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Contents

A Study on the Sanskrit Literature of Mughal Period: A Window Pointing View

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Abstract: *The current paper illustrates the Sanskrit poets and writers and their works that emerged during the Mughal Period. Sanskrit language and literature have been practiced since the ancient age. Although the popularity had its share of downfall when Pal dynasty had taken over, it revived again when the Sen Dynasty came to power. It was then when the Mughals who put out the stifled literature into the light during their reign. They highlighted the Sanskrit literature and patronized poets and writers who delved deep into the language. Their works were preserved in order to help the language prosper. Although the Mughals were from another religion, they admired the dissimilarities between Sanskrit and the language they practiced. This resulted in a revolution. Their open mindedness opened a new door into the future for Sanskrit language and literature. This paper is an attempt to depict the works that were composed during the era of the Mughals.*

Keywords: *Mughal, Sanskrit literature, Writers, Religion, Astronomy, Smṛti, Algebra*

Introduction

The use of Sanskrit language burgeoned vastly in India as the Mughal Empire became more influential. During their rule, the Mughals could establish peace and a sense of security in the minds of Hindus in India. They did so by allowing the proliferation of Sanskrit learning which enabled the language to flourish. Although Sanskrit was still being practiced in the kingdom, Sanskrit literature did not advance practically after 1200 AD. The first two Mughal emperors namely, Babar and Humayun were mostly occupied in conflicts and wars in order to achieve and maintain dominance in India and thus neither had time for literary activities. Consequently, no reference of any Sanskrit Literature was found from the time of the rule of the first two Mughal emperors. This changed in the sixteenth century, when Akbar became the Mughal Emperor. There was a sudden eruption of Sanskrit poetry and writing during Emperor Akbar's reign. Emperor Akbar expressed his exquisite taste in literature, art, science and culture by patronizing many scholars of the time. The royal courts would bustle with respectable and skilled Sanskrit scholars and poets during that era. The Mughals were Muslims but their liberalism transcended religion and culture. Associating two distinct cultures and languages during the 16th century truly reflected the open mindedness of the Mughal patrons. Besides the continuous strive for power and dominion in India, passion for art and language flowed through the spread of Sanskrit language in writing and use.

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Sanskrit Literature in Akbar's Period (1556-1605)

Akbar was one of the mightiest and most powerful rulers of the Mughal dynasty. He was acknowledged for compassion, dedication and judgment, not much considering his ethnic foundation or religious practice. He was born with the name of Abul-Fath Jalal-ud-din Muhammad and later took the title `Akbar' which convoys the meaning great. He never solely stood by his given religion Islam and neither rejected it rather he talked about amalgamation of different religious principles. Akbar approved many Hindu beliefs and practices, such as the migration of the soul and the doctrine of the belief, karma. "He adopted the Hindu way of life and began to celebrate many Hindu festivals, such as Raksha-Bandhan, Dashahra, Dewali and Basanta. Sometimes he would put the Hindu paint mark (tilak) on his forehead." (Srivastava, 1960, pp. 172).

Akbar was an avid learner and he often wandered to discover the realms of literature, leaving the proclivity for conquests behind. The ferocious attitude of the enemies was considerably subdued by the time Akbar had sat on the throne. As a result, he could divert much of his time to ancient learning and cultural development. He encouraged Sanskrit literature and was intrigued by it. He established a translation department where Sanskrit was translated into Persian where the first Persian-Sanskrit lexicon, *pārasī-prakāśā*, was compiled. Inspired by noble ideals, he reached out to the department and got many books in Sanskrit translated into Persian so that Hindus and Muslims came to know each other religion and culture. So many Hindu classics were translated under his patronage. "The *Mahābhārata* was translated into Persian by the joint effort of Naqib Khan, Abdul Qadir Badayuni and Shaikh Sultan under the title *Razmnamah (Book of war)"* (Srivastava,1960, pp.239). The same bathes of scholars also translated the *Rāmāyana* into Persian. Other outstanding works translated into Persian under the patronage of the emperor were the *Lilāvati, Harivaṁśa*, and *Pañcatantra* by Bhāskarācārya*.* The renowned Sanskrit story of Nala and Damayanti was also made a part of Persian by Faizi renaming it *Maanavi Nal-o Daman*. He also appointed Bhanu chandra and Siddha Chandra who wrote a commentary on Bana`s *K*ādambarī*.* He was a lover of poetry, Akbar listened to the poems of his court poets. He also joined in the discussions on theology with the learned scholars. Apart from several other translations of Sanskrit texts, he got certain original Sanskrit words composed under his patronage and patronized many Hindu Pandits. Some of the Sanskrit works that were composed by several learned men during the time he ruled are described as follows:

Rāmavinoda

Rāmacandra provided a series of rules and data for the computation of calendars in his karanagrantha called *Rāmavinoda.* It stated Saka 1512 as the epochal year, and the length of the year alongside with the position and motions of the planets which are based on the modern Surya Siddhānta. It is a compilation of small volume of

tables focusing on the calculations of tithis and many more, accumulated in 17 verses. There are eleven chapters and 280 verses in the work. It was composed for Ramadāsa Bhupāla who was then the minister of Akbar. He initiated his book with the genealogy of Emperor Akbar. Viśvanātha even wrote an illustrative commentary on it. His calculation of the year includes the 35 of the era of Akbar i.e from A.D. 1556 when Akbar ascended the throne. "The date of composition is given as saka 1535=A.D. 1613. Sudhākara Dwivedi says that people on Jaipur side compile their almanacs with the help of this work"(Dikshit, 1981, pp.151)

Rāmacandra was the son of Ananta and belonged to the Gārgya Gotra. They lived in Dharmapura on the bank of the Narmadā, near Nasik. He wrote on *Kāmadhenu-ṭīk*ā of Bopadeva which was perceived as a commentary or review on it. He also wrote a work on horoscopy called the *Jātakapaddhati*. Ananta had two sons, Nīlakaṇṭha and Rāmacandra. Nīlakaṇṭha also followed his father's footsteps and composed renowned works, one being for Todaramalla, the well-known finance minister of Akbar.

Besides the *Rāmavinoda*, in 1600, Rama wrote a literary work called *Muhūrtacintāmaṇi* which is a treatise on auspicious moments for the performance of religious ceremonies. He also wrote a commentary on it entitled *Pramitākṣara.* (Dikshit,1981, pp. 147). In addition to this there is the well-known commentary on it called *Piyusadhara*, written by his nephew Govinda. Both the works were printed.

*Ṭoḍar*ā*nanda*

*Ṭoḍar*ā*nanda* was a vivid and a broad work on religion, civil law, astronomy and medicine by Nīlakaṇṭha; the brother of Rāmacandra, for his patron Todarmalla, the celebrated finance minister of Akbar. The amazing work is separated into three parts; the first part is named Dharma or religious law, second one is Jyotiṣa or Astronomy and the last is Vaidyaka or Medicine. The Dharma section consists of the religious and civil law, several parts of judicial procedure, marriage and etc. The Jyotiṣa section establishes the saṃhitā branch of Indian Astronomy and talks about topics like the results of eclipse, the rise of the comets, the signs of the zodiac and so on. The last section concerns the medical aspect. The extensive spectrum in its nature of the work demonstrates its encyclopedic character. It is an assemblage of excerpts from earlier writers with him having around 1000 verses. It can be noticed that a chapter on pilgrimage is incomplete and can be concluded that the work was completed hastily.

Nīlakaṇṭha, as mentioned before, was the son of Ananta and brother of Rāmacandra. His mother's name was Padmā. Nīlakaṇṭha's son Govinda later on presented him as a learned man at Akbar's court. Nīlakaṇṭha had his expertise in the two sciences; Mīmānsā and Sāṃkhya. He also worked on many astronomical work, Samātantra, (Varṣatantra), on Tajik which is widely known as Tājika-nīlakaṇṭhi .(Dikshit,1981,

pp.148) composed in A.D. 1587. The work is very well-known and has been so celebrated across the globe that it got published with commentaries of different languages. Viśvanātha has given his work on it with his various examples. He got very popular for *Tithi Ratnamālā* which is work on Horary astrology entitled *Praśnakaumūdī* or *Jyotisakaumūdī*. He also wrote commentaries on *Graha-Kautuka*, *Graha-Lāghava*, *Makaranda* and a work on *Muhūrtas*.

Nītisāra

Nītisāra is a piece of a work consisting of various topics in three śatakas. Viz

1. *Rājanītivarṇana*

2. *Sṛṅgārādivivaraṇa* and

3. *Paramārtha-śataka*.

It is being stated by the author, *Gaṅgādhara*, that his work at the instance of Emperor Akbar. The colophon reads as under –

इतिश्रीश्रीमन् महाराजअकवरशाहिआज्ञया गङ्गाधरदीक्षित विरचितं नीतिसारंतृतीयपरमार्थशतकं सम्पूर्णम् (Shastri,1934, pp. 418).

–This says that the third paramārtha śataka was completed in *Nītisāra* by Gaṅgādhara dīkṣita under the command of Emperor Akbarshahi.

Nartana-nirṇaya

Nartana-nirṇaya is a rich dissertation on dancing and its accompaniments. It was composed between 1555 and 1565. Even though the name narrows the spotlight, it contains other parts of the music such as tala, gayana, different ragas, the qualities and failings of a singer and so on. The work consists of four chapters out of which, the last chapter is devoted to the treatment of dancing. He states the purpose of composing his treatise before finishing his work.

Puṇḍarīkaviṭṭhala composed his *Nartana-nirṇaya (Ascertainment of Dance*) to please Emperor Akbar. "Puṇḍarīkaviṭṭhala entered Akbar's court through the patronage of Man Singh and Madho Singh of the Rajasthanikachhwaha lineage, one of the earliest Rajput backers of the Mughals."(Truschke,2016,pp.31) He composed four works, viz, *Ṣaḍrāgacandrodaya*, *Rāga-mañjarī*, *Rāga-māla* and *Nartana-nirṇaya*. The works were composed under the patronage of different princes. "He was a native of the Mysore province which was about that time (about1500 A.D) a tributary state of the Vijayanagar empire" (Krishnacharya,1936, pp.371). *Ṣaḍrāgacandrodaya* was one of Puṇḍarika's work from which it was found that he was a resident of Sātanurvā, a village near the hill called Śivagaṅgā in the Karṇāṭa country. He was born as a brahmin of the Jāmadagnya gotra in the Karṇāṭa Jāti. "He was at his prime during the court of Mohomedan King Burhan Khan of the Faruki dynasty which ruled between 1370-1600 at a city called Ānandavalli in Khandesh in the South." (Chaudhuri, 1954, pp. 89)

Pārasī- Prakāśā

*Pārasī-prak*āśā is a work on astronomy which provides equivalent terms of the Persian astronomical terms. Although it is being arranged in Anushtup verses, the whole is explained in Sanskrit. Bihārī Kṛṣṇadāsa was the one in charge to write the grammar and glossary of the Persian language as spoken in India by Emperor Akbar. In other works, it can also be called a Persian-Sanskrit glossary of astronomical expressions. Bihārī Kṛṣṇadāsa also the author of his famous work *Māga-vyākti*, which talks about the Iranian immigrants who had joined the Hindu social system as Maga Brahmins, and proclaims himself a member of that community. "His grammar is topically arranged in a manner similar to the *Kātantra* etc; the only peculiarity is a list of Persian numerals inserted into the first chapter. The grammar in the first chapter teaches Persia (in c. 480 rules in Sanskrit with the author's own commentary) as a transfer grammar (Sanskrit>Persian). It differs from earlier transfer grammars (Sanskrit >Prakrit) where the rules often correspond to an historical development."(Scharfe,1977, pp.196) The interpretations can hardly be similar for their massive indifferences in the origin as for Sanskrit being more closely related to the original synthetic structure than the modern Persian. The transfers were often narrowed to reductions, where the multitude of Sanskrit forms corresponds to a single Persian form.

The work was done in the late sixteenth century on Emperor Akbar's request. The Mughal sponsorship can be found throughout the lexicon and grammar portions of the work. Bihārī Kṛṣṇadāsa mentioned at the very beginning that his text provided a resource material for teaching Persian:

> A collection of some Persian speech is produced by me
> so that those who understand Sanskrit can enlighten themselves.
> For those who desire to plunge into the great ocean of the Persian language,
> Kṛṣṇadāsa makes this life raft of words [nibadhnātivacahplavam].
> (Quote, Truschke,2016, pp. 93)

Thus, he gracefully spread across the beauty of Persian language to Sanskrit intellectuals. *Amarakoṣa* (ca. seventh century), a popular Sanskrit the saurus, acted as a standing stick to the lexicon consisting of commonly used words in the two languages. However, the style of the grammar was not so easy going, keeping in context of the late sixteenth-century.

Jagannātha-Prakāśa

Jagannātha-prakāśa was a renowned work on smṛti during Akbar's time. It was composed by Sura Miśra for Jagannātha, a Kamboja warrior who lived at the court of Akbar. The work deals with the following ten subjects in ten prabhāsas: (i). Virtue, vice and duty (ii). Caste (iii). Sacraments (iv). Diurnal religious duties (v). Times meet for fasts (vi). Loyalty and expiations (vii). Impurity of the person from birth or death in one's family (viii). Śrāddhas and gifts (ix). Religious calendar and

(x). Emancipation. The author praises his patron in the following verses:

.....श्रीजगन्नाथनाम्ना निर्दिष्टोऽसौ व्यधत्ते प्रकटितयशसा सुरमिश्रः प्रकाशम्।
अशेषकाम्बोजकुलावतंसः श्रीमज्जगन्नाथ इति प्रसिद्धः। अकारयद्धर्मनिबन्धमेतं
धराधिपेऽप्यर्कवले नरेशे।

… It's says that renowned writer Suramisra specifically revealed the name of jagannātha. Jagannātha was significantly famous in the Kamboja family. He was the greatest king in the middle of the earth and the sun.

The above composition of the first prabhāsa was given as A.D. 1598, which means that the work composed were in the last days of the great Emperor Akbar. (Marulasiddaiah, 1925, No. 2041)

Sanskrit Literature in Jahangir's Period (1605 - 1627)

The throne of Mughal dynasty was being held by Jahangir making him the fourth emperor. He was born on 9th September 1569 in fatehpur-Sikri. His father was Akbar and mother Miriam Zamani. His mother was a Hindu and his father, despite being a Muslim had chosen to marry someone from one of the many minorities of his territory of a different religious domination. This can be shown when he married his cousin Manbai, daughter of Raja Bhagwan Das, whom he loved very dearly. He often indulged himself with discussion with the followers of different faiths. He used to enjoy listening to discourses of learned men from separate faiths. He was an appreciator of art and could write pretty well himself. "He patronized learning and encouraged literature in Persian and Sanskrit languages. Under it, auspices literature flourished as it had never done before and a host of remarkable learned persons gathered at his court and composed works in his honor." (Prasad, 1940, pp. 248) I shall mention here few of the Sanskrit works that were written during his time:

Khānkhānacarita

Rudrakavi was one of the most celebrated court poets during the reign of Pratap Shah's father, Narayaṇ Shah. He was very well known for four Sanskrit panegyrics for Mughal elites during the time. He was a poet who was engrossed into politics which could be found in his brilliant works. He often uses long strings of compounds, complex imagery and numerable cultural references throughout his works. He also provides an insight to philosophy, poetry, regional characteristics of women, and the types of heroines (nayika-bheda). His approach was not only enclosed in the Mughal culture but was for the general lover of Indian literature.

Rudrakavi composed a renowned work called the *Khānakhānacarita* (Acts of Khān-iKhānān) for Abd al-Rahim, also known as the Khan of Khans, is an important literary and political figure. "The work is dated to Saka 1525 i.e. A.D.

1603, as stated by the author himself." (Pingree, 1970, pp. 80) Hence, the work was done during the last days of Akbar. He wrote this during the armed dispute between Pratap Shah and the imperial army. "*Khānakhānacarita* mixes Sanskrit poetry and prose in four chapters and pursues a twofold approach to enlisting the general's assistance." (Truschke, 2016, pp.82). In the first chapters Rudrakavi praises Khan-i Khanan to be a very important figure and puts him to a place where he is no less than a king himself. The final chapters are more about the military circumstances and Rahim as a protagonist. *Khānakhānacarita* unlike others uses complex linguistic constructions and thus requires profound knowledge on Sanskrit literature presenting the skills he possessed. It also puts forward very political views and insights during the time with the mixture of Sanskrit poetry.

His first important work was *Dānasāhacarita* (Acts of Generous Danyal Shah), in the praise of Akbar's son Dānyal. Later he composed two more undated panegyrics: The *Jāhāngiracarita* (Act of Jahangir) for Jahangir which now exists in a single incomplete manuscript in present. The poet is seen to reuse verses across his four panegyrics, a lot of which can be seen in the *Jāhāngiracarita.* Another of the work is *Kīrtisamullāsa* (Brilliance of Fame) dedicated to the Prince Sultan Khuram, son of Jahangir.

Bījanavāṅkura

Bījanavāṅkura, is a commentary work on the metrical portions of Bhāskarācārya's Bījaganita, a famous work on Algebra. The commentary was also known by many names such as *Bījapallava*, or *Kalpalatāvatāra*. Kṛṣṇa has suggested some new artifices of his own in it. The commentary has made his name as one of the finest in the ancient commentaries and is accepted as such by scholars. "He has written a commentary, consisting mainly of examples, on the *Jātakapaddhaṭī* of Śrīpati. Another of his work is *Chādakanirṇaya* which was published by Sudhākara Dvivedī composed in A.D. 1587." (Dikshit,1981, pp. 159). Kṛṣṇa, the author of the present commentary, was the second son of Ballāla and played a profound role at the court of Emperor Jahangir. Kṛṣṇa was well respected at the court of Jahangir.

