of harmony in music or the use of imagery in literature that is “perceived by most people as being temporarily unpleasant.” (Tenny, 1988 as cited in Stockwell, 2017, p.71). At a first glance, the reader used to clear blue eyes or chocolate brown eyes may find the imagery of eyes like bird’s nests unpleasant. But if they put themselves in the poet’s shoes, they may be able to understand why Das created such an image and learn to appreciate its unconventionality. For example, the circular birds’ nest can look like the eye’s branched iris while the inner circle of the nest can look like a dark pupil.

Banalata Sen, the mystical lady of Jibanananda Das’s poetry is a metaphor who unveils the poet’s unconscious. She is a metaphor for lightness and darkness, for life and death, the past and the future in the poet’s life. Despite the polar opposites of her being she is no contradiction in his life. Travelling through the ancient dark cities of the Indian subcontinent, it is Banalata Sen who gave the poet, “a moment’s peace” (6) as if rendering the passage of time meaningless. While the poet is adrift in the dark sea of life, it is Banalata Sen he sees on a green grassy island as if her bird’s nest like eyes light his path. At daybreak, when only darkness remains, it is Banalata Sen he confronts, as if she is death personified waiting for him. She is the certain point of surrealism that Breton referred to as the annihilator of contradictions between polarities such as

life and death. Moreover, her surreal entity unveils the poet's existential philosophy.

In his *Second Manifesto*, André Breton stated, "the drift of surrealism has always and chiefly been towards a general and emphatic *crisis in consciousness*" (Breton and Rosemont, 1978, p.129). Banalata Sen as a surreal metaphor unveils the poet's unconscious existential crisis. The speaker, as a worn-out traveler seeks, Banalata Sen, the woman that lights his path. He desires to find peace from the inauthentic life he and others around him are living. When the poet's rudder is broken and he is adrift at life's sea, he finds Banalata Sen. Her entity in the poem here, reveals the existential crisis and anxiety he was experiencing. In the last stanza, when the speaker is face to face with Banalata Sen, the metaphor for darkness and death, he is living an authentic life. The surreal image of Banalata Sen lays bare the poet's unconscious desire to confront death and his conscious acceptance of death. All in all, 'Banalata Sen' with surreal imageries, unexpected juxtapositions, dream like scenes chronicle the different stages of the poet's existential crisis from inauthenticity to authenticity.

John Donne's poetry is saturated with illogical juxtapositions and unconventional imageries making the poems not only metaphysical but also surreal. Donne's, 'The Good Morrow' is one such example of a metaphysical surrealistic poetry due to its unexpected imageries. To the general reader, Donne's metaphors, symbols and imageries are completely unexpected, illogical, and incomprehensible. But there is a logic to his surreal imageries that only he could comprehend completely. For example, the rapid change of imageries from child-like lovers and seven sleepers from the Christian mythology to the unconventional hyperbole of past sexual relationships of the speaker being a dream of his beloved, Donne juxtaposed completely different images to convey the message that his relationship with his beloved is much mature and spiritual than naïve sexual relationships of the past. Further progression of the poem leads the reader to more astonishing, logical defying and surreal imageries.

In the second stanza, the speaker transforms their room into kingdoms and a world of its own. The third stanza juxtaposes the faces of two loves with two hemispheres without north and west. Such imagery is not only unexpected but also logic defying. The last three lines of the poem, following a surrealistic tradition, reflect the unconscious desires and fears of the poet through imagery. The "dying" mentioned in the last three lines could refer to a spiritual love between immortal beings because Donne's contemporaries might know that "only impure things are mortal" (Nutt, 1999, p. 50). Then again, "dying" can also refer to a sexual love that ends in a climax. According to Pritchard the last three lines of Donne actually refer to the spiritual and sexual love of the

prelapsarian loves where the human minds could control their organs. As such, Donne's love for his beloved defies time, sexuality and even mortality.

'The Good Morrow' that Donne "explores is what takes place inside his own head" (Nutt, 1999, p.47). The death imageries in the poem reflect Donne's desire to evade death. His strong desire reflected in the last phrase of the poem, "none can die" also reflect his fear of death. His desire to immortalize his love or claim it as immortal reflects his incapability to accept death. To Heidegger, death is an inevitability and the faster one accepts it, the faster they can live authentic lives in control of their own free will. From that existential perspective, Donne's death imageries in 'The Good Morrow' reveal that he is living an inauthentic life by attempting to evade or conquer death.

Das and Donne's poems exhibit surrealistic characteristics such as dream-like scenes, and symbols along with unexpected and illogical juxtapositions. Although Donne's poetry contains bizarre and surreal imageries and juxtapositions it lacks the psychic automatism and spirit of spontaneity present in Das's poetry. Despite that, Das's 'Banalata Sen', 'A Day Eight Years Ago', and Donne's 'Death be not proud', 'The Good-Morrow' reflect their existential philosophy as the unconventional imageries in their poems uncover their unconscious desires and fears that revolved around life and death.

Findings and Recommendations

Das creates images of the surreal psychological array that favors out-of-body experiences for the speaker within the context of a 'real-life' situation, that is, a man committing suicide in 'A Day Eight Years Ago'. It also shows that the speaker's expressive response to the "call of conscience" for the suicidal man helps individuals like him reach authenticity as it reorients Dasein or existence. (i.e. looking for the light within the darkness of existence). As the suicidal man fails to distinguish himself from others, he gives into the state of Being-towards-death rather than easing into the path of Being-in-the-world like other nature's creations. Therefore, through surreal and existential imagery, the speaker confronts death and reveals how one fights to live with the link between poetry and community, seeing in poetry the human realization of the spontaneous demand at the heart of companionship (Mitsein). On the other hand, Donne's "Death be not proud", the findings are how death serves both as a weak figure as well as a figure of healing beyond the typical forms of good and evil. This refers to how humans like the speaker have the potential to reach authenticity if they accept their individuality (i.e. one is born alone and one must die alone someday) outside of social beliefs (e.g. assuming that death is the enemy). This embodies a

new reality, opening the speaker up to new possibilities of existence as it is only by dying to that illusion of death that he enters reality in the poem.

Conclusion

Poetry as a mode of self-expression becomes logic-defying with the incorporation of surrealistic imagery. Similarly, Das and Donne's poems with their surreal images shatter the boundary between reality and imagination. In doing so, the poems uncover their unconscious inclinations, aspirations, anxieties, and fears. Surrealism in Das and Donne's poetry reflect how both poet's approach death and their mortality. Donne's imposing image of a boastful death that needs to be conquered and Das's multiple images of death in beauty and nature elucidates a deep understanding of death. Das and Donne's poetry such as 'Banalata Sen', 'A Day Eight Years Ago', 'Death be not Proud', and 'The Good-Morrow' respectively, through surreal imageries uncover the existential anxiety, the "being-towards-death" or death wish and the authentic lives the poet's unconsciously express in their verse. The surreal death imageries not only reflect their innermost conflicts and resolutions regarding death but also the authenticity of the lives they are leading. As such, Das and Donne's poetry serves as an illuminating guide for their readers to comprehend their own mortality and existence.

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Rokeya's *Padmarag*: A Marxist Reading

Shipra Mondal¹

Abstract

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's novella *Padmarag* reveals an intriguing depiction of a utopian women's world, set against a backdrop of pervasive exploitation and patriarchy. The novella portrays independent and resolute women characters who defy oppressive social customs imposed by the regressive society. Central to the narrative is the construction of Tarini Bhavan (Tarini House), a commune where oppressed and outcast women reside as a community based on equality and compassion, emancipated from the rigid confines that permeated early twentieth-century Bengal. In *Padmarag* Rokeya rejects and refutes the archetypal constructs prevalent in society and advocates for the liberation of women from oppressive societal frameworks and strives to create a more egalitarian and inclusive social order. Marxism, as a pro-women philosophy, advocates for social transformation towards equality as part of the general emancipation of humanity from historical bondage of exploitation and suppression. Marxist ideas and views have been used as a framework for analyzing Rokeya's aspirations and fortitudes for women's emancipation in the novella *Padmarag*. This paper endeavours to critically examine Rokeya's discernible Marxist consciousness of social transformation, intersectionality, patriarchy, collective action, and emancipation in *Padmarag* and portrays her as a Marxist Feminist by in-depth textual analysis and allusions to classical and contemporary Marxist ideas.

Keywords: Marxism, feminism, women, emancipation, education

Introduction

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932) was the trailblazer for women's education and emancipation in early twentieth-century British Bengal. She was a social reformer who advocated women's active involvement in all social sectors. Living in a society dominated by capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, and fundamentalism, Rokeya experienced firsthand the deprivation and oppression faced by women. She recognized the dire circumstances in which women were confined within the boundaries of their homes, denied education, opportunities, and basic rights. Instead of accepting these social hostilities, she chose to actively engage in social reform.