Munīśvara contributed in a commentary on a part of the *Siddhānta-śiromaṇi* composed in Saka 1560 by Bhāskarācārya. His parts were seen in *Bījaganita*, which is known as the second part of the major treatise. There he stated himself as a disciple of Nṛsiṁha, the nephew of Gaṇeśa, the renowned author of *Grahalāghava*. From his statements, it can be concluded that Kṛṣṇa was one of the learned pandits who lived at the court of Jahangir, although, Kṛṣṇa nowhere mentioned of Jahangir as his patron.

Sanskrit Literature in Shah Jahan's Period (1627- 1658)

Shahab-ud-din Muhammad Khurram, widely known as Shah Jahan, was the fifth Mughal emperor. He ruled from 1627 to 1658. He was engaged to Arju-mand Banu Begum who is also better known as Mumtaz Mahal. She was a greatly accomplished and a proficient woman. She was very intelligent and had a tender

heart. Emperor Shah Jahan desired to immortalize the love for his beloved wife through the construction of the Taj Mahal. Hence, the Taj Mahal was constructed in memory of the queen. It is considered that the empire was at its pinnacle during his reign. Shah Jahan's reign symbolizes the climax of the Mughal dynasty. Shah Jahan contributed in various works during his thirty years to achieve a lasting impact and importance. The sector of art and literature did not embellish much during his reign. He did patronize Persian and Sanskrit learning and assisted in preparing many works in these two languages. He eradicated the tax which was imposed on the pilgrims at Benares and Prayaga, at the request of the recognized Sanskrit pandit named Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī. Later, he conferred on him the title "Sarvavidyānidhāna". Shah Jahan's eldest son was Dara Shikoh who supported in bringing out the original Sanskrit to Persian translations of *Shrimad Bhagavad Gīta, Yoga Vaśiṣṭha,* principal *Upaniṣads* and *R*ā*māyaṇa* ordering it through Chandar Bhan Brahman.1 Chandar Bhan Brahman got fifty-two (52) *Upaniṣads* translated with the name of *Sirr-i-Akbar* or *The Great secret* that he completed in 1657. These surely depict the admiration he had for Hindu pandits. Some of the great works are mentioned below:

*Rasagaṅg*ā*dhara*

Jagannātha Paṇḍita is widely known as for his *Rasagaṅg*ā*dhara*, *Bh*ā*mini-vil*ā*sa* and *Gaṅg*ā*l*ā*hari.* (Sarma,1994, pp. 2) *Rasagaṅg*ā*dhara* is one of the most celebrated works of Jagganātha during Shah Jahan`s rule. It was most probably planned to consist of five heads (anana) or chapters. It is a highly revered sanskrit poetics theory where rasa and bhāvas, guṇas, vṛttis, kāvyabheda, divisions of Dhvani etc are discussed. Jagannāth was very deliberate in his critics of the celebrated writers of the past, often expressing his own stands on it. He believes that not *rasa* but *ramaṇīyakat*ā is the essence of good Kāvya (ramaṇīyakārtha-pratipudakaś śabdah kāvyam). "The work suddenly breaks off in the second chapter while dealing with the *uttar*ā*laṃk*ā*ra* and Nāgeśa's commentary also goes no further. It seems therefore probable that Jagannātha could not complete his work. His vṛtti is very erudite and contains references to his many views on the subject of the theory of vyañjanā or dhvani and the expression of rasa, which are not available in any other work of alaṃkāra." (Dasgupta,1947, pp. 565) "He also wrote a grammatical work, directed against Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita's famous commentary *Manoram*ā, and called it *Manoram*ā*-kuca-mardana.*"(De, 1976, pp. 233) There are also Stotras such as those of Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī, Gaṅga and Yamunā. Other noteworthy works are Panegyrics of *Pr*ā*ṇan*ā*r*ā*yaṇa*and *Citra-m*ī*m*ā*ṃsa-Khaṇḍana*, a commentary on the *K*ā*vya-praka*ś*a*. It is appreciated by the readers for its outstanding precision and accuracy in the presentation of theories. Its commentary *Marma-Prak*ā**ś**a* written by Nā**ge**ś**a bhaṭṭa** is in the beginning of the eighteenth century**.**

*Bh*ā*min*ī*-vil*ā*sa* is the collection of detached verses independent of each other and so, it may be called a kosakāvya. The book is split up into four vilasa: (i). Prastāvikā (Anyokti) Vilāsa (ii). Karuṇā-Vilāsa (iii). Śṛṅgāra-Vilāsa and (iv). Sānta-Vilāsa.

The divergence lies in the number of verses and it enjoyed great popularity.

Gaṅgālāhari is a popular poem written in the praise of Gaṅgā. Jagannātha Paṇḍita portrayed his expertise in Sanskrit through this Stotra. The poem reflects the love of Indian culture for this river-goddess which later on was translated into Hindi and English. Gaṅgā symbolizes more than the stream of water. From the perspective of the believers, she is believed to be the Goddess Makarāsanastha and at the transcendental level she is considered to be 'Sachidānanda-svarūpa Brahmadravarūpiṇī.'

Another well-known work of Jagannātha is a Sanskrit panegyric titled Ā*sapha-vil*ā*sa* for Nawab Āsaf Khan, brother of Nur Jahan and a nobleman in the court of Shah Jahan, in whose praise he wrote his Ā*sapha-vil*ā*sa.* It focuses on the visit of Āsaf Khan in Kashmir in the company of Shah Jahan where he emphases the beauty and mythology related to Kashmir in Sanskrit. He often uses great Sanskrit comparison to showcase his admiration for Āsaf Khan. Moreover, at the finale of the prose section, Jagannātha places him within numerous hierarchies of Sanskrit aesthetic theory.

> [Āsaf Khan] is respected in battle and honored by the gods. Among all neighboring rulers who are related to the world conqueror, he is like literature [kāvya] is to speech, like poetic suggestion [dhvani] is to literature, like aesthetic emotion [rasa] is to poetic suggestion, and like erotic love [śṛṅgāra] is to aesthetic emotion. Nawab Āsaf Khan, who bathes in the essence of all śāstras, is esteemed thus because of his sweetness and greatness that stir the hearts of all sensitive critics. (Truschke, 2016, pp. 90)

A lot of scholars find that the brief extant text to be incomplete making Ā*sapha-vilasa* a controversial topic. Nonetheless, it succeeds to add a valuable perception of how patrons and authors made Sanskrit relevant within the Mughal imperium in the fine work in Kashmir's appreciation of the Mughals. His works transcend the cultural boundary when it comes to the readers without stepping out of his traditional conventions.

Jagannātha Paṇḍitarāja is undoubtedly one of the greatest rhetoricians when it comes to the literary history of India both as a critic and poet in Sanskrit. He was the last prodigious inspiration on Sanskrit Poetics, and as a poet also, he is similarly celebrated. His father's and mother's names were perubhaṭṭa or peramabhaṭṭa and Lakṣmī respectively. They were from the village Mungundu in the Godavarī district. He belonged to khandrika family and was a Telegu Brāhmin. He is well known for being a literary theorist or rhetorician. "He was the poet-laureate of Shah-Jahan and the emperor used to listen to his composition and bestow upon him royal gifts and favours.''(Srivastava,1960, pp.324) Furthermore Shah Jahan also granted him title of Paṇḍitarāja (King of the Learned). His works were remarkably diverse and achieved great expertise in the Vedas, Vedānta, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā, Grammar and Aesthetics.

Siddhānta-sārvabhauma

Siddhānta-sārvabhauma, also called *Siddhantatattvārtha* written by Munīśvara, was an expert in his field at that period of time. It is remembered as a certified compendium of theoretical astronomy. It is a compilation of the several siddhāntas on Indian astronomy. The chapters discussed in the work are: (i). Measurement of true solar year (ii). Duration of the years (iii). Motions of planets (iv). Measures of months and years and the mode of reckoning them (v). Modes of planetary orbits (vi). Measures of bulk (vii). Diameter and motions of the earth (viii). Equatorial regions (ix). Calculation of latitudes and nadir (x). Curved motions of the planets (xi). Nodes (xii). Position of the earth (xiii). The orbits of the planets (xiv). Arcs between the vernal equinoctial point and the equator etc. (Mitra, vol. 5, pp. 171)

The work was done by Munīśvara, also known as Viśvarūpa who was the son of Raṅganātha. In his works he added that he had the fortune to get favors from Kārtik swāmī and his was Nārayaṇa, Kṛṣṇa's disciple. He was the famous mathematician who produced accurate sine tables. The date of composition is 1627 which can be known from his work. Therefore, it is acknowledged that Shah Jahan ascended the throne during that period. Munīśvara was born in A. D. 1603.

Munīśvara was also well known for his works other than *Siddhānta-sārvabhauma.* One of them were *Marīcīi*, an in-depth interpretation on the Gaṇitādhyāya and Golādhyāya of Bhāskar's *Siddhāntaśiromaṇi.* Another renowned was his work on the *Lilāvatī* of Bhāskarācārya containing 7000 verses, entitled *Niṣṛṣṭārthadūlī Līlāvati Vivṛiti*. *Pāṭisāra is* an independent work on elementary arithmetic. "He has mentioned at the end the date of the completion of the first half of the *Marīcī*commentary in a strange chronogram."(Dikshit, 1981,pp.161)

Sarvasiddhāntarāja

Sarvasiddhāntarāja is an amazing astronomical work composed by Nityānanda in A.D 1640. The work can be split into two sections: The Gaṇitādhyāya and Golādhyāya. He tried to achieve the knowledge and analytical elements found in their texts that are of Islamic origin, e.g. computational methods, geometrical argument, astronomical models, diagrammatic proofs etc. The Gaṇitādhyāya contains of the following nine chapters: (i). Mimāṃsā (Rationale), (ii). Mean places, (iii). True places, (iv). Three problems, (v). Lunar eclipse, (vi). Solar eclipse, (vii). Elevation of moons cusps, (viii).Conjunction of planets with stars and (ix). Shadow and the Golādhyāya contains three chapters: (i). The Universe, (ii). The celestial sphere and (iii). Instruments. The distinct feature of this work, which makes it unique from all other Siddhānta works described so far, is that it follows the Sāyana system. He has fully discussed in the first chapter on `Mīmāṃsā' (Rationale) how the Sāyana system is the supreme structure and how it is recognized as such by Gods and Ṛṣi**s.** (Dikshit, 1981, pp.165). Nonetheless, very little is known about the work's actual use in the calculation of almanacs.

Nityānanda was a Sanskrit astronomer. He was commissioned by a minister of the emperor to translate into Sanskrit from the Indo-Persian. He lived in Indrapurī near Kurukṣetra. He was from the Gauda family and his gotra was Mudgala. He was brought up in the Dulināhaṭṭa tradition of teaching. According to Sudhākara, Dulināhaṭṭa was his traditional inherent residence. His father was Devadatta, son of Nārāyaṇa. (Plofker,1963, pp.324)

He was also recognized for another of his astronomical work called *Siddhāntasindhu* where he mentions Shah Jahan as his patron and ancestors up to Babar. It was composed for Vasafa Khan (Asaf khan, 1641) who was the Minister of Shah Jahan.

Pārasī-Prakāśa

Vedāṅgarāya was a renowned author during the time of Shah Jahan for his numerous astronomical and religious treatise. He mainly bloomed during his reign and presented quite a few of his works to please the emperor. One of his famous works is the *Pārasī-prakāśa* in which are given methods for "converting Hindu into Muhamedan dates and vice versa and the Arabic and Persian names of the days of the week, the months, the planets, the constellations, the signs of the zodiac etc. Several Arabic technical terms of astronomy and others that are ordinarily used in astrological treatises are explained, and the influences of the planets in different positions are mentioned." (Kielhorn and Bhandarkar, 1884, pp. 14) He wrote the work to impress the emperor Shah Jahan and gain his indulgence.

The son of Vedāṅgarāya, Nandikeśvara, is also well-known for his famous astrological work called *Gaṇakamaṇḍana*. In the work, Vedāṅgarāya's another name, Mālajit, was stated and was aware with the Vedas and Vedāṅgas. He got the title of Vedāṅgarāya from the emperor of Delhi. "Mālajit identified as Vedāṅgarāya, was the son of Tigalabhaṭṭa who was the son of Ratnabhaṭṭa. Ratnabhaṭṭa lived at Śrīsthala in Gujarat." (Kielhorn and Bhandarkar, 1884, pp.14)

Sanskrit Literature in Aurangzeb's Period (1658 -1707)

Muhi-ud-Din Muhammad who is generally known as Aurangzeb is supposed to be the last of the Mughal emperors after whose death, the empire concluded. He ruled the entire Indian Subcontinent for a time frame of 49 years. He was the third son of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal. In Dahod, a place in Gujarat on 3rd November, he was born. A great deal of controversies regarding Aurangzeb's personality was being noted during his time. "He gave grants of lands to Hindu temples and priests, and that if he ordered the destruction of Hindu temples, he did so during his time of war or to reclaim those mosques which had been forcibly occupied by the Hindus and converted into temples.''(Srivastava,1960, pp.359) Nonetheless he was a very diligent man, logical and disciplined in habits and thought and an unrelenting worker. His inclination towards his bias made him not be concerned in learning Sanskrit. Aurangzeb tended to have a hostile attitude towards Hindus. Therefore, the extent of his influence on Sanskrit learning at the time of his rule

can be thought as little. Nevertheless, many of the works made their way through his time. The descriptions of two of the works are mentioned below:

Muhūrtamālā

*Muhūrtam*ālā is a renowned work on 'muhūrtas'2or auspicious moments written at Varanashi by Jyotiṣī Raghunāthain Aurangzeb's time. It holds and deals with moments which are considered favorable for performing religious ceremonies.

Ragunātha was the son of Nṛsiṁha, the one who was given the title of *Jyotirvitsarasa* from Emperor Akbar when the latter conquered the fort of Āseri. Nṛsiṁha's family hailed from Dabhol, in South Konkan, but he settled at Benares. He had the patronage of Emperor Akbar. The author was from the Śāṇḍilyagotra and was known as a Chitpavan Brahmin. The composition was done at the from time when Aurangzeb had commenced his rule by defeating Dara Shah, Suja Shah and Murad Shah in around 1660 A.D. The writer has given the following account in a verse:

जित्वा दाराशाहंसुजाशाहंमुरादशाहं च।
अवरंगजेवशाहेशासत्यवनींममाय्रमुद्योगः।।

I have undertaken this work when Emperor Aurangzeb is ruling the earth, after conquering Dara, Shuja and Murad.'' (Dikshit, 1981, pp.361)

Muhūrtaratna

Muhūrtaratna is a treatise combining the religious and astrological aspects to provide the moments fit for the performance of religious ceremonies. The work is divided into twenty-seven chapters each describing certain moments as favorable for performing particular acts. They are as follows: (i). Saṃvatsara (ii). Tithi (iii). Vāra (iv). Nakṣatra (v). Yoga (vi). Karaṇapraviṣṭi (vii). Muhūrta (viii). Upagraha (ix). Saṅkrānti (x). Gocara (xi). Candratārādisthala (xii). Lagna (xiii). Saṃskāra (xiv). Samayaśuddhi (xv). Mahādoṣanirūpaṇa (xvi). Vratabandha (xvii). Samāvarttana (xviii). Churikā (xix). Vivāha (xx). Vadhūpraveśa (xxi). Rājyābhiṣeka (xxii). Yātrā (xxiii). Vāstu (xxiv). Gṛhapraveśa (xxv). Devapratiṣṭhā (xxvi). Genealogy of Aurangzeb (xxvii). Svasthānagotravarṇana (Pingree,1970, pp. 55) The last two chapters consist of the genealogy of Emperor Aurangzeb and the author's own story respectively. The references and details from the author it can be deduced that his work was composed under Aurangzeb.

Iśvaradāsa was the son of Keśavaśarmā who obtained the title *Jyotiśarāya* and also plenty of wealth from Jahangir on account of his proficiency in the science of astrology. The family hailed from Kāliñjara and were Kānyakubja Brahmans belonging to Vatsagotra (Marulasiddaiah,1925, vol.3, No. 10). During that very time of 1585 A.D. to A.D.1663 Aurangzeb was at the peak of his power.

Conclusion

A clear understanding of the Mughal's contribution to the Sanskrit language and literature is crucial to understanding the first uses Sanskrit. It also helps us to develop a clear perception of where it might have originated. A lot of writers and poets of the Mughal era have contributed to the nourishment of this language through their work. This nourishment, thus enabled the language to evolve. Although stifled by the conflicts arising in the initial years of the Mughal era, the development of Sanskrit received a lot of attention from the era of Emperor Akbar. The fact that Sanskrit is still practiced worldwide to this day in the 21st century is evidence that it has been etched with threads of history.

Endnotes

1. Chandar Bhan Braman, the Mughal state secretary or munshi, was one of the great Indo-Persian poets and prose stylists of early modern South Asia. Chandar Bhan`s life spanned the reigns of four emperors: Akbar (1556-1605), Jahangir (1605-1627), Shah Jahan (1628-1658), and Aurangzeb (1658-1707). As a high caste Hindu who worked for a series of Muslim monarchs and other officials, forming powerful friendships along the way. Chandar Bhan's experience bears vivid testimony to the pluralistic atmosphere of the Mughal court, particularly during the reign of Shah Jahan, the celebrated builder of the Taj Mahal.

Kinra, Rajeev (2015). *Writing Self, Writing Empire* (Chandra Bhan Brahman and the cultural world of the Indo-Persian State Secretary), (First Edition), University of California Press, P. 7

2. Certain rules have been framed to show what moments prove beneficial if selected for performing the sanctifying ceremony of impregnation, for starting on journeys and for several other functions concerning everyday life; and the moments thus selected are technically known as 'muturtas'

Dikshit, Sankar Balakrishna (1981). *Bharatiya Jyotish Sastra*, [History of Indian Astronomy], part-2, The controller of Publications, Delhi, P. 355

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South-East Asia: Unity in Diversity

Md. Abul Kalam Azad[*]

Abstract*: South-East Asia is probably the most unique place in the world for the region has been witnessing two opposite features since time immemorial. The entire region is multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural with diverse historical backgrounds. At the same time, there are elements that have accorded the region a contrasting feature. That is why, unity in diversity has been a common characteristic of the region. While South-East Asia is an example of diversity for its geographical, ethnic, linguistic, economic and historic considerations, the region is also a shining example of unity for several factors. The basis of looking at South-East Asia as such may be articulated in various approaches and the present article is a humble attempt to that end.*

Introduction

'South-East Asia' is a modern term and it is used to refer to both the vast archipelago, which includes Indonesia and the Philippines, and the areas of the eastern Asiatic mainland that make up the Indo-Chinese peninsula. In other words, the whole region which contains the countries of Burma or Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, and East Timor is called South-East Asia. The term 'South-East Asia' first appeared in 1839 in Boston in a publication entitled *'Travels in Southeastern Asia, Embracing Hindustan, Malaya, Siam, and China'* which was a two-volume travelogue of Howard Malcolm, an American Christian missionary. Then in 1847, the British anthropologist J. R. Logan inaugurated the scholarly usage of the denomination in the first of a series of articles in the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia*. It took a century from the time of Malcolm and Logan until the phrase 'South-East Asia' was widely used during the Pacific War of the Second World War which lasted from 1941 to 1945 (Hall, 1981: 3, Emmerson, 1984: 5). It has now been internationally accepted that the region which comprises the countries as just stated what are now ten members of the ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations), plus East Timor is called South-East Asia. Of ten countries of South-East Asia, Indonesia's current official national motto is *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*—a phrase from fourteenth-century poem by Mpu Tantular and it is translated as Unity in Diversity.[1] The term 'Unity in Diversity' can equally and rationally be applied to South-East Asia as a whole for two opposing features were in the past and are at present seen to reflect on the region's geography, history, language, ethnicity,

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religion and culture. Divided as mainland South-East Asians and Insular South-East Asians currently, the Indonesians, Malaysians and Filipinos are mainly of Malay origin while the ethnicities, languages and alphabets of the Vietnamese, Thais, Laotians, Cambodians, and Burmese are significantly different from one another. Such diversity is also reflected in geographical and cultural fields of South-East Asia. However, at the same time, the region is now a symbol of unity which is also reflected in several areas. This article attempts first to review the reasons for which South-East Asia is arguably called a place of diversity and then examine the factors for which it can also rightly be considered as a region of unity. In the process of doing so, the article also analyzes different aspects of the diversity and unity of South-East Asia. The discussion of the article, however, covers a period from ancient times to the preaching of Christianity by the Europeans in the area in the early modern period.

Diversity of South-East Asia

South-East Asia has never been in any sense an isolated or self-contained unit; rather the region is easily accessible by water. Because of its crossroads situation on the map of Asia and easily accessible by sea, South-East Asia has always been peculiarly exposed to external influences. For this very reason South-East Asia has become a meeting-ground of commerce, cultures and civilizations (Harrison, 1963: x). Early in the Christian era, when the commercial importance of South-East Asia was seriously felt, the Indians and Westerners used to call the region Golden Khersonese, the "Land of Gold". Soon, the region became known for its aromatic woods, benzoin, pepper, pine resins, the finest and rarest of spices and the other products of its rainforests or Sumatran jungle numbering about 500 (Hall, 1981: 40, Wheatly, 1966: 144-145). With the establishment of the Srivijaya maritime empire in southern-eastern Sumatra in the latter half of the seventh century (650 A.D.) the communication of South-East Asia with the outside world rapidly increased which in fact began to bring wealth and new ideas to that region (Hall, 1981: 39-41). Hence, from the seventh to the tenth centuries, Middle Easterners and Chinese not only saw South-East Asia as an essential commerce route between India and China, but also as a source of spices and other items from the jungle with a high market value.

Knowing full well that South-East Asia was the spice center of the globe by the fifteenth century, sailors from ports on the Atlantic, on the other half of the hemisphere, would venture into unexplored and uncharted oceans in order to find these Spice Islands (Hall, 2011: 3). Considering the commercial significance of South-East Asia, people from various parts of the world, particularly from India, China, Bengal, Arabia, Persia and Europe, started migrating into this region even from the early times. Thus, distinctive geographical setting and the geographical crossroads position plus the economic value of South-East Asia have greatly contributed to the development of it as a fascinating region of diversity and this diversity of South-East Asia is evident in many areas ranging from geography to

ethnicity to language to economy and history to religion and culture. These are explained in the following sections.

Geographical Diversity of South-East Asia

A sub-region of Asia, South-East Asia covers 4.5 million square kilometres (1.7 square miles), or 10.5% of Asia and 3% of the earth's total land area. The region extends 4,500 kilometres from north to south and 5,500 kilometres from east to west (Chufrin and Mohzeiko, 1989: 2). Geographically, South-East Asia is fairly well defined; however, it does not form a natural unit of its own. A large part of South-East Asia is situated in the Northern Hemisphere, the equator dividing Indonesia approximately in half. Some of its islands are, therefore, situated south of the equator. In line with such diversity, South-East Asia comprises highlands, high mountains, lowlands, longest rivers (the Irrawaddy, Sittang, Menam, Mekong and Red Rivers) and intervening vast seas, stretch for nearly 5000 kilometers southeast from Myanmar to eastern Indonesia (Tarling, 1992: 55). The region also encompasses two broad geographical groupings or sub-regions namely, mainland South-East Asia and island South-East Asia. The series of mountains that stretches from the Himalayas eastward into southern China physically divides Mainland South-East Asia from the rest of the Asian continent. The mainland South-East Asia is also known as peninsular or continental South-East Asia while the island South-East Asia is also known as maritime or the Malay Archipelago or insular South-East Asia. Mainland South-East Asia consists of countries of Burma or present-day Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Singapore and Peninsular Malaysia. On the other hand, the island parts of South-East Asia are situated farther south and the areas are more isolated and these compose the huge archipelagoes of Indonesia and the Philippines. Island or insular South-East Asia comprises the countries of Indonesia, Brunei, the Philippines and East Timor and the eastern part of Malaysia.

Below is a Map of South-East Asia that clearly shows its geographical diversity.
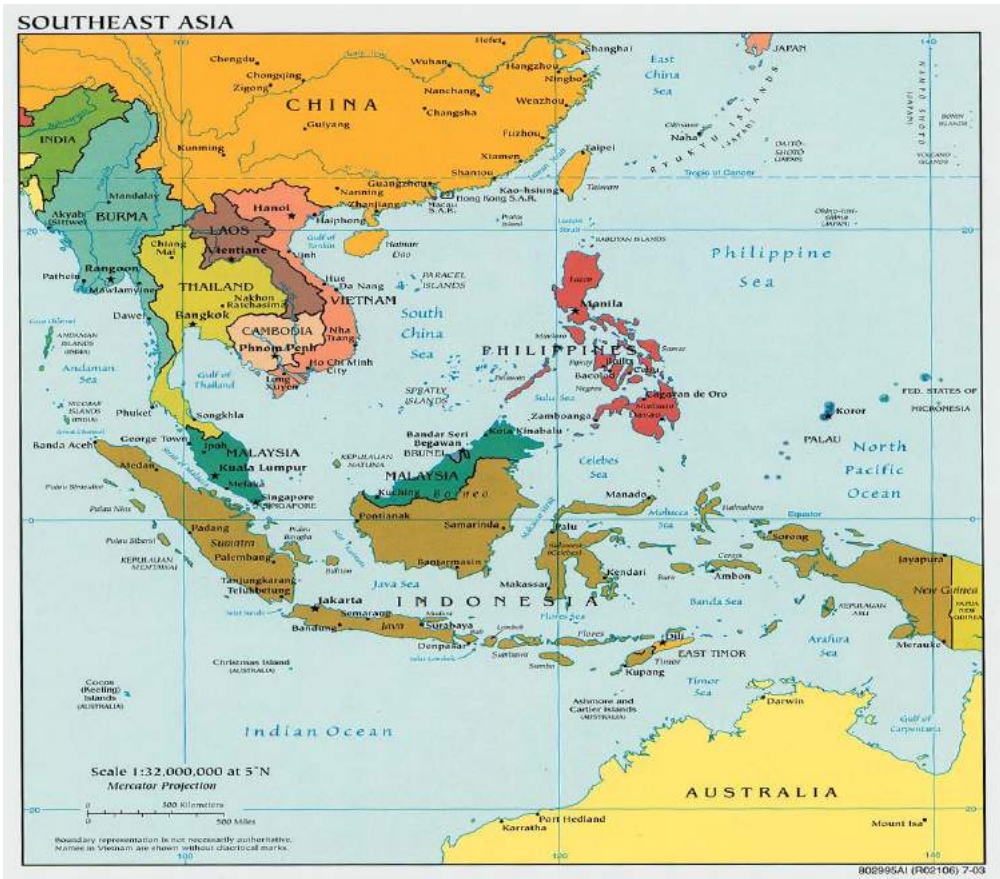
Historical Diversity of South-East Asia

The historical diversity of South-East Asia is reflected on various names that had been used for the region before the very term 'South-East Asia' came into general use in the 1940s. History records that the name 'South-East Asia' got currency only since the Second World War when the region was placed as South East Asia Command or SEAC under the command of Admiral Lord Luis Mountbatten in 1941. Previously, with the sole exception of Thailand, all modern nations of South-East Asia had long formed parts of different imperial groupings of the British, French, Dutch and the Americans. Hence, the region was called in several names. Many British, French and Indian scholars called the region 'Greater India' or 'Further India' and the Hinduized or Indianized states (Funan and Champa). On the other hand, most Chinese literatures categorized the region as *Kun Lun* or 'Nanyang'

('Little China' or region along the Southern Ocean). The Indians called South-East Asia 'Suvarnabhumi' and the Arabians named the region as 'Zabag' (Emmerson, 1984: 4). The region also has other names as well including Indo-China (for mainland South-East Asia), the Malay world[2] (together with the Malay Peninsula, the Indonesian islands may be called the Malay world, an inverted half-moon), the Malay Archipelago which was known as 'Netherlands India' or the East Indies or the Netherlands Indies.[3] The various spellings and usages of the current name of the region that have been widely used by the historians and scholars add further historic diversity to the region. In using the name of the region American writers have standardized the form 'Southeast Asia'. Victor Purcell, E. H. G. Dobby and others have followed this form. During the Second World War when the name of the region came into use, the South East Asia Command used the unhyphenated form (i.e. South East Asia). However, Admiral Lord Luis Mountbatten who was the Supreme Allied Commander of South East Asia in his report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff specifically used the hyphenated form— 'South-East Asia'. The British Royal Navy also uses the hyphen in using the name. In the field of history D. G. E. Hall and after him Paul Wheatly, Gennadi Chufrin, Igor Mohzeiko and others have popularized this form. Brian Harrison chose 'South-east Asia' style. Thus the different and significant names of South-East Asia used for the whole region or sometimes parts of the region in the past, and the various forms of the present term itself unequivocally show the region's historic diversity.

Ethnic or Racial Diversity

The diversity of South-East Asia is more pronounced in the field of ethnicity. South-East Asia is rightfully regarded as 'an anthropologist's paradise' (Hall, 1981: 5) since it is a region of anthropological complexity and remarkable for the sheer variety of ethnic diversity. From time immemorial South-East Asia has become a melting-pot of diverse ethnic groups. It has been determined by genetic and biological data, such as tooth morphology and craniometric investigations that humans have lived in Borneo and the Malay Peninsula for at least 40,000 years (Hooker, 2003: 21). However, South-East Asia has a history of human settlement that dates back around a million years (Tarling, 1992: 61). Additionally, history reveals that a variety of prehistoric human species moved from continental Asia through mainland and island South-East Asia. The major human groups thus came to South-East Asia and settled themselves are of four types. According to R. O. Winstedt, they were: the Jakun (or Proto-Malay) and the civilized Malay, the Negrito, and the Sakai (Winstedt, 1934: 1). Brian Harrison in his South-east Asia: A Short History, however, classified these four types as Australoid or Veddoid, Negritos, Melanesoid and Indonesian. It is pertinent to state that the features of the Sakai type human race are similar to that of Australoid-Veddoid type while the Jakun type of people can be compared with the Indonesian type. A general description of these human groups of South-East Asia will clearly show South-East Asia's ethnic diversity.

i)   Australoid-Veddoid or the Sakai Type

According to Brian Harrison, the Australoid and the very similar Veddoid people were probably the first widespread human inhabitants of South-East Asia. The Australoid type of people survives in the aborigines of Australia and in the Sakai and Senoi hill-tribes of Malay. The Veddoid type (though generally with a Proto-Malay admixture) whom the anthropologists have categorized as such after the Vedda tribes of Ceylon, is seen in certain groups in the southern parts of Celebes, and on the Engano and Mentawei Islands off the west coast of Sumatra. The peoples of southern India also show a strong Veddoid type or admixture. The Australoid-Veddoid type is a dark-skinned race of small stature, with a depressed nose and curly but not woolly hair (Harrison, 1963: 4; Vlekke, 1965: 8; Hall, 1981: 6). They are taller and fairer than Negritos, with larger skulls and wavy hair, and have painted lines and designs on their faces (Winstedt, 1934: 2). These peoples' artifacts have been discovered in northern Anam, Luang Prabang, Siam, Malaya, and on Sumatra's east coast.

ii)   Negritos

The next oldest group of human types who moved down into South-East Asia was the small (dwarf) woolly-haired Negritos (Harrison, 1963: 4).

According to R. O. Winstedt, Spanish writers invented the name 'Negrito' to refer to the dark-woolly-haired Aetas of the Philippines (Winstedt, 1934: 1). It is assumed that around 40,000 years ago they may have been predominant in South-East Asia. This group of people appears to be representative of contemporary Australo-Melanesian population. At present, only the Andaman Islands, portions of peninsular Malaysia and Thailand, as well as some areas of the central and northern Philippines, are home to them. (Tarling, 1992: 74-78). They survive in Malaya as the Semang people of Kedah and Perak and the Pangan in Kelantan, and in the Philippines as the Aetas (Harrison, 1963: 4; Sardesai, 1981: 8). Both Australoid and Negrito peoples spread southward as far as Australia.

iii)   Melanesoid or Australo-Melanesoid

The third type of human race that followed the Australoid and Negritos and came to South-East Asia was the Melanesoid or Australo-Melanesoid people. Brain Harrison has stated that this type of people is no longer surviving in South-East Asia, but numerous in the Pacific islands to New Guinea and Australia; however, Cady has noted that frizzy-haired, black-skinned Melanesoid peoples were observed in the Mekong delta by Chinese visitors in the thirteenth and by French observers in the twentieth centuries (Cady, 1964: 14).

iv)   Indonesian or Austronesian (the Jakun type)

Austronesian or Indonesian peoples were the last major group of people to descend into South-East Asia during prehistoric times. The rivers served as the migratory

routes for people from South-East Asia during both prehistoric and historic periods. The more developed Malay races, also known as Indonesian or Austronesian races, started their long southward migration from southwest China and arrived in South-East Asia between 2500 and 1500 B.C. after the Australoid-Veddoid, Negrito, and Melanesoid primitive peoples. According to historians, the descendants of these people make up the majority of the Malay and island populations of South-East Asia and are fundamentally of the same human genus as the remainder of the Indo-Chinese peninsula and southern China. The Indonesian type peoples who are the largest ethnic elements in today's South-East Asia and who are the brown-skinned Malay inhabiting Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines form two broad, though by no means exact, categories: the Deutero-Malay and the Proto-Malay (the elder) (the younger). The Proto-Malays with their clearer Mongoloid strains arrived in South-East Asia in about 2500 B.C. and they probably formed the first basic Indonesian population of South-East Asia (Harrison, 1963: 5; Winstedt, 1966: 14). They are represented in the Jakun of Malaya, the Torjas of Celebes (also known as Sulawesi), the Dyaks of Borneo, the islanders of Nias and the Bataks and the Minagkabau of Sumatra. The Proto-Malays also predominated in the population of the Greater and Lesser Sunda Islands to the east. The less homogenous but a more mixed type Deutero-Malays, known also as the Coastal Malays migrated to South-East Asia in around 300 B.C (Sardesai, 1981: 8-9; Vlekke, 1965: 9-10). The Deutero-Malays tended to settle in coastal areas and became more mobile, especially after traders arrived from the outside. They are found in the Malays of Malaysia and Sumatra, the Balinese, Javanese, Sundanese, and Madurese of Indonesia and the Bisayans, Tagalogs, Ilokanos, Bikols, and Pampangans of the Philippines (Bastin and Benda, 1968: 2; Harrison, 1963: 5). Sea-gypsy fishermen-pirates who long infested the straits of Malacca and the northern coasts of Java Sea, along with the Bugis of the Celebes north of Macassar, were of this group (Cady, 1964: 12).