¹Senior Lecturer, Dept. of English, Daffodil International University, shipra@daffodilvarsity.edu.bd

Rokeya used her pen as a powerful tool to shed light on the struggles faced by women and advocate for their rights. She is considered “the first and foremost feminist of Bengali Muslim society...[who used her] pen...first [as] a weapon in her crusade for social reform” (Jahan, 1988). She was simultaneously a writer, a social activist and a politically vocal person who wrote, not for creating aesthetic literature, but for bringing social revolution. As Jahan mentioned, “She did not write primarily to entertain. Rather, ... to change customs she considered evil and unjust” (cited in Miah, 2018). The Marxist view on literature “literature should disdain elaborate aesthetic techniques and become an instrument of social development” (Eagleton, 1989) is relevant for Rokeya’s literature. She faced numerous challenges and obstacles in her pursuit of advocating for women's rights and education in early twentieth-century Bengal. The society she resided in was deeply entrenched in patriarchal and fundamental values, further reinforced by the capitalist-colonized system. She had to pass a thorny life till death as she could not but provoke the so-called social leaders by her strong words for women’s progress as well as social progress. She expressed distress, “For 25 years I took curses from die-hard fundamentalists for serving society” (Rokeya, 2006). Despite enduring a challenging life until her passing, she remained steadfast in her commitment to advocating for gender equality and societal development.

Background of the Study

Rokeya wrote literature to depict the flaws of a capitalist-fundamentalist society of her time, to show women’s substandard life in that society, to persuade women to rise against the inequity, and to embolden women to take active role in social reconstruction with an aim of building a better society with women’s respectful and meaningful life in it. “As early as 1844, in his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, Marx argued that women’s position in society could be used as a measure of the development of society as a whole” (cited in Brown, 2014). This Marxist thought has been reflected in Rokeya’s literature where she consistently tried to show the co-relation between women’s development and social development. She firmly believed, “If all Indian women do not rise, India will never rise” (Rokeya, 2006). Rokeya’s belief of this inextricable relationship between women’s contribution and social and national progression has been reiterated in the novella *Padmarag*.

In the context of her time and social setting, the way Rokeya sketched women characters and women’s thoughts has been extremely revolutionary. The female characters in *Padmarag* exemplify women’s empowerment, women’s capabilities, various professions, solidarity among women, mental strength, and

independent lives. *Padmarag* shows women's construction of an equal society and women's firmness to go beyond the confinement of family life and to devote their life for the service of society.

Literature Review

Rokeya is arguably the most prominent feminist writer and campaigner in the early twentieth century Indian sub-continent. She has been dubbed as the "feminist foremother" (Jahan, 1988, p.7). Rokeya's literature has been researched far and wide through feminist lens. As asserted, "Rokeya can be regarded as one of the most important feminist voices in the annals of twentieth-century world literature" (Hasan, 2018). Rokeya's only novella *Padmarag* has been analyzed through feminist angle. As stated, "Reading this novella brings home to us just how bold, wide-ranging, and universalist Rokeya's vision of feminism" (Bagchi, 2004) and announced, "*Padmarag* is a feminist, and primarily female, utopia" (Bagchi, 2013). However, *Padmarag* presented a revolution in making with breaking so many traditional boundaries beyond feminist label and analyzed women issues along with social and national issues. Thus, it makes sense that this text be scrutinized through the Marxist lens.

Problem Statement

Despite addressing those crucial ideological issues of her time, research on Rokeya's *Padmarag* from Marxist standpoint remains limited. Although *Padmarag* incorporates Rokeya's views on social, economical, and political structure of the then patriarchal society under capitalist-colonized system, the necessity of investigating *Padmarag* through Marxist framework has been hardly felt so far in the academic arena. This research endeavours to address this gap through a comprehensive Marxist study of *Padmarag*, with an aim of unfolding Rokeya's critique as well as perspective on the socio-political system of the capitalist-patriarchal society of the early twentieth century British Bengal.

Rationale of the Study

Marxist ideas have been one of the greatest intellectual tools for analyzing society, economy, politics, and world views in the modern world, especially, where the question of emancipation of humanity is concerned. As such, it is only rational that this revolutionary text of Rokeya symbolizing the transformation of society and emancipating the exploited women of her era, be assessed through the Marxist purview. Although a late-twentieth-century resurgence in the inquiry into the writings and activism of Rokeya has brought forward her prominence as the leading feminist figurehead from the dawn of that

century, most, if not all, of the analyses of her writings were devoid of any link and allusion to Marxist ideology. At the very moment of the novella's creation, the influence of Marxist revolution was evident on the global stage, characterized by successful revolutions and the transformation and transcendence of societies. It can thus hardly be termed as coincidental that the novella *Padmarag* contains such revolutionary ideas regarding the emancipation of society and women. In this context adopting a Marxist purview, this study seeks to understand the implicit connection of the broader Marxist discourse in Rokeya's novella *Padmarag*, thereby elevating our perception about the revolutionary fervour regarding the emancipation of society and women exuded in Rokeya's narrative.

Objectives of the Study

Thus, the objective of this paper is to identify and analyze the Marxist elements present in Rokeya's sole novella, *Padmarag*, while also portraying Rokeya as a Marxist-Feminist. This paper explores how an egalitarian world has been imagined in Rokeya's *Padmarag*, through the transformative drive by women's leadership in reshaping society for a better place and delves into Rokeya's thoughts and declaration on women's progress as an integral facet of both social and national progress.

Research Methodology

The methodology employed in this article involves a thorough analysis of the text, critically examining it considering Marxist theory and ideas and identifying the aligning elements and concepts, and thus rationally portraying Rokeya as a Marxist-Feminist. It explores Rokeya's perspective on the idea of women's active involvement in serving and reconstructing society through a Marxist lens. The research also delves into Rokeya's vision of an egalitarian society where people regardless of their class, caste, gender, and religion, can coexist harmoniously. The primary source for this analysis is the novella *Padmarag*, supplemented by various books, research papers, and reliable websites as secondary sources. All the information has been utilized in the paper based on its logical relevance.

Theoretical Framework

A crucial aspect of Rokeya's feminism lies in highlighting the interconnection between women's progress and social progress. According to Clara Zetkin (2015), "the question of the emancipation of women is not an isolated one but rather constitutes a part of the great social question". Through her literary works, including *Padmarag*, Rokeya advocated for women's

advancement, emphasizing the essentiality of women's equal participation in social and economic spheres for the overall advancement of society. Lenin also regarded “the woman question as a part of the social question” (cited in Zetkin, 1934). Kollontai (1909) stated, “The feminists seek equality in the framework of the existing class society”. However, “Marxist feminism, on the other hand, does make the connection between the oppression of women and capitalism” (Gimenez, 1998). Rokeya depicted a capitalist society characterized by inequality, divisions based on class, caste, race, and religion. She made connections between patriarchy and capitalism, portraying patriarchy as a consequence of capitalist systems. As Hartmann (1979) said,

A materialist analysis demonstrates that patriarchy is not simply a psychic, but also a social and economic structure. We suggest that our society can best be understood once it is recognized that it is organized both in capitalist and in patriarchal ways.

In *Padmarag*, Rokeya portrayed women’s life in a capitalist-patriarchal society and showed that women’s humiliation and degradation is a feature of the existing capitalist system. She also showed alliance between capitalism and colonialism and displayed her strong stance against colonialism. As stated, Marxist feminists insist on developing politics that put women's oppression and liberation, class politics, anti-imperialism, antiracism, and issues of gender identity and sexuality together at the heart of the agenda (Luxton, 2016). In *Padmarag*, Rokeya's efforts extended beyond simply depicting the victimization of women in a capitalist-patriarchal society, rather she called for a revolutionary transformation of the society and declared an all-out war against the misogynistic society. Rokeya’s yearning for social reconstruction relates her thoughts more to a core philosophy of Marxism, as Karl Marx said, “Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways: The point, however, is to change it” (cited in Kumar, 2019).