Apart from the above-mentioned ancient ethnic groups of South-East Asia, the presence of various races including the Burmese, the Champs in central and southern Annam, the Khmers of Mekong delta, the Malays, the Mons in the Menam valley and lower Myanmar, the Pyus in the Irrawaddy and Sittang basins, the Thais and the Vietnamese in the mainland South-East Asia and the Javanese, the Bataks and the Dyaks in the island South-East Asia has also formed the region's ethnic diversity.4 The advent and presence of large minority groups of non-indigenous Asians mainly the Chinese and the Indians as immigrants in various countries of South-East Asia have also formed pluralistic society and multiculturalism in the region. The prevalence of these different human groups in South-East Asia since prehistoric times unequivocally proves the region's ethnic diversity.

Linguistic Diversity

The profound diversity of South-East Asia is clearly evident when we look at the languages of the region. South-East Asia is a fine example of linguistic diversity

exhibited in terms of the existence of more than one major language family and, once again, it does not linguistically form a natural unit. Brian Harrison is of the opinion that three of the great linguistic groups or families of Asia are represented in the region. They are Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Chinese and Malayo-Polynesian (Harrison, 1963: xi). However, historians like Lea E. Williams and Nicholas Tarling claimed that people of South-East Asia speak in the following four language families: Austroasiatic, Tai-Kadai, Tibeto-Burman or Sino-Tibetan and Austronesian (Williams, 1974: 18; Tarling, 1992: 78, 108-109). Each of these language families, however, has its area of greatest diversity for the four, as distinct from one another as the Indo-Europeans from the Semitic family, are of course divided into many languages and sub-divided into innumerable dialects. Following is a brief discussion of the four great linguistic families in which the people of South-East Asia speak.

(i) **Austro-Asiatic**: This language family which includes approximately 150 languages is the most widespread and the most geographically fragmented in mainland South-East Asia (Tarling, 1992: 109). According to Brian Harrison, languages with a common Austro-Asiatic basis were and are seen to speak in parts of Burma or Myanmar, Siam or Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Malaysia (Harrison, 1963: xi).

(ii) **Tibeto-Chinese or Sino-Tibetan**: This language family is also known as Tibeto-Burman and this subgroup includes such major languages as Burmese, Chin, Kachin, Karen, Lolo and Naga. People of Burma or Myanmar, Laos, Siam or Thailand and Vietnam generally speak in this language family (Harrison, 1963: xi; Williams, 1974: 18).

(iii) **Malayo-Polynesian**: Languages of the Malayo-Polynesian family which is a successor group of Austronesian languages family is one of the most widespread linguistic families in the world and the family members of this language in South-East Asia are located in seven of the ten (Laos and Burma are the two exceptions) present-day countries of the region (Williams, 1974: 19-20). This language family includes Malay, Minagkabau, Iban, Acehnese, Chamic, Javanese, Balinese and several other languages of Sumatra and western Borneo. Languages of Malayo-Polynesian family are spoken in parts of southern Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and all of Indonesia except for the Papuan Halmahera (Tarling, 1992: 110, 114).

(iv) **Tai-Kadai**: The Tai-Kadai languages include Thai (with thirty to thirty-five million speakers), Lao, Shan of northern Myanmar and numerous lesser languages of scattered minority peoples in Burma, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam (Williams, 1974: 19).

Below is a map showing the distribution of languages families and major languages.
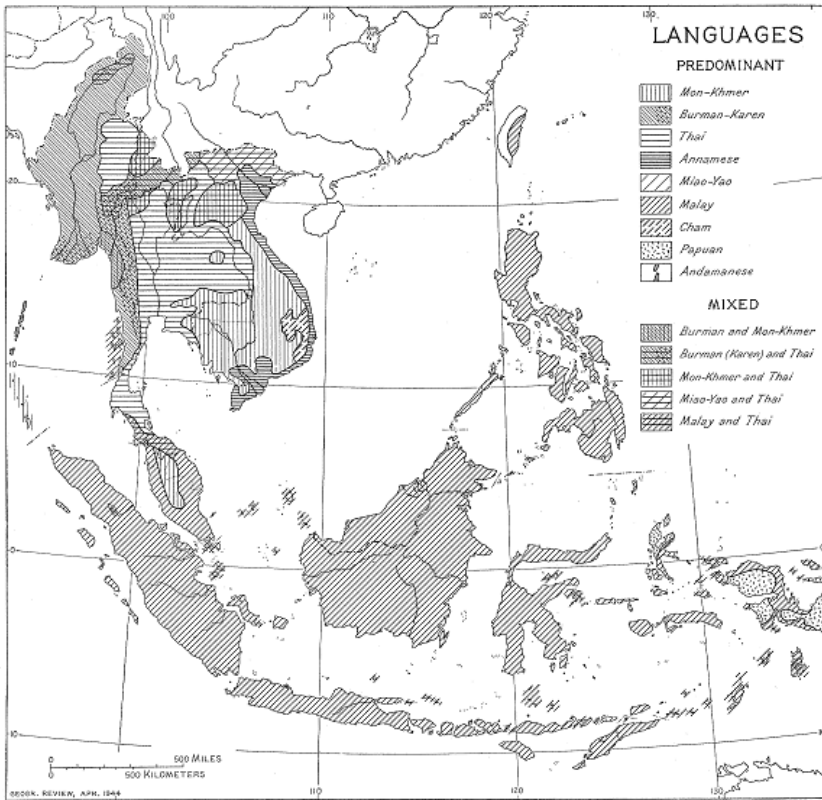
Source: Jan O. M. Broek, 'Diversity and Unity in Southeast Asia', Geographical
Review, April, 1944, Vol. 34, No. 2, p. 184; The Cambridge History
of South-East Asia, Vol. I (From early times to c. 1800), Cambridge
University Press, Singapore, 1992, p. 108.

Religious and Cultural Diversity

South-East Asia has continued to be dominated by the intrusive forces of culture,
commerce, and religion. While the geographical centrality of South-East Asia in
Eastern trade and navigation has been of incalculable significance, the unique
place of the region as a crossroads of peoples has been and remains even more
decisive particularly in terms of religion of the region. Initially, South-East Asia
had fostered an indigenous belief (animism), culture and civilization. The main
elements of this primitive religion of South-East Asia were: the people's pantheistic
belief that each and every living thing has a 'soul' or 'life-energy,' which is present
in all things but may be more concentrated in some parts of the body than others
(Vlekke, 1965: 15). However, as time progressed, Indian and Chinese cultural
influences made their lasting imprint on the region and they impacted nearly every

section of life in South-East Asia for a long period of time. Following the Indian and the Chinese, Arab, Bengal, Persian as well as European contacts have also left an indelible imprint on the larger part of South-East Asia, thus making the region a unique example of religious diversity. The introduction of Hinduism in South-East Asia in first Christian Era was followed by Buddhism (Theravada and Mahayana) more or less about the same time or later by Indian merchants and religious preachers. Later on, from the seventh century A.D., Islam anchored its foothold in the region by the Arab, Indian, Bengali and Persian Muslim merchants and preachers.5 At last, Christianity spread to South-East Asia with the Portuguese conquest of Malacca entrepôt in 1511 and the Spanish conquest and occupation of the Philippines in 1571. Once introduced by commercial enterprises, each of these religions successfully retains its adherents in the region and thus prevents the region from forming a religious unit. Thus, South-East Asia has become the centre of four religions adding a new dimension to the region's religious diversity. The religious and cultural diversity of the region is a result of the absorption of various cultures and religions, including those of Indo-China, India, Islam, and Christianity, as well as their adaptation to or accommodation of local beliefs and customs. The religious and cultural diversity of South-East Asia is evident for the dominant religious traditions practiced in different parts of the region by classifying the region as Hindu South-East Asia (Bali island of Indonesia), Theravada Buddhist South-East Asia (Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia), Mahayana Buddhist and Confucian South-East Asia (Vietnam), Muslim South-East Asia (Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei) and Christian South-East Asia (the Philippines and East Timor).[6]

A map of South-East Asia showing the region's religious and cultural diversity:
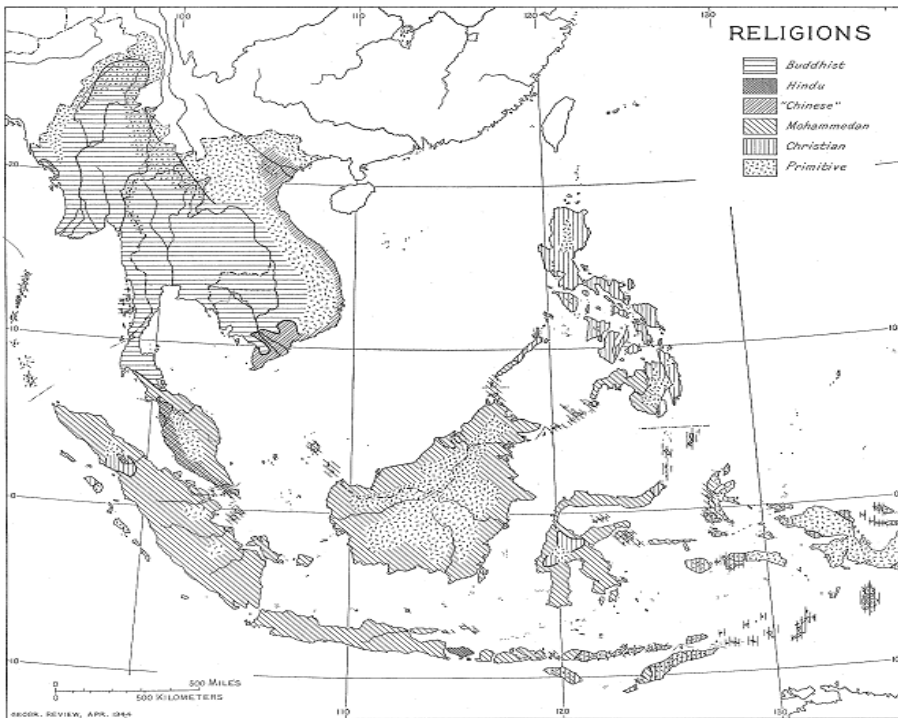
Source: Jan O. M. Broek, 'Diversity and Unity in Southeast Asia' Geographical
Review, April, 1944, Vol. 34, No. 2 p. 185.

Political and Economic Diversity

South-East Asia experienced two types of states or political entities: land states
and port kingdoms or maritime empires, formed on the basis of their economies.
The first land states in South-East Asia, according to D.G.E. Hall, appear in three
areas: the lower Mekong and its delta, north of Hue in contemporary Annam,
and the northern section of the Malay Peninsula. The important land states were
Funan, Champa, Lin-yi and Langkasuka. These states were based on agriculture
economy. On the other hand, the port kingdoms or maritime empires developed
in the coastal areas of the sea or along the Malacca straits or in the islands. The
maritime empires of Srivijaya in south-eastern Sumatra (established in 650 AD),
Mataram in central Java (established king Sanjaya in the eighth century), Majapahit
in Java (established in 1293), and Malacca in the Malay Peninsula adjoining the
Malacca straits (established in 1402) are some examples of these types. These
port kingdoms were based on sea trade or maritime commerce. The early South-
East Asians developed skills in navigation chiefly for sea trade and fishing, and
throughout much of the region seaborne commerce was as important as agriculture
(Cady, 1964: 6). A large part of the able-bodied population has been engaged in

farming, fishing, seaborne trade and the timber industry from time immemorial (Chufrin and Mohzeiko, 1989: 3). Thus, two clear distinct economies developed side by side in South-East Asia centering the two different political types of states and this is another example of the region's diversity.

The above account is a clear picture of the geographical, ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural, political and economic diversity of South-East Asia. However, there are many logical ways to demonstrate the unity and harmony of South-East Asia as well. In fact, the factors and aspects for considering the region as a unity are also numerous. At this point, we turn to examine the reasons and different aspects of the unity of South-East Asia. They can be summarized as being geographical, ethnic, linguistic, historical and political and cultural as well.

Geographical Unity of South-East Asia

As opposed to the exposed geographical diversity, there was an inherent geographical unity of South-East Asia. Geographically, South-East Asia is a huge and varied region; however, its components have much in common. 'It extends from the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas, narrow mountain gorges overgrown with pine trees, from the cool and bright mountain forests and hilly plains covered with tall teak trees to flat valleys in which flow slow turbid rivers, to intended coasts with mango trees, mountain islands rising above the ocean surface, silent tropical jungles and waterfalls rolling from cliffs into the surf' (Chufrin and Mohzeiko, 1989: 3). South-East Asia must be considered a distinct region within the wider unity of the Monsoon Lands from a geographical standpoint (Fisher, 1964: 5). It was due to the geographical factors for which almost the whole of the region experiences a similar tropical climate which is hot and moist. That is, the weather of South-East Asia is characterized by strong downpours and violent sea storms. Its atmosphere is saturated with the smell or orchids and herbs growing on the plains (Chufrin and Mohzeiko, 1989: 3). The majority of South-East Asian nations, which are located between the Tropic of Cancer and twelve degrees south of the Equator, have considerable rainfall and consistently high temperatures, which have contributed to the growth of the region's extensive rain forests. As a consequence, peoples of the region concentrated on settling along the rivers and developed skills in navigation—an important means of movement and communication—a common phenomenon of the region (Bastin and Benda, 1968: 2). It is pertinent to state here that there is a truism regarding South-East Asia where 'land divides, water unites'. It is the widespread development of skills in navigation in the region that confers a significant meaning to that truism.

Ethnic or Racial Unity

As explained above, in the past mainly four major ethnic or racial groups lived in South-East Asia while at present hundreds of ethnic groups are living in the region. However, the matter of the fact is that the great majority of the people have a strong racial similarity. For example, Indonesian or Austronesian (also known as the Jakun) people are the majority in the region which shows a clear racial unity.

This uniformity of race is strongly demonstrated by different admixture of Negrito, Indonesian and Mongol blood people of South-East Asia (Purcell, 1965: 3). Back in 1992 *The Cambridge History of South-East Asia (Vol. I)* mentions that the great majority of the 400 million inhabitants of South-East Asia belonged to a biological grouping which may be termed Southern Mongoloid (Tarling, 1992: 73). Thus, peoples with different language and cultural background of South-East Asia may also be seen with strong physical similarities which support the proposition the ethnic or racial unity of South-East Asia.

Linguistic Unity

True, South-East Asia is a sheer example of linguistic diversity where people speak fine region of cultural diversity where people speak in several language families and each of these language families has its area of greatest diversity for these language families were and are divided into many languages and sub-divided into innumerable dialects. Interestingly, South-East Asian anthropological records show that people who seem biologically quite different speak languages belonging to the same family. That is, despite the fact that many different languages are spoken throughout this wide region, all of them are members of the Malayo-Polynesian or Austronesian language family (Tarling, 1992: 56, 276).

Historical and Political Unity

Since South-East Asia took shape as a definite geographical and geopolitical entity (more than 2000 years ago), the region has passed through a series of historical stages of development which were similar for the various parts of the region. The exposed position of South-East Asia to the outside world has created for the region an opportunity to welcome fairly large minority groups of non-indigenous peoples. Therefore, historically immigrants like Chinese and Indians in the region (chiefly in Myanmar, Malaysia, and Indonesia) have created similar social and political problems in each, the problems of the 'plural society', a society in which 'distinct social orders live side by side, but separately, within the same political unit' (Harrison, 1963: xi). That is, from ancient time the non-South-Asian immigrants in South-East Asia have formed pluralistic societies in the countries of the region where they are living and they have also created similar social orders and problems; however, they have been living side by side under the same political unit of the region. Additionally, all the South-East Asian land states and port kingdoms or maritime empires shared common characteristic features, which highlight the fact that the prevailing inner processes and trends of development were also similar. One important feature was that these former states shared common hierarchical systems. The land and all the subjects belonged to the head of state. The rulers of these states were both secular and spiritual leaders while their thrones were regarded as the centres of the Universe and the palaces as the homes of living god (Chufrin and Mohzeiko, 1989: 16-17).

Economic Unity

As discussed above, due to the two kinds of states formation South-East Asia witnessed two different economic systems in the past. Despite these

differences, there was a common feature of the economy of the region and the life-style of the people of the region. Because of the geographical factors, the mass of over 681 million inhabitants of South-East Asia share broadly similar methods of food-production and ways of life. The region has been inhabited for many centuries and the people of the region have become adapted to it and have been adapting it to their needs. In the early period, the peoples of South-East Asia also shared a mostly similar physical terrain, with plenty of readily accessible productive land to provide the basic economic requirements of the local community. Men and women worked together to produce food in early South-East Asia's traditional households, which involved clearing trees, planting, weeding, harvesting, cooking, feeding pigs and poultry, and fishing (Tarling, 1992: 187). Since early time, the cultivation of irrigated rice-fields has become a common feature in the life of the people of South-East Asia while rice is the basic or staple food of the inhabitants of the region. The early economy of South-East Asia was initially completely self-sufficient and focused mostly on hunting and fishing. Over time, however, it slowly expanded due to the adoption of primitive agricultural practices that involved shifting dry farming on progressively cleared forest lands. This method of farming, which is still prevalent in South-East Asia, was finally replaced by wet rice production (called sawah) in permanently irrigated fields (Bastin and Benda, 1968: 3). Hence, the principal means of livelihood of the South-East Asian people at the early stage was agriculture (Vlekke, 1965: 12). Therefore, though the mode of life of the peoples of the region differs, their main occupation has been and still is agriculture (Chufrin and Mohzeiko, 1989: 3).

Cultural Unity

More important than the geographical, racial, linguistic or religious diversity of South-East Asia is cultural affinity or cultural unity. That is, culturally, too, there is an underlying concept of the unity of South-East Asia despite the astounding diversity of the region in almost every aspect. To demonstrate the cultural unity of South-East Asia we may sum up the characteristics of the region in the manner:

a) On the material side, despite ethnic variety, the early peoples of South-East Asia shared a fairly common pattern of material culture including wet rice cultivation or the cultivation of rice on irrigated fields, the domestication of the cattle (ox) and buffaloes, the preparation of stone adzes[7], the rudimentary use of metals chiefly bronze and iron, pottery making, weaving, the use of batik work or the painted ornamentation of textiles, skills in navigation and the use of outrigger canoes (Purcell, 1965: 3; Cady, 1964: 12-13).

Of them, wet rice farming, ox and buffalo domestication, the use of metals, primarily bronze and iron, and navigational skills are acknowledged as the distinctive material traits of South-East Asian civilization prior to the period when it was influenced by outside forces. Nicholas Tarling

explicitly stated that beautiful large bronze ceremonial drums from Dong-son (present-day Vietnam) may be found all over South-East Asia. Tarling also gives a detailed description of how farmers, metallurgists and mariners South-East Asia developed their skills in their areas during the process of developing their own profession (Tarling, 1992: 185). Two general conclusions emerge concerning the cultural unity of South-East Asia from this analysis: (i) the mass cultures of South-East Asia based on the growing of rice by irrigation and agricultural resources were obviously basic and similar; and (ii) the early South-East Asians developed similar profession either in weaving or in pottery making or in navigation (Cady, 1964: 6).

b) On the social sector, the high status of women or the importance of women and descent by the maternal line was and is a common practice evident everywhere in South-East Asia. Victor Purcell categorically stated that the unity of South-East Asia is significantly demonstrated by the high status of women throughout the region as contrasted with that in some adjacent civilizations (Purcell, 1965: 3-4). Additionally, the organizations arising from irrigated cultivation is another manifestation of social unity of South-East Asia (Harrison, 1963: x). Archeological researches have claimed that everywhere in South-East Asia (particularly in Indonesia) there remain many traces of the original social organization and the most remarkable one, is the joint responsibility of all members of the community for the common welfare. This includes the obligation to help each other in time of distress and to bear jointly the responsibility for crimes and offenses committed on village soil if the actual perpetrators are not detected. According to Bernard H.M. Vlekke, in the later period the Netherlands colonial administration tried to introduce the principle of individual responsibility but the old system was never wholly destroyed (Vlekke, 1965: 13-14).

c) On the cultural side, the early people of South-East Asia were accustomed to fishing, agriculture, sea trade, hunting and gathering, as one moves inland from the coast and river into the forests and hills. This pattern had been largely established over 2000 years ago in prehistoric times (Hill, 1984: 86-87). Throughout the monsoon lands of South-East Asia there were also different seasonal festivals including the *wayang* or puppet shadow theatre and the gamelan orchestra. Victor Purcell concludes that the ancient shadow-play is still performed in the east-coast states of Malaya (Purcell, 1965: 3).

d) On the religious level, the common belief that widely was practiced in early South-East Asia was animism or the attribution of a soul to natural objects as mentioned above. South-East Asians shared the belief in the existence of a personal soul that guides a person through life. They also held the belief that the soul lives on after death and is required to stay

close to the regions where the body had previously resided. According to them, the soul does not withdraw from the community of the living but continues to take an interest in communal life. Consequently, the souls of the deceased may be angered when their descendants give up the old traditions or fail to fulfill their duties towards the spirits, they believed. Given this belief, the early burials of the dead bodies of the region took place in Jars or at dolmens (stone graveyards or grave of unhewn stones) and the worship of ancestors were maintained dutifully. In fact, ancestor worship was always one of the strongest forces in the maintenance of old customs and traditions of South-East Asia (Vlekke, 1965: 15). Other common beliefs that were practiced in the regions were the worship of the God of the soil, the location of shrines in high places, a mythology imbued with dualism of mountain versus sea, winged beings versus water beings, and men of the mountain versus men of the sea coast, haruspicy or taking of omens from the entails of animals, a God-king, respect for the number 7 and the incantation (Purcell, 1965: 3; Bastin and Benda, 1968: 4). Although subject to considerable local variation and to subsequent modification by Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, these cultural elements still survived (particularly haruspicy or taking of omens from the entails of animals, a God-king, respect for the number 7 and the incantation or magic) and today provide the essential justification for the religious unity of South-East Asia.

Conclusion

Indisputably and unquestionably, South-East Asia is a unique example of unity in diversity. While it is a region of diversity on its own, it is at the same time a region of unity as well. The basis of viewing South-East Asia as such may be enunciated in different approaches and the above analysis is a humble attempt to that end. South-East Asia is a region which contains a group of countries (mainland nations and island nations) and whose social structures were and are much in common and whose past history and present politics show many similarities, although the diversity of the region was and is still an obvious and well-established fact. While geographical factors have given the region a clear feature of diversity, the similar climatic, natural and economic conditions of the region have been hugely determining the lives of the people of the region. Although the people of South-East Asia were influenced by external factors and influences from India and China, they never compromised on the question of the basic structures of their societies. This has prevented the region from forming a complete unity in the sphere of culture. The people of South-East Asia shared in the past and so do at present similar tastes of lives in different fields despite their ethnic and linguistic dissimilarities. Thus, these two opposite features of their lives as well as the geographical landscapes of South-East Asia have given the unique and logical surname to the region: unity in diversity. The region of South-East Asia thus could be thought of as a unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation.

Endnotes

1.In the 14th century, during the Majapahit Empire, when tensions between the two major religions of the time, Hinduism and Buddhism, had increased, poet Mpu Tantular coined the Old Javanese term Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. Chiara Logli, "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity): Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Religion in Indonesian higher education", A Doctoral Dissertation, University of Hawai'i, 2015, p.55

2   .   "An area stretching from Sumatra in the west to the Spice Islands in the east, and from the island of Java in the south to the plains of Kampuchea in the Indo-Chinese Peninsula in the north, is identified as the Malay world, or sometimes fondly referred to as *Nusantara,* or the world of islands." Mohd. Taib Osman (ed.), *Islamic Civilization in the Malay World,* Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur, 1997, p. xxv.

3   .   The Malay Archipelago was known as 'Netherlands India' to the Dutch and since its independence it became known as Indonesia. East Indies was used for the Malay Archipelago as opposed to the West Indies, the name given early explorers to islands in the Atlantic Ocean which they believed to be off the coast of India (the Indies). See: also Victor Purcell, *South and East Asia since 1800,* Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1965, p. 2.

4   .   A modern scholar has claimed that peoples of South-East Asian culture are now-a-days also found in the eastern hills of India (Assam, notably Nagas, Garo, Khasi, Mizo) and Bangladesh [Kuki in Chittagong (now Chattogram) Hill Tracts], and in the southern part of China (notably Tai-speakers and Miao). Lewis Hill, 'South-East Asia', Newsletter (Museum Ethnographers Group), No. 15, February 1984, p. 86.

5   .   To be more clear, in mainland South-East Asia Theravada Buddhism, disseminated from Myanmar, came to predominate while Mahayana Buddhism flourished in Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula and western Kalimantan. Hinduism made its way in Java. Bali is still a Hindu Island. Islam appeared in the region in thirteenth century and the process of Islamization was at first slow. However, following the conversion of the ruler of Malacca at the beginning of the fifteenth century was Islam soon firmly established in northern Sumatra, the peninsula, northern Java and western Kalimantan. Nicholas Tarling (ed.), *The Cambridge History of South-East Asia, Vol. I (From early times to c. 1800)*, Cambridge University Press, Singapore, 1992, p. 54.

6   .   Today, about half the total population of the region is Muslim, the main concentrations being in Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei and the southern Philippines. The people of Burma or Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam and most Chinese in all parts of the regions are Buddhists. Most Indians throughout the region—mainly in Myanmar and Malaya) are Hindus. Indonesian Bali Island is a Hindu majority region in South-East Asia. In the Philippines about 95 percent of the total populations are Christians. Nicholas Tarling (ed.), *Op., cit.,* p. 13.

7   .   The quadrangular adzes of the Neolithic or New Stone Age historically supplanted the Mesolithic societies that produced the Bacsonian semi-polished chisel-edged stone tools of Tonkin and comparable objects discovered on sites in Thailand, Malaya, and Sumatra.

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Bibliometric Analysis of Research Publications of the University of Dhaka during 1971-2021: A Study

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Abstract: *Established in 1921, the University of Dhaka celebrated the 100 years of its establishment in 2021. As part of the celebration of this milestone, DU offered centennial research grants. The primary objectives of this project are to review the status of journals published by Dhaka University and examine and analyze the trend of scientific publications nationally and internationally for a period of 50 years from 1971 to 2021. We found that 13 faculties, 83 departments, 13 institutes and 56 research centers & bureaus of Dhaka University have published thirty-nine journals from 1971 to 2021. Collectively these journals have published 9,378 scientific articles in fifty years. The average publication of the journal per year is 187.56. Among these only 1148 scientific articles are available online. The Dhaka University Studies (Faculty of Arts) has published the highest number of scientific articles (1504) in 46 years. Researchers from 61 countries have collaborated with DU researchers and published in the DU journals. None of these journals are indexed by the leading databases like Scopus and Web of Science. The findings of this study help us to come up with some recommendations. Department-wise journal publications should be stopped and only the leading faculties of DU can take the responsibility to publish few journals with maintaining the standard set by the flagship journals. While the recent moves of DU show a positive direction to improve the ranking of this university, materializing these recommendations will further improve the ranking of Dhaka University.*

Keywords: *Scientific publications, Authorship, Collaborations, Dhaka University journals, Bibliometric, Centennial research*

Introduction

The University of Dhaka is the oldest and largest university in Bangladesh. Since its journey in 1921, this university has been playing an important role for building nation as well as creating new knowledge to develop the nation. Under the recent global university ranking by Times Higher Education (THE) Dhaka university ranked in between 601 to 800[t]h position (THE, 2023). Dhaka University is taking different initiatives and offering research funds to improve the ranking. This

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university celebrated its centenary in 2021 with gorgeous and a number of national and international programs. But the research contributions of this university are not enlisted systematically and showcasing properly. Therefore, it has become essential to explore and expose the scholarly contributions of DU during the last 50 years particularly after the independence of Bangladesh e.g. from 1971 to 2021.

Review of Literature

Since late 60s, 'Bibliometrics' has been using as one of the important tools for examining the scientific publications of university and evaluating the scientific works (Beck and Manuel, 2008). Since then many researchers are using this tool in their research studies. Yusop *et al.* (2022) examined the scientific publications of the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), and the heist number of publications found under the field of engineering and computer science. In addition, UITM became the top ranked university under the engineering and computer science in Malaysia. For examining the scientific publications of Alzahra University from 1986–2019, Doulani (2020) used bibliometrics method to analyze the scientific publications of this university. Under the number of publications and citations, there were upward trends during this period. The research collaboration was increased and mostly collaborated with the USA-based authors. However, majority of the authors published less which supports the 80/20 rules of publications (80% of scientific publications are published by 20% of authors). In a bibliometrics study in the University of the Punjab (PU) in Pakistan, Ahmad *et.al*. (2020) examined the scientific publications of this university from Scopus database. Authors found some significant findings of research collaboration, open access journal publishing and citation patterns of Punjab University. Many similar studies were found in the context of different universities across the world. Xu, Mishra & Jones (2017) examined the worldwide research approach and activities in the field of multimorbidity to explore the limitations in knowledge and identify the importance of knowledge sharing between high income countries and low- and middle- income countries. For this purpose a comprehensive search was conducted to extract research publications from Web of Sciences in multimorbidity with special reference to Diabetes, Depression, Hypertension and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. The analysis covered research output of 116 years from 1900 to 2016 and data for analysis was extracted from date of publications, subject category, author, title, abstract and keywords as well as full texts were obtained for the co-citation analysis.

There are few numbers of bibliometrics studies found in the context of Bangladesh. Some of these are; Library and information Science research publications in Bangladesh from 1971 to 2020 (Islam and Roy, 2021); publications and authorship patterns among the LIS researchers (Ahmed and Shuva, 2007). Khan et al. (1998) prepared a list of papers compiled for showing the growth and size of the scientific literatures of library and information science (LIS), patterns of their distribution by subjects within the field of librarianship, characteristics of

the contributing periodicals, language of publication, authorship patterns, and geographic distribution of the periodicals. Islam, Islam and Akter (2023) examined the fifty years of scientific publications of Dhaka University from Scopus database. Authors found that 9351 scientific publications published during fifty years which got cited 147,460 times (15.77 times per publication) and authors from institutions in 151 countries have published with most articles from USA, Japan and the UK. Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) and International Center for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr'b) were the highest collaborative organizations collaborated with Dhaka University researchers. While we see few numbers of publications found in the context of Dhaka University and Bangladesh, no bibliometric study found examining scientific publications of Dhaka university published in the DU journals.

Objectives and Research Questions

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- To explore the frequency of publication of the local journals over the past 50 years.

- To examine journal publication trends of various faculties, departments, institutes and research centers in DU.

- To determine the authorship patterns and international collaboration of those journals in the same period.

Research methodology

Data collection process

Phase 1: The project team looked at the Dhaka University Library (DUL) website as the very first initiative to excavate the journal titles, and DUL website seems very insignificant as there is partly information found of 16 journals.

Phase 2: A formal letter was issued to the librarian of DU central library to know if they have any other journal in their collection except the journals available on DUL website. But the librarian replied that DUL does not have any other journals in its collection other than the issues which have been uploaded on DUL website.

Phase 3: With the view to collect journal information manually from each of the entities of DU that publishes journal/s, the chief investigator prepared a general authorization letter requesting to deliver the journal issues to the bearer of the letter for a certain time with commitment that the issues of the journals will be handled very carefully during data entry and returned to respective office before or on the deadline. Four research assistants were deployed to visit the different departments, institutes and offices of DU. Finally; it is found that there are thirty nine journals which have been published between 1971 and 2021.

Phase 4: For analyzing the bibliographic information of the scientific publications, we have created an excel spreadsheet and filled up the fields with the selected information. We included journal name, faculty/institute/departments from where it is published, author name, year of publication, pattern of authorship (single/ joint), author institutions, number of years the journal is publishing, citations in google scholar, DOI and ISSN (Print and Online). For the bibliometric studies these are the essential fields to analyze and identify the trends of scientific publications.

Data analysis and interpretation of DU publications

After collecting all the relevant journal publications nationally, we have analyzed and interpreted the publication information.

Table 1: Journals Published by the Faculty & Institute, DU (1971-2021)

Sl.no	Faculty/Institute Name (29)	Name of Journal (18)
1	Faculty of Arts	Arts Faculty Journal
2	Faculty of Arts	কলা অনুষদ পত্রিকা
3	Faculty of Arts	The DU Studies
4	Faculty of Social Sciences	Social Science Review
5	Faculty of Social Sciences	সামাজিক বিজ্ঞান পত্রিকা
6	Faculty of Law	DU Law Journal
7	Faculty of Business Studies	The DU J. of Business Studies
8	Faculty of Science	The DU J. of Sciences
9	Faculty of Biological Sciences	The DU J. of Biological Sciences
10	Faculty of Pharmacy	DU J. of Pharmaceutical Sciences
11	Faculty of Earth and Environmental Sciences	DU J. of Earth and Environmental Sci.
12	Faculty of Engineering and Technology	DU J. of Applied Sci. and Engineering
13	Faculty of Fine Art	N/A
14	Faculty of Education	N/A
15	Faculty of Medicine	N/A
16	Faculty of Postgraduate Medical Sciences and Research	N/A
17	Institute of Education and Research	Teacher's World
18	Institute of Statistical Research and Training	Journal of Statistical Research
19	Institute of Business Administration	Journal of Business Administration
20	Institute of Nutrition and Food Science	Bangladesh Journal of Nutrition

21	Institute of Social Welfare and Research	The Journal of Social Development
22	Institute of Modern Languages	আধুনিক ভাষা ইনস্টিটিউট পত্রিকা
23	Institute of Health Economics	N/A
24	Institute of Information Technology	N/A
25	Institute of Energy	N/A
26	Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies	N/A
27	Institute of Leather Engineering and Technology	N/A
28	Confucius Institute	N/A
29	Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Research Inst. for Peace & Libe.	N/A

Table 1 represents an overview of journal contribution by different faculties and institutions of the University of Dhaka (DU). The information about the availability of online journals and the numbers of articles published in the journals are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Journals available in DU Library, Online (n=16)

Faculty/Institute Name	Name of Journal	Issue available	Articles
Faculty of Arts	Arts Faculty Journal	1	14
Department of English	Spectrum	1	17
Department of Arabic	The DU Arabic Journal	7	108
Department of Urdu	The DU J. of Urdu	1	19
Dept. of Info. Science & Library Manag.	Bangladesh J. of Library & Information Sci.	3	30
Department of Linguistics	The DU J. of Linguistics	2	21
Department of Sociology	Journal of Sociology	2	25
Faculty of Law	The DU Law Journal	29	187
Faculty of Business Studies	The DU J. of Business Studies	12	142
Faculty of Science	The DU J. of Sciences	24	419
Faculty of Biological Sciences	The DU J. of Biological Sciences	26	321
Faculty of Pharmacy	The DU J. of Pharmaceutical Sci.	29	288
Faculty of Earth and Environmental Sci.	The DU J. of Earth & Environ. Sci.	1	9

Faculty of Engineering and Technology	The DU J. of Appl. Sci. & Engineering	3	29
Institute of Stat. Research and Training	Journal of Statistical Research	19	139
Institute of Nutrition and Food Science	Bangladesh Journal of Nutrition	27	266
Total		**187**	**2034**

Table 2 represents the visibility of DU journals on its library website and indicates that all the issues of all journals are not available. It also depicts that the highest number of issues of a single journal (The DU J. of Pharmaceutical Sci.) is visible through DU library website. The present scenario of the total number of journals of DU published from 1971-2021 is enumerated in Table 3.