Discussion and Findings

Rokeya as a Marxist Feminist in *Padmarag*

In *Padmarag* Rokeya narrated a utopian women’s world, a women’s sanctuary led, administered, and run by women. She also sketched woman characters possessing strong determination and strength in mind to turn down family life and chose the path of devoting whole life for serving the society. However, along with these, she also revealed her view about an ideal society, a

society based on equality. Marxist consciousness can be traced in Rokeya's writing while analyzing her view about social construction and women's role in society. Although Rokeya never depicted herself as a Marxist publicly, she manifested Marxist thoughts in a good deal of her writings including *Padmarag*, consciously or covertly. Historically early twentieth century is a very significant period in India and worldwide. This is the era; the grown-up Rokeya belonged to and wrote her notable literature (*Padmarag* was published in 1924). This is the turbulent period in history when Russian revolutionary movement as well as Indian independence movement were gaining impetus. This is the period when Marxist ideology diffused worldwide and Marxist thoughts inspired revolutions against oppressive rulers like that of the Russian revolution (Gray, 1999). India's movement for independence from the British colonial rule was inspired by the Russian revolution. Kumar (2019) stated,

In India, the struggle for independence from British colonial rule was deeply enriched by lessons from the world's first successful revolution, which was socialist in nature ... the first Russian Revolution in 1905 ... made Marxism-Leninism a potent ideological force internationally.

Thus, early twentieth century was an era of restive political atmosphere in India and throughout the world and Marxism was a prevailing political ideology worldwide. Rokeya was a very politically conscious writer, and she was very much vocal about Indian national political situation. Being an intellectual and a person interested in political affairs, it can be speculated that Rokeya was aware of the political environment worldwide and might have known and read about Marxism as it was pervasive at her time and prevalent in her literature. Rokeya's revolutionary spirit is manifested in her fearless utterance talking about colonized India, "We are not a slave nation, we have to believe that firmly" (Rokeya, 2006) and she questioned rebelliously, "Why have you allowed the foreign colonials to sit on the throne of India?" (Rokeya, 2006). Khan (2013) commented, "Rokeya's criticism was not limited to the patriarchy only. She continued her struggle against the subjugation of her country also". Rokeya's revolutionary imagination of a communistic and uncompromising community sketched in *Padmarag* places her in the line of Marxist thinkers.

Rokeya's social thought is the specialty of her feminist thought which demonstrates her as a Marxist-Feminist. Rokeya consistently emphasized the interconnectedness of women's issues with broader social concerns. She made a conscious effort to illustrate the interdependence between women's advancement

and overall social progress, highlighting the significance of women's engagement in social activities for the betterment of society. Lenin's view about "The inseparable connection between the social and human position of the woman" (cited in Zetkin, 1934) has been echoed in Rokeya's thoughts.

Tarini Bhavan, the Refuge for the Wretched and the Symbol of Equality

The Women in Tarini House: The Warriors of Societal Change

Deen-Tarini Sen, the founder of Tarini House, is one of the leading women characters in *Padmarag*. Being widowed at only seventeen, Deen-Tarini did not let her to be imprisoned by her late husband's family members. She did not like to spend her widowed life only by observing hollow familial rituals. Rather, she dedicated the rest of her life to social work. With the money she inherited, she founded "Tarini House", to give shelter to the outcast women of the society. She also opened a school for girls' education and an organization for addressing women's misery. As described,

Despite facing opposition from her father-in-law's relatives, Deen-Tarini established a shelter for widows called 'Tarini House'. Encouraged by the positive outcomes of Tarini House, she went on to establish a school and form an organization called the 'Association for Alleviation of Women's Calamities'. The Tarini House compound consists of a school on one side and a refuge for widows on the other. Later, she also established a hospital as part of her initiatives (Rokeya, 2006, p. 268).

Thus, by founding 'Tarini House', Deen-Tarini made it the vow of her life to stand by the hapless, the unprivileged, the oppressed, the outcast and the destitute. As narrated, "The widows who have no one to go to, where will they get refuge? – In Tarini House. The orphan girls, where will they get education? – In Tarini School. The married women who have to leave husband's home by being brutally oppressed, where will they go? – In Tarini Office. The destitute people suffering from incurable diseases, their safe haven also is the Tarini Hospital" (Rokeya, 2006). However, for violating the social norms prescribed for widows in an extremely patriarchal society, moreover, for taking social service as the devotion of life as a woman, she had to be "outcast" (Rokeya, 2006) by her own relatives who would condemn her saying, "Those fallen women, those lepers, those orphaned children, they are Tarini's family" (Rokeya, 2006). However, those so-called relatives were not successful in stinging her as those

comments would make Tarini rather laugh. She would say being content in her heart, "Can all have the blessedness like me to serve humanity?" (Rokeya, 2006). Deen Tarini's life matches largely with Lenin's vision regarding women's lives. Lenin talked about "an extension and exaltation of motherliness from the individual to the social sphere ... all the awakening social life and activity of women must be encouraged, so that they can discard the limitations of their philistine individualist home and family psychology" (cited in Zetkin, 1934).

Padmarag (the name given to her by Deen Tarini for her beauty, real name Siddiqa, nick name Joynob), the eponymous heroine of the novel, is the sister of a landlord. She was married off in her childhood (at 12) and was humiliated by her husband's family due to their greed for her property. Her husband married for the second time due to his uncle's desire to grab property of the second bride's family. Her elder landlord brother Soleman did not accept this polygamous family life (which was very usual for men in the patriarchal society of that time) for her sister and did not let her go to her husband's family. After her elder brother's murder, she took refuge in Tarini House. In Tarini House, Padmarag engaged herself in social work. Despite being a Zaminder girl, she got herself declassed and merged herself with all the other socially outcast women in Tarini House. However, through a course of events, she met her husband at one point in her life. Her husband, Mr. Almas, fell in love with her and wanted to reunite with her as his second wife died by that time. Padmarag, though equally fell in love with her husband, did not go back to his husband's family. She did not erase the memory of dishonor she received from her husband's family. She stood against the commodification of human relations, a basic trait of a capitalist society. She said, "They wanted my property, - not me. Are we dolls of clay that they can reject and accept us whenever they wish?" (Rokeya, 2006). She made a solemn commitment to remain single and dedicate her entire life to the fight for a dignified existence for women. Being requested to accept her husband and domestic life, she replied, "If I go back to my husband's family forgetting those insults and refusals, giving this example, in future, the grandmothers will tell the emerging spirited women, 'Let your determination and spirit be given up, - can't you see, even after so much degradation, Joynob chose to devote her life to serve her husband'. And the men will proudly say, 'However high educated, high minded, spirited, great and glorious women might be, - at the end, they must fall under our feet!'" (Rokeya, 2006). Instead of serving a husband and a family, she thought it worthier to spend her life to serve the greater society and the innumerable hapless women of that society. Rising above the chain of family life, she proclaimed, "I want to show the society that only married life is not the ultimate goal of a woman's life; serving the husband's family is not the essence

of life. On the other hand, I hope my sacrifice will bring good for the women in future” (Rokeya, 2006). Padmarag’s strong words against repressive patriarchal family life sound as the reverberation of what Kollontai (1909) said,

To become really free woman has to throw off the heavy chains of the current forms of the family, which are outmoded and oppressive. For women, the solution of the family question is no less important than the achievement of political equality and economic independence.

Rokeya’s portrayal of other women’s lives in *Padmarag* gives an excruciating description of the repression, affliction, and persecution of women by the family, society, and the law in a capitalist-patriarchal society. Kollontai (1909) said,

In the family of today, the structure of which is confirmed by custom and law, woman is oppressed not only as a person but as a wife and mother, in most of the countries of the civilised world the civil code places women in a greater or lesser dependence on her husband, and awards the husband not, only the right to dispose of her property but also the right of moral and physical dominance over her.

Saudamini became a stepmother by being married off to a widower who had two children. Saudamini’s tale shows us the stigmatization and mental torment she had to endure being a stepmother by the other women of the husband’s family and society. In her married life, as a stepmother, the torturous events she had to go through eventually turned her mad. Afterwards, after being cured she took refuge in Tarini House. Rafia Begum’s husband was studying to be a barrister in England. Rafia Begum waited for her husband’s return for long ten years with intense emotion in her heart. She loved him so much that “She did not eat milk cream and mango for these ten years – as her beloved husband was deprived of these two foods in England” (Rokeya, 2006). After her long wait, Rafia Begum was rewarded with a divorce letter from her husband. Her husband returned from England, having married a memsahib, Rafia Begum suffered a mental breakdown. After her recovery, she found shelter in Tarini House. Mrs. Helen Horrace appealed to the court to be released from her drunk, lunatic, lecher husband. However, the court rejected a woman’s appeal and decreed, “Mrs Helen Horrace cannot get release from her husband Lieutenant Cornel Sisil Joseph

Horrace” (Rokeya, 2006). As a result, Helen’s life got “Tied for life to a lunatic” (Rokeya, 2006). This is England’s law for women, “This England – this stinky, rotten England claims it to be civilized!” (Rokeya, 2006). Sakina was married to a lawyer, Abdul Gafur. Abdul Gafur was a pervert womanizer. Even at the time of his marriage to Sakina, he had a secret concubine. Sakina’s refusal to go to her lecher husband’s house enraged her brothers. They wanted to send Sakina forcefully to her husband’s home. Finding no other alternative to save her dignity, Sakina attempted suicide. However, she was rescued and at long last got a new life in Tarini House. Usha’s coward husband left her alone to the robbers and ran away through the window. The robbers dragged Usha along with them. Neither her husband, nor her husband’s four brothers came forward to save her. Fortunately, three congress men rescued Usha and returned her to her husband’s house where she was not accepted any more. However, no punishment awaited her husband, “The coward husband who instead of saving his wife, ran away jumping through the window, is there any punishment for him in your society?” (Rokeya, 2006). Usha decided to commit suicide first. Afterwards, she changed her mind and planned to work as a domestic worker. The maid servant who promised to help her secretly sold her to a prostitution. Usha somehow escaped it and was finally brought before Mrs. Deen-Tarini Sen who embraced her with a lot of affection. In Tarini House, Usha got higher education by Deen-Tarini Sen and finally became the head teacher at Tarini School.