Table 3: Total Journals of DU, 1971-2021 (n=39)

Sl. no	Faculty/Department name	Name of Journal	Medium	Issue found Year (1971-2021)
1	Faculty of Arts	Arts Faculty Journal	English	2006 -2021
2	Faculty of Arts	কলা অনুষদ পত্রিকা	Bangla	2006 -2021
3	Faculty of Arts	The DU Studies	English	1971 - 2016
4	Dept. of Bangla	সাহিত্য পত্রিকা	Bangla	1985 -2018
5	Dept. of English	Spectrum	English	1998 -2019
6	Department of Arabic	The DU Arabic J.	Arabic	2014 - 2020
7	Dept. of Per. Lan. & Lit.	The DU J. of Parsian	Arabic	2005 - 2011
8	Dept. of Urdu	The DU J. of Urdu	Urdu	2015
9	Dept. of Sanskrit	প্রাচ্যবিদ্যা পত্রিকা	Ban & Eng	2016 - 2020
10	Dept. of Philosophy	Philosophy & Progress	English	1981 -2019
11	Dept. of Philosophy	দর্শন ও প্রগতি	Bangla	1986 -2019
12	Dept. of Islm. Hist. & Cult	প্রবন্ধ সংকলন	Ban & Eng	1999 - 2020
13	Dept. of Inf. Sci. & Lib. mgt	Bangladesh J. of Lib. and Info. Science	English	1998 -2021
14	Dept. of Linguistics	The DU J. of Linguistics	Ban & Eng	2009 -2021
15	Faculty of Social Sciences	Social Science Review	English	1991 - 2021

16	Faculty of Social Sciences	সামাজিক বিজ্ঞান পত্রিকা	Bangla	2005 - 2020
17	Det. of Political Science	Bangladesh Political Science Review	English	2013 -2019
18	Dept. of Int. Rel.	Journal of International Relations	English	1993 - 2020
19	Dept. of Sociology	Journal of Sociology	English	2005 -2009
20	Dept. of Popu. Sci.	Journal of Population & Development	English	2014
21	Faculty of Law	The DU Law J.	English	1992 - 2016
22	Faculty of Business Studies	The DU J. of Business Studies	English	1989 - 2020
23	Dept. of Management	The Dhaka Univeristy J. of Managt.	English	1995 -2019
24	Dept. of Marketing	The Dhaka Univeristy J. of Marketing	English	1999 - 2018
25	Department of Finance	Journal of Finance & Banking	English	1991 - 2020
26	Dept. of Bank. & Insurance	Journal of Banking & Financial Service	English	2007 -2021
27	Dept. Manag. Info. Systems	Bangladesh J. of MIS	English	2009 - 2020
28	Faculty of Science	The DU J. of Sciences	English	1989 - 2021
29	Faculty of Bio. Sciences	The DU J. of Bio. Sciences	English	1992 -2021
30	Dept. of Psychology	The DU J. of Psychology	English	1990 - 2016
31	Faculty of Pharmacy	The DU J. of Phar. Sciences	English	2011 - 2020
32	Faculty of Ear. & Env. Sci.	The DU J. of Earth & Environmental Sci.	English	2015
33	Faculty of Engi. & Tech.	The DU J. of Applied Sci. & Eng	English	2016 - 2018
34	Inst. of Edu. & Research	Teacher's World	English	1983 -2017
35	Inst. of Stat. Res. & Train.	Journal of Statistical Research	English	1971 - 2018
36	Inst. of Bus. Admi.	Journal of Business Administration	English	1975 - 2021
37	Inst. of Nutr. & F. Sci.	Bangladesh Journal of Nutrition	English	1987 -2019
38	Inst. of Soc. Wel. & Res.	The Journal of Social Development	Ban & Eng	1992 - 2020

| 39 | Inst. of Modern Languages | আধুনিক ভাষা ইনস্টিটিউট পত্রিকা | Ban & Eng | 1984 - 2019 |

NB: Information of 'ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় পত্রিকা' was not available during the data collection periods. We failed to add this journal information in our study from the existing departments, institutes, faculties and libraries. Hence, the total number of journals published by Dhaka University will be 40.

It is significant to notice that among all the journals, the journal published by the 'Institute of Business Administration is the most regular and aged journal as since 1975 the institute is contributing its journal and it has published the latest issue of 2021. The total number of articles published per journal is demonstrated in Table 4 including coverage of year and average article per year.

Table 4: Number of articles per journal (n=39)

Sl. no	Name of Journal	No of articles published	No of year covers	Avg. article per year
1	Arts Faculty Journal	136	16	8.50
2	কলা অনুষদ পত্রিকা	199	16	12.44
3	The DU Studies	1504	46	32.70
4	সাহিত্য পত্রিকা	184	34	5.41
5	Spectrum	146	22	6.64
6	The DU Arabic Journal	108	7	15.43
7	The DU Journal of Parsian	73	7	10.43
8	The DU Journal of Urdu	19	1	19.00
9	প্রাচ্যবিদ্যা পত্রিকা	73	5	14.60
10	Philosophy & Progress	331	39	8.49
11	দর্শন ও প্রগতি	296	34	8.71
12	প্রবন্ধ সংকলন	86	22	3.91
13	Bd. Journal of Library and Information Science	30	24	1.25
14	The DU Journal of Linguistics	108	13	8.31
15	Social Science Review	477	31	15.39
16	সামাজিক বিজ্ঞান পত্রিকা	110	16	6.88
17	Bangladesh Political Science Review	66	7	9.43
18	Journal of International Relations	107	28	3.82
19	Journal of Sociology	25	5	5.00

20	Journal of Population & Development	6	1	6.00
21	The DU Law Journal	187	25	7.48
22	The DU Journal of Business Studies	770	32	24.06
23	The DU Journal of Management	91	25	3.64
24	The DU Journal of Marketing	210	20	10.50
25	Journal of Finance & Banking	158	30	5.27
26	Journal of Banking & Financial Service	194	15	12.93
27	Bangladesh Journal of MIS	65	12	5.42
28	The DU Journal of Sciences	683	33	20.70
29	The DU Journal of Biological Sciences	624	30	20.80
30	The DU Journal of Psychology	212	27	7.85
31	The DU Journal of Pharmaceutical Sci.	288	10	28.80
32	The DU Journal of Earth & Environmental Sci.	9	1	9.00
33	The DU Journal of Applied Sci. & Engineering	29	3	9.67
34	Teacher's World	244	35	6.97
35	Journal of Statistical Research	528	48	11.00
36	Journal of Business Administration	327	47	6.96
37	Bangladesh Journal of Nutrition	266	33	8.06
38	The Journal of Social Development	214	29	7.38
39	আধুনিক ভাষা ইনস্টিটিউট পত্রিকা	195	36	5.42
	Total	**9378**		

Table 4 summarizes the total number of articles and average yearly number of articles contributed by per journals in the designated period. It shows that the total number of articles contributed by each journal during the research period varies significantly. Hence, majority of DU journals have contributed less than two-fifty articles. The total number of publications during the last fifty years (1971-2021) has been depicted in Table 5.

Table 5: Number of publications (1971-2021)

Year	No. publication	NP%	CC	Year	No. publication	NP%	CC
1971	25	0.27	25	1997	218	2.32	2747
1972	29	0.31	54	1998	217	2.31	2964
1973	21	0.22	75	1999	222	2.37	3186
1974	50	0.53	125	2000	157	1.67	3343
1975	48	0.51	173	2001	164	1.75	3507
1976	44	0.47	217	2002	156	1.66	3663
1977	37	0.39	254	2003	223	2.38	3886
1978	38	0.41	292	2004	222	2.37	4108
1979	58	0.62	350	2005	313	3.34	4421
1980	35	0.37	385	2006	311	3.32	4732
1981	60	0.64	445	2007	234	2.50	4966
1982	119	1.27	564	2008	283	3.02	5249
1983	105	1.12	669	2009	240	2.56	5489
1984	125	1.33	794	2010	365	3.89	5854
1985	87	0.93	881	2011	344	3.67	6198
1986	132	1.41	1013	2012	415	4.43	6613
1987	135	1.44	1148	2013	391	4.17	7004
1988	120	1.28	1268	2014	313	3.34	7317
1989	116	1.24	1384	2015	296	3.16	7613
1990	137	1.46	1521	2016	392	4.18	8005
1991	117	1.25	1638	2017	265	2.83	8270
1992	150	1.60	1788	2018	359	3.83	8629
1993	169	1.80	1957	2019	326	3.48	8955
1994	185	1.97	2142	2020	287	3.06	9242
1995	225	2.40	2367	2021	136	1.45	9378
1996	162	1.73	2529	**Total**	**9378**		

Table 5 reflects the yearly contribution of articles by the DU journals. It is obvious that there is constant growth in article publication by DU journals because in 1971, only 25 (0.27% of the total number of articles during 1971-2021) articles were published whereas by the first half of 2021, number of articles contributed is 136. However, remarkable number of articles like 415 was published in 2012 and the rate was 4.43% of the total number of articles. The scenario of authorship under different faculties, institute and decade during the last fifty years has been demonstrated in Table 6 (a), 6(b) and 6(c).

Table 6 (a): Faculty-wise authorship (1971-2021)

Among 14 faculties of DU nine faculties have their own journal so for the analysis of faculty wise authorship patterns those journals have been considered and data collected from those journals has been distributed in the following table.

Decade	Name	1	2	3	4	4+	Total	Decade	Name	1	2	3	4	4+	Total
1971-1980	FA	243	32	15	2	0	292	1971-1980	FBioS	0	0	0	0	0	0
1981-1990	FA	679	79	28	18	6	810	1981-1990	FBioS	4	3	0	0	0	7
1991-2000	FA	471	41	30	13	4	559	1991-2000	FBioS	50	60	54	42	21	227
2001-2010	FA	610	103	13	1	1	728	2001-2010	FBioS	25	90	60	47	37	259
2011-2020	FA	810	32	4	0	0	846	2011-2020	FBioS	12	102	99	57	40	310
2021	FA	47	6	2	1	2	58	2021	FBioS	1	4	11	11	6	33
Total		**2860**	**293**	**92**	**35**	**13**	**3293**	**Total**		**92**	**259**	**224**	**157**	**104**	**836**
1971-1980	FSS	0	0	0	0	0	0	1971-1980	FP	0	0	0	0	0	0
1981-1990	FSS	0	0	0	0	0	0	1981-1990	FP	0	0	0	0	0	0
1991-2000	FSS	139	33	7	1	0	180	1991-2000	FP	0	0	0	0	0	0
2001-2010	FSS	127	66	16	1	31	241	2001-2010	FP	0	0	0	0	0	0
2011-2020	FSS	211	121	21	3	1	357	2011-2020	FP	0	3	24	58	203	288
2021	FSS	4	8	0	1	0	13	2021	FP	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		**481**	**228**	**44**	**6**	**32**	**791**	**Total**		**0**	**3**	**24**	**58**	**203**	**288**
1971-1980	FL	0	0	0	0	0	0	1971-1980	FEES	0	0	0	0	0	0
1981-1990	FL	0	0	0	0	0	0	1981-1990	FEES	0	0	0	0	0	0
1991-2000	FL	39	0	0	0	0	39	1991-2000	FEES	0	0	0	0	0	0
2001-2010	FL	88	13	0	0	0	101	2001-2010	FEES	0	0	0	0	0	0
2011-2020	FL	32	15	0	0	0	47	2011-2020	FEES	1	1	3	3	1	9
2021	FL	0	0	0	0	0	0	2021	FEES		0	0	0	0	0
Total		**159**	**28**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**187**	**Total**		**1**	**1**	**3**	**3**	**1**	**9**
1971-1980	FBS	0	0	0	0	0	0	1971-1980	FET	0	0	0	0	0	0
1981-1990	FBS	20	9	0	0	0	29	1981-1990	FET	0	0	0	0	0	0
1991-2000	FBS	134	112	33	0	0	279	1991-2000	FET	0	0	0	0	0	0

2001-2010	FBS	127	160	140	21	0	448	2001-2010	FET	0	0	0	0	0	0
2011-2020	FBS	210	419	91	4	0	724	2011-2020	FET	2	9	7	9	2	29
2021	FBS	4	4	0	0	0	8	2021	FET	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		**495**	**704**	**264**	**25**	**0**	**1488**	**Total**		**2**	**9**	**7**	**9**	**2**	**29**
1971-1980	FS	0	0	0	0	0	0								
1981-1990	FS	5	1	2	1	2	11								
1991-2000	FS	32	34	24	18	5	113								
2001-2010	FS	27	69	43	35	34	208								
2011-2020	FS	21	102	100	58	52	333								
2021	FS	1	8	4	2	3	18								
Total		**86**	**214**	**173**	**114**	**96**	**683**								

Table 6(a) reflects faculty wise summary of authorship patterns of the research contribution reported by DU journals. The data in this table represents that single authorship is popular in the researches of the faculties of arts, social sciences, business studies and law whereas joint authorship is dominant in the researches of the faculties of sciences, engineering, bio-sciences and pharmacy. It is significant to mention that in the first decade there was no research that has more than four authors.

Table 6 (b): Institute-wise authorship (1971-2021)

Although there are 13 institutes in DU, all of them do not have their own journals so institute wise authorship pattern under this research will not reflect the whole pictures of research output by all institutes. Only institutes that have their own journals have been covered by this research and the data has been distributed in the table below.

Decade	Name	1	2	3	4	4+	Total	Decade	Name	1	2	3	4	4+	Total
1971-1980	IER	0	0	0	0	0	0	1971-1980	INFS	0	0	0	0	0	0
1981-1990	IER	12	1	0	0	0	13	1981-1990	INFS	9	18	17	6	11	61
1991-2000	IER	13	11	7	1	0	32	1991-2000	INFS	4	28	25	19	20	96
2001-2010	IER	26	37	14	0	0	77	2001-2010	INFS	0	16	20	9	27	72
2011-2020	IER	21	57	44	0	0	122	2011-2020	INFS	0	6	13	10	8	37
2021	IER	0	0	0	0	0	0	2021	INFS	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		**72**	**106**	**65**	**1**	**0**	**244**	**Total**		**13**	**68**	**75**	**44**	**66**	**266**

1971-1980	ISRT	35	22	5	0	0	62	1971-1980	ISWR	0	0	0	0	0	0
1981-1990	ISRT	35	40	5	0	0	80	1981-1990	ISWR	0	0	0	0	0	0
1991-2000	ISRT	52	79	22	3	1	157	1991-2000	ISWR	40	13	0	0	0	53
2001-2010	ISRT	53	76	36	5	1	171	2001-2010	ISWR	22	18	4	0	0	44
2011-2020	ISRT	16	21	12	3	6	58	2011-2020	ISWR	75	35	7	0	0	117
2021	ISRT	0	0	0	0	0	0	2021	ISWR	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		**191**	**238**	**80**	**11**	**8**	**528**	**Total**		**137**	**66**	**11**	**0**	**0**	**214**
1971-1980	IBA	30	1	1	0	0	32	1971-1980	IML	0	0	0	0	0	0
1981-1990	IBA	89	15	2	1	0	107	1981-1990	IML	17	0	1	0	0	18
1991-2000	IBA	40	19	8	0	0	67	1991-2000	IML	22	0	0	0	0	22
2001-2010	IBA	27	26	23	0	0	76	2001-2010	IML	67	17	1	0	0	85
2011-2020	IBA	6	13	18	0	0	37	2011-2020	IML	53	17	0	0	0	70
2021-	IBA	3	1	4	0	0	8	2021	IML	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		**195**	**75**	**56**	**1**	**0**	**327**	**Total**		**159**	**34**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**195**

Table 6(b) is the representation of authorship pattern in the research output by different institutes of DU. It is evident from the table data that research by single author is predominant in the institutes that conduct research and education in the field of arts, social sciences and business. On the contrary, in the field of physical and biological sciences prefer joint authorships.

Table 6 (C): Decade wise number of authorship

This research has covered scientific publications by different entities of DU from 1971 t0 2021 that is research output of five decades which have been displayed by the following table.

Sl No	Decade	1	2	3	4	4+	No. of articles
D1	1971-1980	308	55	21	2	0	**386**
D2	1981-1990	870	166	55	26	19	**1136**
D3	1991-2000	1036	430	210	97	51	**1824**
D4	2001-2010	1199	691	370	119	131	**2510**
D5	2011-2020	1470	953	443	205	313	**3384**
D6	2021-	60	31	21	15	11	**138**
D1-D6	**Total**	**4943**	**2326**	**1120**	**464**	**525**	**9378**

Decade wise analysis of research output by all entities together represents that single authorship is much higher than joint authorship and among publications by joint authorship there is a trend of decreasing number of publications with the increase in number of authorship.

Faculty and Institute wise collaboration with DU, DU and others in BD and international

The status of faculty and institute wise collaboration with DU, DU and other academia in BD and other countries of the world is mentioned in Table 7.

Table 7: Faculty and Institute Wise Collaboration (DU, DU and others in BD and international)

S.No	Name	DU	DU & Oth BD	Int	Total	Sl.No	Name	DU	DU & Oth BD	Int	Total
1	FA	3210	50	33	**3293**	9	FET	22	6	1	**29**
2	FSS	614	127	50	**791**	10	IER	153	78	13	**244**
3	FL	178	4	5	**187**	11	ISRT	122	2	404	**528**
4	FBS	1057	396	35	**1488**	12	IBA	248	42	37	**327**
5	FS	522	145	16	**683**	13	INFS	232	27	7	**266**
6	FBioS	662	144	30	**836**	14	ISWR	175	35	4	**214**
7	FP	202	69	17	**288**	15	IML	182	8	5	**195**
8	FEES	8	0	1	**9**		**Total**	**7587**	**1133**	**658**	**9378**

Table 7 reflects DU researchers' collaboration with other DU researchers, researchers from other institute of Bangladesh (BD) and international research community.

Faculty and Institute wise collaboration (national and international) with the percentages

The faculty and institute wise collaboration with national and international level are shown, using the percentage in Table 8.

Table 8: Faculty and Institute Wise Collaboration (National and International) with %

Sl.No	Name	Nat	%	Int	%	Total	Sl.No	Name	Nat	%	Int	%	Total
1	FA	3260	99.00	33	1.00	3293	9	FET	28	96.55	1	3.45	29
2	FSS	741	93.68	50	6.32	791	10	IER	231	94.67	13	5.33	244
3	FL	182	97.33	5	2.67	187	11	ISRT	124	23.48	404	76.52	528
4	FBS	1453	97.65	35	2.35	1488	12	IBA	290	88.69	37	11.31	327
5	FS	667	97.66	16	2.34	683	13	INFS	259	97.37	7	2.63	266
6	FBioS	806	96.41	30	3.59	836	14	ISWR	210	98.13	4	1.87	214

| 7 | FP | 271 | 94.10 | 17 | 5.90 | 288 | 15 | IML | 190 | 97.44 | 5 | 2.56 | 195 |
| 8 | FEES | 8 | 88.89 | 1 | 11.11 | 9 | | Total | 8720 | 92.98 | 658 | 7.02 | 9378 |

Table 8 data represents that DU research collaboration enjoys national collaboration greater than international collaboration. It shows that, on an average 90% of the research published by different faculties and institutes has national collaboration.

Decade wise collaboration in national and international level

The decade wise collaboration in national and international level during the last fifty years is noted in Table 9.

Table 9: Decade Wise Collaboration (National and International)

Sl No	Decade	National	Int.	Total
D1	1971-1980	366	19	**385**
D2	1981-1990	1053	83	**1136**
D3	1991-2000	1637	185	**1822**
D4	2001-2010	2282	229	**2511**
D5	2011-2020	3249	139	**3388**
D6	2021	133	3	**136**
D1-D6	**Total**	**8720**	**658**	**9378**

Table 9 reveals that DU has an increasing trend of research collaboration with different national and international entities. From the first to the fifth decades covered under this research national collaboration has increased gradually however international collaboration has decreased dramatically in the fifth decade however, there is a huge lift in national research collaboration from fourth to fifth decades.

Faculty and/or Institute wise citation (GS) pattern

The faculty and/or institute wise citation (GS) pattern is dispersed in Table 10.

Table 10: Faculty/Institute wise Citation (GS) pattern

Sl. No	Name	Article	Citations (GS)	Avg Citation per article	Sl. No	Name	Article	Citations (GS)	Avg Citation per article
1	FA	3293	1884	0.75	9	FET	29	10	0.29
2	FSS	791	246	0.31	10	IER	244	194	0.80
3	FL	187	55	0.29	11	ISRT	528	1399	2.65
4	FBS	1488	1612	0.92	12	IBA	327	233	0.71
5	FS	683	1126	1.08	13	INFS	266	490	1.84
6	FBioS	836	1339	1.60	14	ISWR	214	12	0.06

| 7 | FP | 288 | 1445 | 5.01 | 15 | IML | 195 | 34 | 0.17 |
| 8 | FEES | 9 | 4 | 0.44 | | **Total** | **9378** | **10083** | **0.93** |

Table 10 provides the distribution of citation count against the total number of articles published by different faculties and institutes of DU along with average citation per article. The data reveals that FP is in the leading position in terms of receiving citations which is followed by ISRT and the citation per article are above five and around three respectively.

Status of online availability

The present status of online availability of the articles published in the journals during the period of 1971 to 2021 is summarized in Table 11.

Table 11: Online availability

Sl No	Name	Article	DOI	Bangla Jol	ISSN Online	ISSN Print
1	FA	3293	3	45	76	1355
2	FSS	791	15	15	2	553
3	FL	187	0	0	0	188
4	FBS	1488	0	0	133	987
5	FS	683	298	298	419	682
6	FBioS	836	144	308	322	836
7	FP	288	0	0	254	254
8	FEES	9	0	0	0	9
9	FET	29	0	0	0	29
10	IER	244	0	0	0	235
11	ISRT	528	0	0	0	487
12	IBA	327	0	0	16	129
13	INFS	266	0	22	0	266
14	ISWR	214	0	0	0	0
15	IML	195	0	0	0	127
	Total	**9378**	**460**	**688**	**1222**	**6137**

Table 11 indicates that the online visibility of DU research output is very poor as majority of the articles do not have DOI or journals do not have online ISSN. Among 15 faculties of DU, articles from only four faculties have got DOI number and articles from five faculties including those four have enlisted into Bangla Jol (an open access journal platform of Bangladesh).

Country wise author affiliations in the articles

The country wise author affiliations are shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Author affiliations in the articles (Country Information)

Sl. No	Country	No. of Authors	Sl. No	Country	No. of Authors	Sl. No	Country	No. of Authors
1	India	278	22	Poland	5	43	Norway	2
2	U.S.A	197	23	South Africa	5	44	Papua New Guinea	2
3	Canada	102	24	Sweden	5	45	Philippines	2
4	Australia	41	25	Austria	4	46	Russia	2
5	Japan	33	26	Czech Republic	4	47	Slovakia	2
6	Saudia Arabia	30	27	Finland	4	48	Ukraine	2
7	U.K.	29	28	Hong Kong	4	49	West Indies	2
8	Nigeria	21	29	Mexico	4	50	Ireland	1
9	Malaysia	16	30	Pakistan	4	51	Jamaica	1
10	Germany	14	31	Egypt	3	52	Kenya	1
11	China	12	32	Hungary	3	53	Myanmar	1
12	Iran	11	33	Indonesia	3	54	Namibia	1
13	Brazil	9	34	Italy	3	55	Oman	1
14	Thailand	9	35	Mauritius	3	56	Prague	1
15	Jordan	8	36	Zimbabwe	3	57	Qatar	1
16	Taiwan	8	37	Algeria	2	58	Scotland	1
17	South Korea	7	38	Bahrain	2	59	South Sudan	1
18	Kuwait	6	39	Libya	2	60	Switzerland	1
19	Singapore	6	40	Louisiana	2	61	Syria	1
20	Slovak Republic	6	41	Nepal	2			
21	Turkey	6	42	Netherlands	2			

Table 12 reveals that there were authors from 61 countries who collaborated with the DU researchers and faculty members.

Findings and discussion

During a fifty-year time span from 1971 to 2021, we see that 39 journals have been published by different departments, faculties and institutes of DU. Among these journals 18 are published by different faculties, institutes and remaining 21 journals are published by different departments. Only two journals namely 'The Dhaka University Studies' and 'Journal of Statistical Research' have been publishing since 1971. The 'Journal of Business Administration' published by the 'Institute of Business Administration (IBA)' is being publishing regularly since 1975. However, most of the DU journals are not publishing regularly. Despite this, there are good trends that many faculties, departments, institutes and centers are publishing journals. At this moment, none of the journals published by Dhaka University are listed by the major indexing databases like Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, EBSCO and others. Even most of these journals are not listed under DU library website and BanglaJOL.

Under the name 'Dhaka University Journals' in DU Website, we see that only 16 journals are listed with few issues. In BanglaJOL database 166 Bangladeshi journals are enlisted but the number of journals listed from Dhaka University remains low. Though Arts Faculty journal is enlisted in the BanglaJOL, only single issue information is available in the BanglaJOL website. Like this, very few scientific publications are found and uploaded in the Dhaka University Institutional Repository. Out of 9378 scientific publications published by DU journals, we found that only 460 publications have DOI number, 688 journals are found in the BanglaJOL and 1222 journals have online ISSN number.

During these fifty years, the average number of scientific publications per year is 187.56. The Dhaka University Studies from the Faculty of Arts has published highest number of publications that is 1504 in 46 years and the average number of publications of this journal per year is 32.70. Collaborative scientific publications in DU journals are less appeared and not popular. Single authorship is popular by the authors in the faculty of Arts, Social Sciences and Business Studies. The good trends of collaborative publications and joint authorships have been more appeared in the Faculty of Science and Biosciences. However, an opposite trend in authorship found in the last two decades that is single authorship had reduced over the decades and joint authorship had risen in this time.

In case of research collaboration with researchers from other institutions/ universities, we found that research collaboration within DU is higher than between DU and other organizations in BD. It is also found that only 7.02% (658) of the total publications of DU journals (9378) have international authorship from abroad. Authors from 61 countries have contributed and collaborated with these 7.02% publications. In the DU journals, authors from India, USA, Canada, Australia and Japan have made more scientific publications with the DU researchers. The DU Journal of Pharmaceutical Science was the only journal of DU which was listed in the SCImago journal ranking and indexed by the Scopus. But now this journal is no longer be listed in Scopus. Considering the regular publications and global authorships, this journal has got the highest citations in the Google Scholar (average citation per article 5.01) which is followed by ISRT journal (2.65 citations per article), INFS journal (1.84 citations per article), Faculty of Science journal (1.08 citations per article) and Faculty of Biosciences journal (1.60 citations per article). However, the rest of the journal articles of DU have got a lower count which is below 1 citation per article.

Conclusion and recommendations

Collecting scientific publications' information from the 39 local journals of DU, we have observed an overall upward growth of scientific publication by researchers of DU. The journals published from DU have low publication visibility as most of these journals are not listed in the BanglaJOL or in the university library website, most of the journals do not have DOI number and are not published regularly.

Hence, we have come up with some recommendations to improve this existing scenario. Some of the major suggestions are listed below.

- Dhaka University should encourage publishing journals by the dean office of different faculties rather than publishing under the department. Because most of the journals which are published by the departments are irregular in publications. Therefore, few of the faculties can take a lead to publish one journal considering the faculty intake.

- Initially, the top five oldest and regularly publishing journals under different faculties can be considered for the pilot project. Some initiatives like withdrawing the restrictions of authorship, inviting national and international experts of the respective fields in the editorial board, setting up a language club for the writers, encouraging more collaboration between universities and countries should be taken immediately. Open access online journal management system should be introduced for the top five listed journals of Dhaka University. The back issues of these selected journals should be scanned and inserted bibliographic information using the standard meta data protocol which works in line with other journal indexing systems.

- The top listed five journals of DU should follow the standard guidelines of submitting articles set by the commercial publishers and flagship journals. The journal article review policy should be revised and adopted standard peer review policy in line with the standard journals. It is essential to organize regular scientific writing workshops for the faculty members.

- For improving the publication visibility of the DU journals, all publications should be made available on DU library website, BanglaJOL and Dhaka University Institutional Repository under the green open access and creative common policy set by the publishers. Availability of DU journal publication in the Google Scholar, ResearchGate, ORCID, Academia and other research platforms would increase the possibility to be seen and cited by other researchers. Moreover, engaging in social network communities, creating and keeping up to date online profile of faculty members, organizing post-publication sessions and outreaching communities through open access mechanism can improve the visibility and citations of DU researches.

- The different global ranking organizations of universities have made weight categories on teaching, research, citations, international outlook and industry income. While there are lots of discussions and critiques about the lower rank of Dhaka University, the increased number of research publications, visibility of these publications and citations will help to gain weight on research score.

- As per SCImago journal and country rank, we can see that there are 13 journals listed from Bangladesh in the Scopus and none of these journals are from Dhaka University. DUJPS can take the lead to work on how to join the Scopus platform. DUJPS was listed earlier in the Scopus and failed to maintain the standard and features set by the Scopus. Perhaps, DU authority can take a pilot project and select 2 or three journals to be listed in the Scopus.

- Dhaka University library can update the DU Journals' site by adding the remaining titles of the DU journals. Giving all the bibliographic information of the scientific articles published by the DU journals can help the international community to know what has been published by DU researchers. Perhaps, uploading the DU journal and article information in the portal would help the community to get all the information in easy and convenient way.

Finally, this paper has number of limitations as well.

- We are not sure about how many journals are left for this project as we do not have any primary data. For example, we missed adding journal information of 'ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় পত্রিকা'' in this study. We did not get information of this journal from the departments, institutes, faculties, research centers and libraries. Later, we came to know that this journal is published centrally by Dhaka University not from any departments, institutes, centers and faculties. Likewise a faculty can publish papers in other Bangladeshi journals like Asiatic Society or abroad like Indian/ Malaysian journals which are neither the DU journals nor listed in the Scopus.

- Considering the coverage and research areas of the current project, the project period was short. The recent tri-semester system has even made this difficult for the project members to complete the project in time.

- Covering some of the limitations, a follow-up project can be conducted to get more insights from the scientific publication of Dhaka University.

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A Review of Lakatos's Rational Progress Theory on Rationality of Science

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Abstract: *The rationality of science is debated by contemporary and recent philosophers, and the debate turned vibrant in Popper, Kuhn and Feyerabend. Lakatos's rational progress theory adopts the best parts of Pooper's hypo-deductive method and Kuhn's revolutionary approaches to provide a comprehensive framework of justification of science. By designing negative and positive heuristics for scientific rationality, he refutes Humean scepticism that proven knowledge is an untenable ideal. The paper objects "anything goes" principle concerning scientific progress and argues that Lakatos's framework is a better approach to scientific research and progress, and demonstrates the justification of scientific theories if triangulation, internal justification, and external verification are considered integral parts of scientific rationality.*

The rationality of science, progress and methodological debate involving scientific knowledge are crucial problems in the philosophy of science. In this regard, various approaches have been proposed at different times. For example, induction is considered a valid scientific method and provides rational grounds for believing scientific theories. The debate has evolved throughout history. In this paper, presenting a historical introduction, I critically examine and argue for Lakatos's rationality of science and its progress with additional conditions, such as "triangulation" (Babbie, 2020)[**], to justify sciences.

Historical Introduction of the Rationality of Science Debate

In *The Problem of Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell (1998) reduced the rationality of science to custom and habit, as did Hume (1987) in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* in the modern period. Later, the logical positivists attempted to design a demarcation criterion named *verifiability* by proposing a direct verification principle to outlaw metaphysics and similar ideas to affirm the rationality of science. Later, an indirect verification principle was proposed by Ayer (1946), considering the limitations of applying a direct verification principle. In this context, Karl Popper (1972) introduced an alternative proposal/principle: fallibility.

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[**] A useful method applied in social sciences similar to rationality demonstrated on agreement among scientists.

In contrast, Thomas Kuhn (1970) added a different principle- social justification for the rationality of science. Popper's logic of scientific discovery and Kuhn's psychology of research theory draw much more attention to the methodological debate on scientific rationality than logical positivists. Imre Lakatos (1965) tried to resolve scientific rationality issues by elucidating Kuhn and Popper's crucial arguments and extending the meaning of scientific progress further in detail to understand them (Kuhn and Popper). For him, both Popper and Kuhn have made substantial progress in the philosophy of science to save sciences from sceptics. However, some limitations remain in their understanding and methodology of the scientific research programs to be illuminated. Lakatos was reluctant to admit Kuhn's theory of scientific rationality. Lakatos argued as it seems that Kuhn interpreted scientific rationality as a type of religious conversion that depends on the approval of the scientific communities. Nevertheless, in Popper and Kuhn's arguments, he has found some crucial features of scientific research programs dedicated to demonstrating the rationality of science.

Presenting a critical discussion of Popper and Kuhn, Lakatos tells us about the negative and positive heuristics for scientific progress and justification. Paul Feyerabend (1975) also investigated Lakatos's scientific research program's methodology and proposed counter-induction for the methodological solution, and *anything goes* as principles of scientific rationality. Adopting a critical approach to the philosophical investigation of sciences, Lakatos attempted to demonstrate justification for believing scientific theories as *rational per excellence* (Newton-Smith, 2002). The question is: whether Lakatos's theory of justification of science can resolve the rationality debate[***]. In this following section, I examined Lakatos's arguments and argued that his critical discussion illuminated the problem of justification of science and scientific theories. Although the puzzle is unresolved, Lakatos has made the royal road of science further stronger and more precise through his powerful arguments and by defeating sceptical arguments against the progress of sciences.