Tarini House: The Central Point of Social Upheaval

Tarini House emerged as the epicenter for social transformation led by and for women. In the pursuit of societal change, all the downtrodden women in Tarini House became warriors, actively engaging in the battle against the prevailing norms of society, “All the outcast, destitute, abandoned, helpless, oppressed women, - unite. Then we declare war against society! And Tarini House is our fort” (Rokeya, 2006). In the society, Rokeya depicted in *Padmarag*, women had to take it as the devotion of their life to serve the husband and the domestic life. The family boundary was the world for the women. Women had to accept it as their destiny and whatever oppressive the family life for them might be, they had to be incarcerated within the family. However, the outcast women residing in Tarini House became powerful agents of social transformation. They could rise above the limitation of domestic life and proclaimed,

We want to show that we have a lot of important things to do than serving your family. Living a family life with a husband is not the ultimate goal of a woman’s life. Human life is a precious gift from

God – it should not be wasted by only cooking and crying! We must declare war against the society! (Rokeya, 2006).

Women keep peace in the family by self-immolation. Women in Tarini House do not want to keep that peace anymore, they want revolution, “We do not want peace! We do not want peace, lifeless like death!” (Rokeya, 2006).

Tarini House: Manifestation of Rokeya’s Philosophy of Equality

In Tarini House, Rokeya manifested her vision of an egalitarian society. Irrespective of their class, caste, gender, or religion, individuals in Tarini House exist on equal footings. Women in Tarini House live a communistic life and Tarini House is their commune. Inhabitants of Tarini House are free of oppression, discrimination, and deprivation. The inhabitants of Tarini House experience freedom and equality. There is no animosity among people in Tarini House as they do not think about personal wealth, personal interest, or personal gain. They uphold collective identity and abandon the thought of personal welfare; they work for the organization’s welfare and the greater social welfare. It is a “Communistic, exploitation free, women-directed refuge, set up in the middle of a patriarchal society” (Amin, 2013). Women in Tarini House live their lives devoid of any extravagance, “There is no luxurious item ... Every sister gets one bed only ... All sisters wear quite same clothes... They do not wear heavy ornaments ... No vanity, No luxury ... They are epitome of simplicity and kindness” (Rokeya, 2006). Women in Tarini House do not accumulate wealth due to spending for their personal needs. As described about the heroine Siddiqa, “She earns 200 taka as salary from Tarini Office. From that amount, she spends only 30/40 taka for her necessities. She donates the rest of the money to Tarini House’s fund” (Rokeya, 2006). Tarini House does not run after name, fame, or money. Tarini House is a sanctuary for the wretched people,

The destitute, helpless ailing people found from anywhere get shelter in Tarini Hospital. Most of them leave after recovering. Only the leper and the disables keep living here ...The poor widows and married women, who are unable to work due to old age and disease, live in Tarini House (Rokeya, 2006).

Siddiqa rightly described Tarini house as a more desirable place than heaven, “I would not go to heaven even, if I can stay here” (Rokeya, 2006). Tarini House is a “utopia where Rokeya’s feminist and communist ideals have been reflected in every corner” (Amin, 2013). Rokeya’s “Socialistic notions” (Amin, 2013) are

explicit in Tarini House. In Tarini House, the women, of different background and social status, are declassed. They might have come from landlord, aristocratic or middle-class families. Whatever their past class might have been, in Tarini House, they are equal. In Tarini House, there is no hierarchy based on caste. As Amin (2013) stated,

Final declassing will happen here ... Abandoning the sign of caste, religion, class, and family, Siddiqa will take position among the people of industrialist, that is, capitalist era – landlord will merge with nurses, teachers and typists.

Women of different religions live together in Tarini House, “What an equality! Musalman, Hindu, Brahma, Christian all are working together as they are siblings born to same mother” (Rokeya, 2006). In a time marked by heightened animosity between Hindus and Muslims, Rokeya dared to envision a world where they could coexist under the same roof. Mr. Almas got overwhelmed, “A Muslim girl in a Brahma house. – what an enigma!” (Rokeya, 2006). Rokeya pushed boundaries even further by portraying Muslim and Hindu women in Tarini House practicing their religious rituals together, transcending the religious divisions that prevailed in society. “In evening prayer time, Rafia and Koresha performed their namaz on Tarini’s carpet” (Rokeya, 2006). Considering the communal context of her time, Rokeya’s vision of Hindu-Muslim equality is revolutionary. As Bagchi (2013) stated,

Rokeya’s vision in this novella is courageous and bold ... The uncompromising, ambitious, and unsectarian nature of Rokeya’s vision of feminism and education are revealed perhaps most graphically, among all the works she penned, in *Padmarag*.

Thus, Rokeya’s imaginary communist world has got expression through Tarini House. It is “a women’s world where people are free from inequality and exploitation” (Mazhar, 2013). Freed of all kinds of differences, discriminations, exploitations, and animosities, Tarini House became a sacred place for the dwellers, “Our Tarini House is like Ganga – by diving once in it, all get pure” (Rokeya, 2006).

Rokeya’s Notion on Education: Reformist, Resolute and Revolutionary

Rokeya was a relentless champion for women's education. However, her thoughts on women’s education were extremely revolutionary and reformist. Her

groundbreaking thoughts on education for women have been put into practice in Tarini School. As delineated, “Financial aid from the government is not accepted in the school. Therefore, textbooks recommended by the government are not used. By consulting with the well-educated women of the country, Deen-Tarini selects the textbooks by herself. Female students are not made dolls of luxury by being taught just to read a little to shape themselves in the mold of the university. Science, literature, geography, history, and math – all are taught to them, but the system of education is different. By making them memorise false history, they are not taught to hate their own country and country people. Ethics, moral education, and character building are given more attention. Girls are taught to become the most ideal daughters, wives, and mothers and they are taught to love their country and morality more than their own life. Especially, they should become self-reliant, and in future, they should not depend as a burden on their father, brother, husband or son as a wooden doll; this thing is observed particularly” (Rokeya, 2006). Rokeya’s discontent with the existing education system and her urge for reformation in this sector have been reflected in the portrayal of Tarini School. Deen –Tarini refused govt. grants for Tarini School as she did not want to comply with govt. educational system. She rejected the kind of education and the textbooks imposed by the colonial rulers as she aimed to infuse patriotism into the minds of the students of Tarini School. Rokeya’s “nationalist agenda becomes clear through such prescriptions” (Bagchi, 2013). Deen –Tarini expected donations from the people of the society to run the school. However, she “did not accept donations from the colonial rulers and their allies” (Rokeya, 2006). She wanted to build an education system based on her own progressive and patriotic ideals and wanted to keep it free from the influence of the ruling class. Marxist perspective on education has been reflected in Rokeya’s educational ideas. As Marx and Engels (1969) said,

The Communists have not invented the intervention of society in education; they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class.

In Tarini School, girls get education in all branches of knowledge—science, literature, geography, history, and math. In Rokeya’s time, women did not have access to all branches of knowledge, especially science was the exclusive domain for the men. As Ghosh states,

Even long after women's education was accepted by the society, women were considered inferior to men in intelligence. They were not given the opportunity to study science. Perhaps it was thought what was not needed for household chores such as cooking, raising of children, knitting, writing letters or keeping daily accounts were unnecessary for them. Sarala [Devi Chawdhurani] and Shanta [Nag] were students at Bethune College which was founded in 1849 exclusively for girls. No science subject was taught there (cited in Hasan, 2013).

However, Rokeya did not accept the discrimination in education and asked for equality in women and men's education in all branches of knowledge which "was highly revolutionary considering the material culture in which she launched her educational movement" (Hasan, 2013).

Rokeya belonged to an era when women were either not given education, or if they were given education, that was meant only to help the women in their domestic role. Women could be taught only those subjects which were prescribed by the society for the women. Moreover, the educated women also had to be under the guardianship of men and could not go beyond that crossing the boundary of the socially accepted limit. As Sarkar (2001) said,

As the debates around issues such as higher education for women in the last two decades of the nineteenth-century show, the only context in which women would be allowed visibility and agency were under the guardianship of men, and to further the nationalist cause in some way. Any agency shown by women that fell outside these acceptable limits was liable to be ridiculed, denounced, and ultimately given short shrift within nationalist historiography.

In such a backdrop, Rokeya went even further urging the women to use education to earn their own living. In Tarini School, girls are given such education that they can rely on their own rather than depending on the male members of their family. Siddiqa's elder brother also persuaded her to be self-dependent, "Be prepared for the struggle of life! I will prepare you with that necessary education of life so that you would not have to depend on any immoral man for only a handful of rice" (Rokeya, 2006). It was an immensely revolutionary thought for that time,

When the Brahmo community outlined the boundary of women's education, that is, the aims of women's education are to be worthy wife, mother, and daughter of the professional men, spiritual development and getting training to be a skilled housewife; the Muslim community was still debating about educating the women at all – in such a context, talking about using education to earn their own living! Such a new talk – poisonous too (Amin, 2013).

Emphasizing women's economic self-dependence for their emancipation, Engels said, “the first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female into public industry” (2004) and “when domestic duties require their attention only to a minor degree” (2004). Realizing the same truth, Rokeya insisted women to be self-reliant economically. She asked women to acquire that education which will help them to earn. In *Padmarag*, she showed that the education which does not help women to earn seems futile in a time of need. The landlord Siddiq learned a lot of things as a girl of an aristocratic family. However, while living in Tarini House, she found herself unfit as she found, “none of her learnings could help her earn money” (Rokeya, 2006). On the other hand, Rokeya showed the picture of the professional women engaged in various money earning activities. We get a vivid description of women's wage-earning activities in Tarini House,

In Tarini Office, there are all types of women – unmarried, married, and widows. They do different types of needles work, spin wheels, weave clothes in handloom, bind books, prepare various types of sweets for selling. Some get education to become teachers, some learn typing, some learn nursing. Overall, women in this sector earn their own living (Rokeya, 2006).

Moreover, the women in Tarini House are also engaged in social work. As described, “The women in Tarini House also do humanitarian works. To help the famine, flood, and epidemic stricken people, the women help by distributing rice, clothes, and medicines and by serving the patients” (Rokeya, 2006). Rokeya envisioned a wholly transformative world in which women could attain equal and respectable status as “women can become truly free and equal only in a world organised along new social and productive lines” (Kollontai, 1909).

In *Padmarag*, the women stood against the prevailing patriarchy and refused to accept husbands as lords, “Husband is the master – we do not accept it” (Rokeya, 2006). The women stood against the filthiness of dowry system,

“Marriage should not be based on properties and ornaments. Girls are not commodities that motor cars, and three storied buildings should be given free with her” (Rokeya, 2006, p. 366). The women took active role in social and economic activities to achieve the equal status in the society as, “The emancipation of women means the complete transformation of their social position and a revolution in their economic role” (Zetkin, 2015, p. 46). However, according to Rokeya's perspective, women engaged in these endeavors with the purpose of advancing and progressing society. In her view, women's liberation was intertwined with the emancipation of society. The women in *Padmarag* are humanitarian. They participate eagerly in Tarini House's charity works. The heroine Siddiqua termed herself as the “philanthropist” (Rokeya, 2006) and vowed to serve the society till her death. Observing the women's dedication for the country, Deen-Tarini proudly said, “Mother India! Who says you are poor? How can you be a beggar while having such gem like daughters?” (Rokeya, 2006).

Conclusion

In *Padmarag*, the women reconstructed the social system showcasing Rokeya's vision of an ideal system. In this new social system, women are not slaves to men, rather they are leaders. Equality prevails here, regardless of gender, wealth, religion, or social background. Rokeya, existing within a capitalist-colonized-patriarchal society, articulated her dream of a communistic society. Rokeya's patriotism sought emancipation for her motherland, and she beheld that emancipation in the form of an exploitation free, just, and equitable society, resembling the communistic social system.

This paper has presented Rokeya's feminist and social ideologies and their interrelation, highlighting the significant resemblance of Marxist principles on her thoughts. The way Rokeya expressed her viewpoints in *Padmarag*, manifests her to resembling a Marxist thinker, more precisely, a Marxist-Feminist. This paper has demonstrated the perspectives, emphasizing the profound similarities of Marxist ideologies on her overall worldview. The novella's “Political message is clear and very relevant for the present time” (Amin, 2013). In the present capitalist world, women are still the most exploited and oppressed. Marxist-Feminism is considered the most effective approach to address feminist concerns. As stated, “as the ruthlessness of the world market intensifies the exploitation of all working people among which women are the most vulnerable and the most oppressed, the time has come not just to retrieve the Marxist heritage in feminist thought but to expand Marxist Feminist theory in

ways that both incorporate and transcend the contributions of postmodern theorizing” (Gimenez, 1998).

Finally, the paper can be concluded by saying that to scrutinize Rokeya’s thoughts on women and society, the Marxist study of her literature is highly relevant with her portrayal as a Marxist Feminist.

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Why Marxist Ideology Matters in John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*?

Md. Ibrahim Khalil¹

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to map out the landscape of Marxist Ideology in John Steinbeck's novella *The Pearl*. Following the qualitative research method based on Marxist theoretical framework, the results of the study considered how the protagonist Kino and his people were imprisoned within the border of ideology, and how the exploiters naturalized their oppression in the form of religious speeches, deceitful medical treatment, and exploitative business strategies over generations. The study has reflected the origin, function, and application of ideology considering three significant categories such as the doctor, the priest, and the pearl traders accordingly. Besides, the study has demonstrated several factors behind the implantation process which, in fact, has kept the entire system under control. The conclusion mainly shed light on the dreadful consequences caused by the fatal destiny and man-made hazards. Furthermore, it addressed why Kino threw the pearl instead of selling it for a reasonable price later.

Keywords: Marxist ideology, exploitative strategies, dominant classes, naturalization

Introduction

Over the years, John Steinbeck (1902-1968), the eminent American novelist and Nobel laureate (1962), was interested in Mexican culture, language, and literature. As a result of his fascination and long-term adventure, he reportedly visited Mexican cities and deliberately explored how people talked, thought and framed their daily life stories, and how they treated and evaluated their ancestral history through their extraordinary literary words and works. Steinbeck's novella *The Pearl* (1947) is not beyond this conceptual border. Within a short framework, Steinbeck engaged his three dominant characters Kino, Juana and their only baby boy, Coyotito. Providing a gigantic pearl to the centre, he installed his experiments to diagnose diverse diseases of the society. Taking multiple crucial concerns related to everlasting sorrows and suffering into account, this novella invited debates and disputes among the oppressed and oppressors. The significance of the study is that it shows how the protagonist Kino and his people have been ruthlessly cheated, maltreated, and systematically turned like the mechanic tools to produce precious pearl over the years. The

¹Asst. Prof., Dept. of English, Pabna University of Science and Technology, ibrahimkhalil@pust.ac.bd

study explored the intrinsic limitations of Kino and his community that invited the implantation of ideology in the form of the businessmen, the doctor and more interestingly the priest.

Research Questions

The paper highlights the following research questions:

- a. How is Marxist Ideology applied as an instrument in John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*?
- b. What are the inherent factors that work behind the implantation of Ideology?

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- a. To analyze Steinbeck's *The Pearl* from the context of Marxist Ideology
- b. To explore the hidden factors behind the inherent implantation.

Literature Review

No doubt, the pearl looks glazing and stunning. Besides, this beautiful object invites disputes, destruction, and confusion, to the clan of Kino, sometimes, the pearl appears as the ray of hope and the destiny of the future. On the other hand, it turns out to be a matter of greed and devastation. In fact, it has become the devilish weapon of self-destruction. A large number of researches have been done on John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*. Martin observed the emergence of American dream, "With Steinbeck's change from the pearl's satisfying Kino's individual pleasure to it becoming a vehicle for the education of their child, and (one assumes) for the family's rise in social and economic position, he makes the Mexican folktale a parable about the American dream" (2017, p. 96). Steinbeck's source of materials of his original version has been analyzed by Edward Boyer Sams. According to Sams (2014):

The original version of *The Pearl* was a legend found on the Sea of Cortez from which Steinbeck took much of his source material; however, Steinbeck's dark story diverges significantly from the folk tale upon which it is based. Steinbeck learned of this parable down in La Paz, Mexico, during his halcyon voyage of leisurely travel and research on the Sea of Cortez (p. 190).

Another study focused the concern of western understanding and the American dream as George (2004) found out the eastern reaction to western understanding excluding the concern of class oppression and American dream. In this case, he analyzed Steinbeck's *The Pearl* from four of his Taoist principles such as anti-materialism, anti-intellectualism, an insistence on life of acceptance and becoming a Tao following the teachings of Taoism (p. 93). In another study, the context of talismanic identification has been mentioned as Lieber (1972) argued:

The Pearl is another tale whose narrative follows a pattern centered in talismanic identification. At first the pearl has a purely material value and significance... In the symbolic texture of the story the pearl reflects not only Kino's soul but the human soul. As such it is a complex talisman, containing Steinbeck's vision of man (p. 269).

Referring to language as the means of constructing power and identity, Besa (2019) explored the literary elements and linguistic instruments used to unravel critical issues and ideologies that project power and construct identity (p. 6). Steinbeck's style, philosophy and historical approach have been discussed by Michael Meyer. Meyer (2005) noted multiple issues like Steinbeck's style, techniques, his philosophy along with the historical approaches and themes accordingly. On the other hand, Astro (1970) depicted the destructive nature of the pearl:

Kino's decision comes, of course, when he realizes the destructive nature of material wealth, since in order to keep his pearl, he must be willing to exploit his own people, the Indians of the Gulf. So, Kino rejects his newly-acquired fortune, but not until an avaricious society has burned his house and killed his baby. (qtd., p. 119).

Interestingly, no particular research has been found where the only focus is Marxist Ideology. In this regard, this study demonstrates a new dimension in Marxist thoughts apart from the traditional discussion of class struggle. In fact, the study investigated how "Ideology" functions as an intellectual regulator which protects and reinforces the power relationship between the dominant class and oppressed in John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*.

Theoretical Framework

Conceptualization of Ideology

In terms of socio-economic and political condition of a country, the concept of ideology is highly significant and influential as Barry (1995) incorporates Louis Althusser's observation that ideology is, in fact, a vast concept that is broadly associated with the concerns of all Marxists ever known, and it has options based various context and conceptual platform (p. 163). Later, Barry includes Philip Goldstein's definition where ideology is meant to be a system of representations considering images, myths, and concepts in accordance with a particular subject, and there prevails historical contribution and the existence of a certain society (1995, p.163). There appear several definitions of Ideology. Whatever the form or pattern of words, their message is, in most cases, similar and close. The core fact is that ideology refers to the ruling and dominant class of society. It has great connection and legacy with self-set arrangements to convince the oppressed that things are normal and natural as Ryan stated:

Ideology or "the ruling ideas of the ruling class" is a way of legitimating or justifying social and economic arrangements that might otherwise appear unjust because they are characterized by inequality. Those who rule or who possesses economic power need to convince everyone else that the arrangement of the world is reasonable, or natural, or good (1999, p.53).

Freeden (2003) clarified the concept with detailed analysis. The literary and theoretical field consists of a number of "isms" which are widely related to ideological progress. According to Freeden, "When people hear the word 'Ideology', they often associate it with 'isms' such as communism, fascism, or mechanism, all these words do denote ideologies, but a note of caution must be sounded" (2003, p.1). Since there remains confusion and contradictions, in his later explanation, Freeden (2003) provides reliable suggestions to understand the heart of Ideology:

It suggests that artificially constructed sets of ideas, somewhat removed from everyday life, are manipulated by the powers that be- and the powers that want to be. They attempt to control the world of politics and to force us into a rut of doctrinaire thinking and conduct (2003, p.1).

Origin of Ideology

Until today, human civilization has witnessed a wide range of advancement in terms of science and technology. The way man has developed his dramatic skills to drive the flight in the abandoned sky, the same way he has set his lessons to drive a car on the road and a speedy ship in the ocean. Yet there prevails the basic limitation of these super living beings. He loves to dominate his own species along with the negligible creatures. In fact, this technique of dominance comes from the very beginning in terms of social, economic, and political structures. Therefore, the origin of ideology turns back to the ancestral tradition. It is because the ruling class identified the truth that man cannot be controlled easily by physical forces. Instead of visible instrument of dominance, ideas work better. The man behind the term “ideology” is a French philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836). Freedon (2003) noted that Tracy coined the term “Ideology” for the first time in the world (p.4). Although Tracy emphasized his concentration on political aspects widely, this concept is equally applicable for social and economic perspectives. On the other hand, Gramsci (1999) related the term with sensation, science, and analysis of ideas:

“Ideology” was an aspect of “Sensationalism”, i.e. eighteenth-century French Materialism. Its original meaning was that of “science of Ideas”, and since analysis was only method recognized and applied by science it means “analysis of ideas”, and that is, “investigation of the origin of ideas” (p.704).

Function of Ideology

In the context of the definition and diverse meanings of Ideology, there may be variations. But something there is obvious and that is exploitation and dominance. To clarify the forms and functions of Ideology, Nayar (2010) included diverse social structures like education, religion, and culture, “With social structures such as education, culture, and religion the oppressed classes believed that the order of inequality in society is ‘natural’ or ‘preordained’, and do not recognize that they are oppressed” (p.130). In this perspective, Freedon’s observation is very relevant. In order to include the role of the dominant class, Freedon (2003) noted, “The role of ideology was to smooth over that contradiction by making them appear as necessary, normal, and congruous” (p.5). In the context of dominant class, there may be classes like the business class, the elite class, and the religious class as the following figure (Figure-1) remarks the function of ideology.

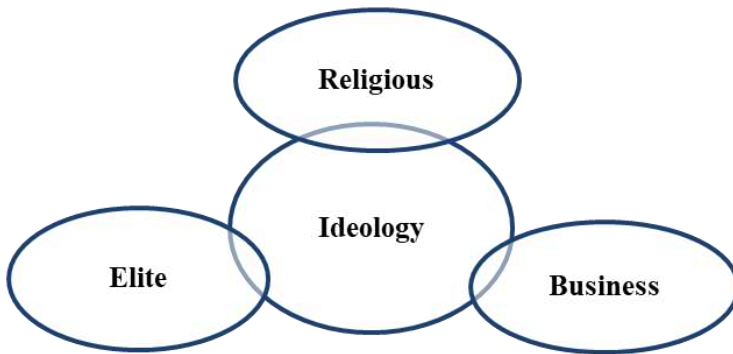


Figure-1: the function of ideology

Research Methodology

This study is based on qualitative research applying both theoretical and textual analysis. It basically concentrates on how Marxist ideology has functioned in John Steinbeck's novella *The Pearl* within the demonstration of intentional motivation, speech, and influence. To accomplish the work, the study took several research articles into account based on the text and the theoretical framework of ideology.

Findings and Discussion

The Application of Marxist Ideology in *The Pearl*

Naturally, pearls are glossy, plane, and precious objects produced within the mantle of mollusks. Due to extraordinary colour, shape, and origin, their value is measured. People use these bright organic gemstones to add extra social status and economic significance. Within this conceptual border John Steinbeck set his novella *The Pearl*. Interestingly, this giant pearl does not demonstrate the higher and lower quality of this dazzling object; rather it concentrates on the measurement of human understanding and controversial ideology. Here, a group of people, professionally, engage their life not to enhance their earthly beauty or glamour, but rather to seek their daily meal and existence.

Over the years, Kino and his people have been dominated and exploited in different forms and social structures through the successful progress of ideology. Freedden (2003) remarked that both Marx and Engels associated ideology and class, asserting that the ideas of the ruling class were the ruling

ideas. Ideological illusions were an instrument in the hands of the rulers, through the state, and were employed to exercise control and domination (p. 6). The following figure (Figure-2) demonstrates both the function and application of ideology with reference to the text.

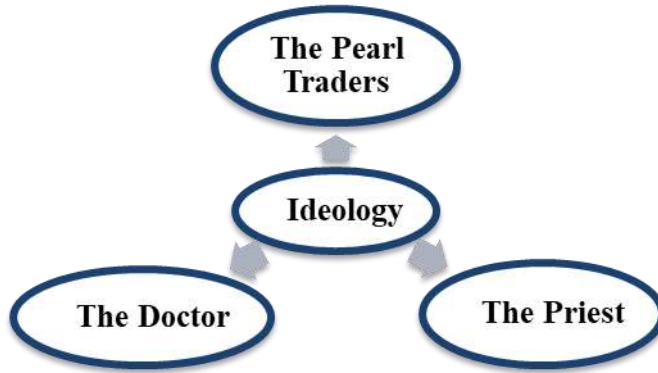


Figure-2: the function of ideology in Steinbeck's *The Pearl*

Ideology of the Doctor

In society, doctors generally hold a significant and trustworthy position as they treat sick or injured people. To them disease or sickness is more important than the identity of the patients. In this regard, Steinbeck's *The Pearl* exhibits something strange. No specific name of the doctor has been mentioned in the novella in the sense that all the doctors are similar in character. Ariki (2006) exposed the reasons behind Kino's misfortune and misery:

Rejected by this insolent doctor, Kino finds his humiliation turning to fury. If his son had not been bitten by a scorpion or if he had not found the pearl of the world, he might have remained contented with his peaceful life. The discovery of the pearl makes him realize how unfairly his people have been exploited by the doctor and people like him. (p. 87).

Kino's people are so helpless that they cannot think of doctor's presence in their locality. When Kino's little son Coyotito was severely injured by a scorpion, Kino's wife Juana wished to get doctor's treatment. But the neighbours could not take this incident easy. To them, expecting a doctor looks like an

unreachable dream as Steinbeck (2003) noted that Kino's people became curious when Juana intended to get a doctor, and that event was a stunning and remarkable matter (p. 6). The statement proves how cruel social structure prevails in society for the working-class people. Due to multiple crises, the doctors systematically avoid them. The only concern is money. Juana knew that Coyotito was her only means of happiness in the world. She also revealed another truth, that the doctor would not treat her son. Yet they tried their last. They brought their baby to the doctor's house.

Interestingly, Kino was not undergoing this bitter experience for the first time. In fact, his people were dominated, beaten, and robbed over the years by the doctor's race and Kino encountered anxiety and anger at times (Steinbeck, 2003, p.8). Outwardly, the doctor looked well-mannered. But the beggars before the church knew his inner self very well, "And they knew the doctor. They knew his ignorance, his cruelty, his avarice, his appetites, his sins. They knew his clumsy abortions and the little brown pennies he gave sparingly for alms" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 6) Even though he is a great liar. When Kino and Juana went to his house, he was at home, "In his chamber, the doctor sat up in his high bed. He put on his dressing-gown of red watered silk that had come from Paris, a little tight over the chest now if it was buttoned" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 9). But the way he pretended was surprising. In fact, it was a great lie. From the servant's final reply, everything became clear. The servant stated that the doctor was not at home as he had to deal with an important case (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 10). Interestingly, when the doctor came to know about Kino's great pearl, he fluctuated from his position as he came across the news. The doctor became firm and thoughtful about Kino's pearl (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 19). Currently, the doctor changed his language, way of expression and tune as if he were talking in favour of Kino's betterment and repeated the lie that he was not at home when Kino went to his house. Getting the news, he immediately came to treat the baby (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 26). It was that same doctor who once intentionally ignored Kino's son. Moreover, he insulted them addressing "Little Indians". Even, no doctor ever visited there. Now the situation has changed. To reinforce his power relationship, the doctor transformed his setup. Now, he began to address Kino as his friend. The author noted his remark, "Sometimes, my friend, the scorpion sting has curious effect. There will be apparent improvement, and then without warning-pouf!" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 27)

The doctor increased his care and service to impress Kino. He addressed Kino as his friend, "Oh, I know the sting of the scorpion, my friend, and I can cure it" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 27). The doctor knew that Kino was moving towards greater prosperity since he was now the owner of the great pearl of the world. Yet

he needed to make sure the rumor was revolving in the air. To the doctor, the treatment fee was nothing. Projecting his conscious words and soft pattern of behavior he had to convince Kino that he was one of his reliable friends. But the problem was that he could not ask the question of the pearl directly. Therefore, he needed logical grounds to put his questions. In this regard, the narrator noted the doctor's questions:

The doctor was closing his bag now. He said, "When do you think you can pay this bill?" He said it even kindly. "When I have sold my pearl I will pay you," Kino said. "You have a pearl? A good pearl?" the doctor asked with interest (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 31).

Getting the expected response, the doctor pretended that he knew nothing about the matter. As a part of his duty and generosity, he had come to take care of Coyotio's health. Besides, the doctor wanted to hide his earnest intention. When he confirmed that he was in progress, he then proposed to Kino that the doctor's house is a secured place to keep the pearl:

The doctor looked surprised. "I had not heard of it. Do you keep this pearl in a safe place? Perhaps you would like me to put it in my safe?" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 31).

For a long time, Kino and his people were accustomed to their sufferings. No matter what disease they encountered, either minor or major, or infectious or fatal, they knew that no treatment was written in their fate. No doctor would even come to save their lives. Without prior call and notice when the doctor came to Kino's house. People easily guessed why the doctor came and behaved so sincerely.

Ideology of the Priest

Like the doctors, the priests also possessed particular social dignity and respect. He instructed people to obey the religious ideals for social discipline and harmony. In the novella *The Pearl*, the readers discover a different kind of priest. He is clever, steady, and diplomatic. He is, in fact, a trustworthy member of the smart exploiters. Freedden (2003) argues that the term ideology is inherently connected with human emotion. In fact, it produces remarkable impacts in their response (p.1). Interestingly, the Priest knew how to use this severe emotional motivation. In this case, he systematically utilized the most sophisticated tool

religion for his self-created arrangements. In order to relate the fact of arrangement and convincing impression, Ryan (1999) stated:

Ideology or “the ruling ideas of the ruling class” is a way of legitimating or justifying social and economic arrangements that might otherwise appear unjust because they are characterized by inequality. Those who rule or who possess economic power need to convince everyone else that the arrangement of the world is reasonable, or natural, or good (p. 53).

Like other exploiters in society, he set his extraordinary mechanism through calculated words, self-modified beliefs, and opinions. In this regard, his one and only concentration was to impress Kino. The Priest clearly knew that the general people were highly motivated by the words of religion. Besides, he needed to form a good relationship with Kino. To represent him as the most loyal and close person, he used the words like “Children” as the narrator stated, “The priest came in—a graying, aging man with an old skin and a young sharp eye. Children, he considered these people, and he treated them like children” (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 24). Even, he changed his pattern of diction and manner. Whatever the Priest stated, it was with profound care and sincerity. The most important fact is that the Priest began to quote from the religious scriptures. Within a close conversation with Kino, the author noted:

“Kino,” he said softly, “thou art named after a great man—and a great Father of the Church.” He made it sound like a benediction. “Thy namesake tamed the desert and sweetened the minds of thy people, didst thou know that? It is in the books.” (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 24).

After telling these words, the Priest made sure that he was not putting his own words rather the words of books. The Priest understood that either Kino or his people would not be able to understand the validity of his words. They could not comprehend what was right and what was wrong. In this situation, the most reliable instrument was religious reference. Steinbeck (2003) mentioned in his book, “I hope thou wilt remember to give thanks, my son, to Him who has given thee this treasure, and to pray for guidance in the future” (p. 25). The Priest was highly self-motivated and profit oriented. But the only means of his power was his religious ideas. Since Kino and his family were now in a good mood, he proposed to spend a good amount of money for religion. The narrator noted the

Priest's remark, "It is pleasant to see that your first thoughts are good thoughts. God bless you, my children" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 25).

Ideology of the Businessmen

It is true that business is profit oriented. The businessmen try all their ways to maximize their benefit. In *The Pearl*, the readers discover different kinds of traders. The ideology of the pearl traders invites multiple questions. Kino went to them to sell the greatest pearl. The narrator described:

Thus, in La Paz, it was known in the early morning through the whole town that Kino was going to sell his pearl that day. It was known among the neighbors in the brush huts, among the pearl fishermen; it was known among the Chinese grocery-store owners; it was known in the church, for the altar boys whispered about it (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 36).

Instead of buying the pearl, they preset a game to be played. In order to convince people, they applied false consciousness properly. Nayar (2010) argued, "'False consciousness' or ideology is a mode of misrecognizing the true nature of our material lives and social roles when we consume a cultural artifact" (p.130). The pearl traders were not ready to buy the pearl rather they apply their self-motivated words to prove that the pearl was false, unnecessary, and valueless:

"You have heard of fool's gold," the dealer said. "This pearl is like fool's gold. It is too large. Who would buy it? There is no market for such things. It is a curiosity only. I am sorry. You thought it was a thing of value, and it is only a curiosity." (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 43).

The next attempt was more surprising. One of the dealers was using other tricks to exploit them. Although he has immense curiosity, he pretended that he did not want to buy it at all:

"Do not include me in the discussion," he said dryly. "I will make no offer at all. I do not want it. This is not a pearl—it is a monstrosity" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 45).

The last dealer functioned in another pattern of ideology. He wanted to prove that the pearl would lose its quality very soon. By any means he intended to settle down that the pearl had no particular significance, "Better pearls are made of paste," he said. "I know these things. This is soft and chalky; it will lose its color and die in a few months" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 45).

Factors behind the Implantation of Ideology

Beyond the conventional exposure of ordinary pearl, the subject matter of this story revolves around the reality of the marginalized and underprivileged people considering their fear, anxiety, and struggle for existence. Throughout the novella, the protagonist has to face lots of struggles and limitations as follows—lack of religious knowledge; identity crisis and social insecurity; the ignorance of the state and political system; unprofessional business strategies and finally the impact of fate. Interestingly, Kino was not facing them for the first time. His ancestors and forefathers could not avoid the limitations. It is because there remain many hidden factors that chained this community one after another.

The first limitation of Kino's community was that they could not access the influence and blessings of general education let alone modern education. It means that they themselves avoided the entrance of education. Years after years passed, yet they could not settle down the response of minimal food and survival for them. The exploiters understood that Kino's people were not educated. They were out of reasonable thoughts and scientific knowledge. Therefore, they could hardly make differences between right and wrong. The way the exploiters wanted, they were motivated and used. Like many of his people, Kino was also illiterate. Yet he understood that only education protected them from exploitation, dominance, and discrimination. After getting the great pearl of the world, Kino immediately thought of the need for education. Unhesitatingly, he decided to educate his son Koyotito properly. Kino substantially hoped that through his son's education he would move forward to reshape his people's fate. As a result, he was much more serious about his son's education. Steinbeck (2003) mentioned Kino's observation that it was their first opportunity where their only child will go to school and bring them out of the exploitative pot (p. 34).

Steinbeck's *The Pearl* shows a severe demonstration of racism. Since Kino belonged to the working class, doctors never visited his people. The narrator exposed the inherent discrimination between the rich and the poor, "The doctor never came to the cluster of brush houses. Why should he, when he had more than he could do to take care of the rich people who lived in the stone and plaster houses of the town?" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 6)

Besides, Kino was humiliated both for his race and old language. When he and his wife Juana went to the doctor's house for their son's treatment, he used old language. Due to this old language, they refused to talk with Kino, "The gate closed a little, and the servant refused to speak in the old language" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 9). The most striking thing was exposed when the doctor insults Kino's people addressing as the "Little Indians: "Have I nothing better to do than cure insects bites for little Indians?" I am a doctor, not a veterinary" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 10). The statement indicates how the doctor evaluates Kino's race and how he humiliates them by calling them animals. Out of anger and hatred, Kino expressed how he was treated by the doctors of the society, "He could kill the doctor more easily than he could talk to him, for all of the doctor's race spoke to all of Kino's race as though they were simple animals" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 8).

The fact is that Kino could understand how he and his people were dominated. Yet he could not raise his voice. A sense of fear prevailed there in society. The narrator noted his fear, anger and anxiety, "And as always when he came near to one of these races, Kino felt weak and afraid and angry at the same time. Rage and terror went together" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 8). The society Kino belonged to was intensely polluted in terms of thought, actions, and functions. In fact, the people who are supposed to be respectable and trustworthy are full of contradictions and hypocrisy. No matter what possession they own or the profession they work for, they are biased and motivated. For example, the doctor of the novella was much more cunning and technical. In order to represent his hypocrisy, the narrator noted the beggar's observation:

The four beggars in front of the church knew everything in the town. They were students of the expressions of young women as they went into confession, and they saw them as they came out and read the nature of the sin. They knew every little scandal and some very big crimes (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 6).

The activities of the doctor are entirely questionable. He tells lies one after another. The reader knows that he did not extend his hand during the danger of Kino's son. Even, he avoided them saying that he was absent in his home. After knowing about Kino's pearl, he immediately turned back. In order to focus his colorful lies, the narrator noted his current words, "He is a client of mine," the doctor said. "I am treating his child for a scorpion sting" (Steinbeck, 2003, p.19).

The amount of income Kino usually earned by fishing was not enough for his family. For that he hardly can fulfill the basic needs of his wife and son.

Even, he himself could not buy new clothes and shoes to wear. When he gets the pearl, he never wished for something big, rather he thought of the basic demands. The narrator commented, "We will have new clothes" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 22). This means that they never had new clothes. All the time, they had to depend on old and tattered clothes. When daily meals were unreachable, then the thought of education sounded unnecessary. Therefore, he always dreamed of his son's education. The narrator pointed out Kino's dream, "My son will go to school" (Steinbeck, 2003, p. 22). This single line signifies how extreme poverty Kino, and his people have to experience over the decades that they cannot afford a son to admit into a school. There remains a significant gap in his profession. Kino not only depended upon fishing, but he also had to depend on the condition of the sea. Therefore, his profession was uncertain. Over the years, Kino's people did not think of changing their professions. Due to the uniformity and uncertainty of their profession, they made friendship with crises, sufferings, and miseries.

Conclusion

Steinbeck's *The Pearl* provides two significant turning points. One is getting the valuable giant pearl itself and the other is Kino's son Coyotito's tragedy. Interestingly, this precious object seemed to Kino highly optimistic, in fact, a symbol of bright life and hope. In reality, the expectant pearl turned into a devilish character which brought series of dangers, struggles and miseries. It is to be noted that Kino's community is directed both by fate and man-made hazards over generations. Kino understood, neither he nor his people were able to cross the boundary of fate. But the struggles they were meeting recurrently over the decades were not supernatural rather man-made, commercial, and power-oriented. Kino comprehended the fact that these man-made crises are resolvable. Due to lack of advanced education, modern ideas and facilities, people turned to be the fatal victims. Getting the great pearl in hand, Kino determined to educate his little child as the means of long cherished emancipation.

Instead of throwing the giant pearl in the sea, both Kino and Juna could decide to sell it for a handsome price. But they rejected the decision and desperately killed their hope of new dress, marriage festival and purchasing weapon for self-security. Perhaps, one and only son's death was enough for them to conclude, thus, since there exists no Coyotito, there exists no hope of education. Consequently, without education, they are not ready to build the castle in the air to get rid of so-called smart ideological ideas, strategies, and practices.

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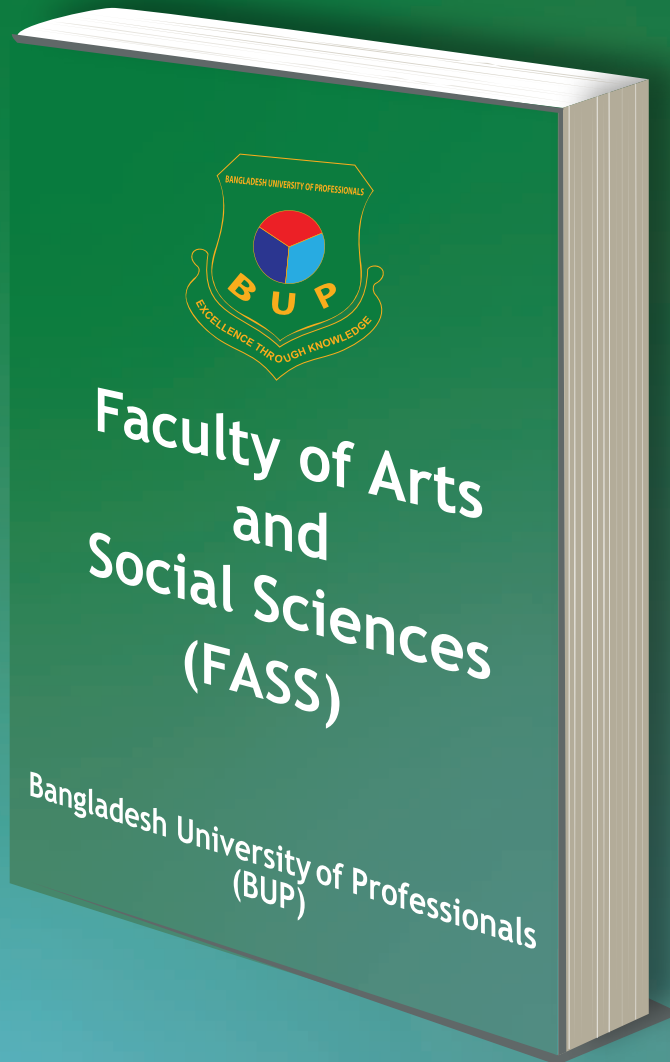
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