According to Lakatos, there is a tendency among some philosophers that evidence cannot prove a theory but disprove it. Lakatos labelled this type of approach as dogmatic falsificationism. According to falsificationism, a scientist invents an idea and discovers its rationality by testing the hypothesis. In this process, empirical evidence plays a vital role. Admitting the role of empirical evidence, Lakatos has placed himself in a position analogous to externalism[****]. However, Lakatos rejects dogmatic falsificationism for the rationality of science because this

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[***] Larry Laudan in his book Progress and Its Problems-Towards a Theory of Scientific Growth, published in 1977 has demonstrated different meanings of rationality concerning acceptance of science and progress. However, I will not here discuss those issues to develop my paper.

[****] Externalism as a set of theories of justification generally argue that without external impute, for example, data gathered from the experience of external world nothing can be justified.

method of justification "rests on two false assumptions and to a narrow criterion of demarcation between science and non-science (Lakatos,1970, p.97)." For Lakatos, psychology testifies against the first and logic against the second assumption. And methodological judgement testifies against the demarcation criterion (ibid, p. 98). Lakatos further critically examined Popper's methodological falsificationism as he highlighted its merits and demerits in detail. For him, methodological falsificationism has a sophisticated version, which is different from naïve falsificationism. These two methods differ in acceptance rules and elimination of scientific theories. For Lakatos, if a theory is experimentally falsifiable, then the theory is scientific and acceptable.

Lakatos, like Popper, argued that a theory is acceptable or scientific if it has "corroborated excess empirical content over its predecessors (ibid, p.116)." That is, it leads to the discovery of novel facts. Lakatos's this type of argument has resemblances with probabilism. According to Lakatos, sophisticated methodological falsificationists (SMF) offer a new standard of honesty. The SMF admit what is proven and what is unproven. Neojustificationists, conversely, accord with the demand that probability based on empirical evidence can be the determinant of the justification of a hypothesis. The naïve falsificationists demand to test for falsifiable hypotheses and reject the unfalsifiable and falsified hypotheses. The SMF suggests looking at different perspectives to put forward new theories with anticipated novel facts and rejects theories that a more powerful one has suppressed. The SMF draws from different approaches, such as empiricism, Kantian activism, and the conventionalism methodology. Lakatos adds this to Popper's idea of excess corroboration (Lakatos, 1970, pp.122-123).

If learning is a prerequisite for justification, meaning meeting requirements to be considered scientific knowledge, then the inductivist's demand for evidence confirming the hypothesis is reasonable. In this regard, from a refuted theory, one learns nothing, according to Lakatos. For dogmatic falsificationists, learning about a theory is about whether it is refuted or not; about confirmed theory, one does not learn anything, about refuted theory, one learns that it is disproved. For Lakatos, the SMF claim learning about a theory means learning anticipated novel facts. Lakatos advocated for the only relevant evidence that is evidence anticipated by the theory, i.e., "*empiricalness (or scientific character) and theoretical progress are inseparably connected* (Lakatos, 1970, p.123)."

Lakatos was interested in developing the methodology of scientific discovery (also the method of justification of metaphysics); our learning program can be continued, and justification of scientific theories and hypotheses can be obtained. In some respect, he was convinced by Popper's theory of conjectures and refutations and utilized some crucial aspects of Kuhn's philosophy of science. Thus, he attempted to devise methodological rules (negative and positive heuristics), drawing and blending Popper's best parts and Kuhn's methodological innovation. Lakatos's rules tell us

what path to avoid in research, and some rules tell us what way to pursue. The first part is called negative heuristics, and the second is named positive. For Lakatos, the negative heuristics "specify the 'hardcore' of the program, which is 'irrefutable' by methodological decisions of its protagonists (Lakatos, 1970, p.135)."

On the other hand, "the positive heuristics consists of a partially articulated set of suggestions or hints on how to change the 'refutable variants' of the research program, how to modify, sophisticate, the refutable protective belt (Lakatos, 1970, p.135)." For Lakatos, "the positive heuristics is thus in general, more flexible than negative heuristics (Lakatos, 1970, p.137)." For Lakatos, in a research program, the creative shift in positive heuristics may save it from degenerating shift and push forward innovation research. According to Lakatos, every scientific research program has a hardcore. The negative heuristics tell us to avoid employing *modus tollen* (the logical rule p implies q, not q, therefore p.). Instead, we must employ our intellectual capacity to articulate auxiliary hypotheses that can form a *protective belt* around this hardcore. Then the modus tollen will be employed against this auxiliary hypothesis to defend the hardcore. The protective belt may get adjusted, readjusted, or wholly replaced in defence of hardcore. These negative heuristics of Lakatos, to some extent, rationalize but are not likely classical conventionalists, for example, Poincare, by not authorizing "'refutations' to transmit falsity to the hardcore as long as corroborated empirical content of the protecting belt of auxiliary hypothesis increases (Lakatos, 1970, p.134)." Such a decision is based on *logical and empirical* reasons instead of the *aesthetic* ground advocated by Duhem (Lakatos, 1970, p.134).

The approach to scientific research, for example, positive heuristics, rescues the scientists from the ocean of anomalies that confuse them to arrive at conclusions. And then, the scientist sets a program that lists a chain of ever-most complicated models (A model is a set of initial conditions bound to be replaceable during the further development of the program), simulating reality. In this process, the scientist disregards actual counterexamples, i.e., data available to refute the theory and pays attention to building his models considering instructions provided in the research program's positive part. Here Lakatos referred to how Newton first developed his planetary system with a fixed point like the sun and one point-like planet. However, Newton's third law became a counterexample and was replaced by any observation or anomalies but by a theoretical difficulty in developing the research program. Moreover, Newton continued to develop more research programs amending the initial model after facing mathematical challenges, and Newtonian puzzles were foreseeable when the first model was developed. According to Lakatos, this example of the Newtonian model shows that 'refutation' is irrelevant in any specific research program's variant (Lakatos, 1970, p.136).

One of Lakatos's aims of the scientific research program is to refute Kuhn's theory of anomalies in scientific revolutions. As Kuhn argued, for Lakatos, not

the anomalies but the research program's positive heuristics determine which problems the scientist chooses to address. The anomalies are solved aside from assuming that they will turn into corroboration. When the positive heuristics run out of steam and anomalies work in degenerating phase, the scientist pays more attention to anomalies.

Lakatos furthermore argued that he sees the rationality of science as Popper has persuaded this. However, he was partially in debt to Lee Roy and Popper for borrowing from their conventionalism, and he thought that ignoring the counterexample was not irrational. He also agreed with Popper that it is good, progressive normal science and imperfect generating normal science if we keep the determination to eliminate some research programs under objectively defined conditions (Lakatos, 1970, p.177).

One of the main reasons for approaching deductivism is the failure of induction and accumulation. However, is it possible to measure theories without induction based on excess empirical content? There are arguments that Kuhn and Lakatos have a similar attitude towards scientific progress as both had rigid paradigm adherence mentalities to suppress alternatives (Walker, 2010, p.436). I think this is not a fault if anyone employs stringent criteria to justify science. Researchers spend an enormous time developing their hypotheses and doing pilot studies to test them. All possible hypotheses are tested, employing reason and experience. Such an approach to scientific research helps to economize the scientific research program.

Besides differences, they have similarities, while Lakatos notes, "Where Kuhn sees paradigms, I also see rational research programs." Walker further noted that

> "Kuhn devotes relatively little attention to measuring a paradigm's progress in a rational manner. Lakatos, however, introduces ways of evaluating a research program's progressive nature, and this remains one of his most important contributions. Though difficult to sort out, his discussions of positive heuristics and progressive problem shifts help fill a large void left by Kuhn's limited depiction of progress in normal science (Walker, 2010, p.437)."

I agree with Walker that Lakatos has contributed to fulfilling the gaps left by Kuhn and Popper. However, Tversky and Kahneman (1974, see also in Goldman, 2017, p. 24) are against heuristics theory, which needs further justification. They have termed heuristics a "quick and dirty" method of forming a belief that is error-prone and biased towards error. Camille and Jenkins, in this regard, contended that following heuristics, "[i]n fact, most of our decisions are made subconsciously and are biased by our emotions, intuitions, and our cognitive constraints and limitations (2017, p.68)." These researchers draw examples from social sciences, a developing branch of science, and talk about humans' political and economic behaviour. On the other hand, Lakatos did not specify whether his negative and

positive heuristics are confined to physical sciences, excluding social sciences. Rather, Lakatos has seen a possibility of success if his methodological framework is employed in social sciences. For example, he notes (See also in Court,1999, p.215) that his methodological recommendation

> is not about a mere technical point in epistemology. It concerns our central intellectual values and has implications not only for theoretical physics but for the underdeveloped social sciences and even more for moral and political philosophy. If even in science, there is no way of judging a theory, but by assessing the number, faith and vocal energy of its supporters, then this must be even more so in the social sciences: truth lies in power. (Lakatos, 1965, p. 93).

A defence for Lakatos can be found in Court (1999[*****]). For Court (1999, p.226), methodological concepts such as "hardcore", "protective belt", "progressive problem shift", and "empirically progressive series of theories" employed by Lakatos help interpret education research. Therefore, criticisms against Lakatos's scientific research program method can be refuted. Court also assures us that Lakatos's theory of heuristics will not result in too many theories' uncritical proliferation.

Feyerabend (1975[******]) also examined Lakatos' method and methodology of the scientific program and described its usefulness in defeating scepticism. For Feyerabend, the methodology of the scientific program has some faults. Nevertheless, it is much more consistent than Kuhn's and has explanatory power to answer scepticism. Lakatos outlined what he meant by heuristics, hardcore, and protective belt and their application in scientific investigation and justification. These are useful for progress in sciences and scientific methodology.

The epistemic norm to govern the growth of scientific knowledge formulated by Lakatos liberates us from Popper's strict fallibilism. Lakatos did not accord with Popper that a piece of scientific knowledge can be discarded if a researcher experiences a negative instance. He favoured a methodological approach to scientific investigation and excess corroboration for selecting from competing theories instead of holding Kuhnian group rationality, although researcher communities practice it. Whether Kuhn has recommended group rationality without measuring corroboration or group rationality is a further step of justification based on the measurement of corroboration. Theory X may have more remarkable corroboration than Y. But this may happen for some other errors committed in research. The scientific community may detect this. This is a kind of triangulation or bird's

[*****] Lakatos Revisited Author(s): DEBORAH COURT Source: *The Journal of Educational Thought (JET)* / Revue de la Pensée Educative, December 1999, Vol. 33, No. 3 (December 1999), pp. 209-229

[******]   Feyerabend, Paul.(1975). Imre Lakatos, *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 1-18.

eye view selecting among competing sciences theories. Kuhn did not undermine the logic of discovery by adding another criterion, "measuring rationality by the scientific community". This external criterion of justification has explanatory power to justify believing scientific statements and theories. It is helpful to meet the criterion of reliabilism. Knowing and justifying are complex processes that require fulfilling various criteria. The brute possibility of "anything goes" makes us aware and leads us to examine our beliefs, test our cognitive process, reflect on them, and find testing methods for these beliefs. The model advanced by Lakatos serves the best towards the progress and rationality of science.

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Issues and Agendas of Infertility Studies in Bangladesh

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Abstract*: In Bangladesh, people and its culture immensely focus on the importance of fertility and reproduction. Motherhood thus became a purified identity in both cultural and mystical ways. As a result, any factor hindering fertility is considered deviant and ignored in all aspects. Hence, our studies mainly triggered the notion, significances and hinders to maternal and child health, birth practices, fertility and reproduction etc. Therefore, the socio-economic and psychological strains of infertile people remain insignificant in our studies. In addition, infertility has been considered a neglected and stigmatized issue due to our overpopulation and socio-cultural perceptions of it. Though the number of infertile people is increasing in Bangladesh still there is a dearth of research on the social aspects and consequences of infertility in the country. Infertility has been considered as a stigmatized, gendered, psycho-social turmoil and sensitive agenda to explore, where the stakeholders consciously ignore the biological and psycho-social solutions to it and exploit the infertile. This piece of paper focuses on the nature of studies conducted on infertility issues in Bangladesh, which emphasize the significance of infertility studies in anthropology and other branches of social sciences. This study also categorizes the issues, perspectives and agenda of infertility studies here in Bangladesh. In doing so, the paper also outlines the future scopes and corridors for infertility studies in Bangladesh.*

Keywords: *fertility, infertility, gender, stigma, culture, health, anthropological studies*

Introduction

The social significance of fertility and reproduction in Bangladesh demonstrates the burdens of infertile people. The sociocultural attitudes and beliefs support fertility and normalize conception as god's will, and any impediment to fertility is regarded as disastrous (Maloney, Aziz & Profulla 1980; Blanchet, 1984; Islam, 1985; Rashid, 2007). However, the challenges associated with spontaneous pregnancy are a hidden, unaddressed agenda that should not be made public, in the cultural context of Bangladesh. Due to these socio-cultural challenges, infertility is one of the most neglected issues to be discussed or addressed. Consequently, the infertile people here in Bangladesh go through a different journey with voids, stigma, and an uneven path throughout their lives without psychosocial support. In the late 1970s and early 80s, some social researchers conducted research on health issues in rural Bangladesh with special attention to maternal health and birth practices (Ellickson, 1972; Maloney, Aziz, & Profulla, 1980; Blanchet, 1984; Islam, 1985). However,

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issues like abortions, sterility, sub-infertile life and reproductive failure remain behind the shadow of fertility concerns, maternal health, and the overall medical systems of rural Bangladesh. As a south Asian developing country, Bangladesh is working hard to achieve sustainable development goals like controlling its birth rate, reducing child mortality, and improving its maternal health, where the human right to fertility and childbirth has remained socio-politically ignored and culturally stigmatized. In consequence, the researches confined with a minimum attention to the infertile people, though the problems and suffering of infertility is not lesser than any other health sufferings that targets gender inequality and adverse effects of patriarchy here in Bangladesh.

So, birth practices, fertility, and maternal health concerns have been the mainstream research concepts in Bangladesh since 1980; yet, situations like infertility have always been whispered covertly and remained a peripheral topic in the discourse of reproductive health agendas. This paper emphasizes those outskirts and focuses on infertility research undertaken in Bangladesh in recent years.

Methodology

This qualitative research is based on secondary sources, where a systematic investigation has been carried out. The paper evaluated and categorized the prime trends in the research related to infertility in Bangladesh. Most of the qualitative anthropological studies on maternal health and infertility have been taken seriously. Moreover, the research tried to understand the current knowledge and compare the between the Western and other South Asian countries experience of infertility. As studying infertility as a social agenda is still a growing issue, the researcher has selected research books, peer-reviewed articles, and online sources on maternal health, reproductive health, and motherhood from the context of Bangladesh published within the last forty years. As the purpose of the study is to focus and categorize the issues and agendas of infertility studies in Bangladesh, the reorientation of secondary sources and discussion would encourage and engage the other researchers on the issues alike. The following part of the article has been divided into four sections, which have played vital roles in discussing the infertility situation in Bangladesh. However, as an overpopulated, developing country with limited resources, we still lack research on infertility, which contributes to the further stigmatization and suffering of the infertile and hinders the overall development of the country. The ensuing part of this paper will discuss the ideas and concerns the researchers have been paying attention to in trying to understand the infertility situation in a third-world, developing, overpopulated, patriarchal, South Asian, Muslim country.

Social identification of infertility

The western biomedical definitions of infertility lack the conception and identification of developing country's women's perception of being infertile (Gerrits, 1997). The society and culture of Bangladesh affect the understanding

of infertility in varied ways. As a stigmatized chamber in reproductive health issues, infertility was always deemed a doomed agenda to explore in the context of an overpopulated third-world country, Bangladesh. However, this situation is quite familiar to other south Asian countries. Like Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and many other countries in South Asia, they struggle with their social expectations of having more children, especially sons. Infertility in South Asian communities is extremely observable and is not considered merely a couple-centered concern. Among the South Asian communities' childless couples, especially the women are subjected to social scrutiny (Culley et al., 2004). Here, the concept of infertility is defined socially rather than biologically. Many studies showed that infertility is detected and scrutinized as the socio-cultural identification to it. Any difficulty to conceive and carry a child to deliver or failing to reproduce a son is regarded as childless infertile category in countries like Bangladesh (Islam, 1985; Begum, 2015). Thus, the social recognition of infertility has improved the overall scenario of infertility studies in developing countries like Bangladesh. Moreover, the significance of having children enhanced and triggered the infertility studies too.

Children are considered assets in crisis during old age; thus, having more children and sons are expected to secure the well-being of aging parents. As a result, people who are pro-natal actively encourage married couples to reproduce. Any glitch with pregnancy is considered as infertile phase by the family members and society of the couples. Thus, in experience the reasoning of childless is more often detected by the society nor the couple or doctor (Begum, 2015). Thus, the causes of ill health and the types of treatment people believe in and seek are culturally variable (Helman, 2000). Accordingly, alternative understandings of infertility exist in many societies, and it may be seen as a punishment from God for wrongdoing in this or a previous life, the result of bad luck, evil spirits, or a curse (Blanchet, 1984; Islam, 1985; Nahar et al., 2000; Begum, 2015; Balen & Inhorn, 2002). Thus, the causes and social recognition of infertility depend on the cultural understanding of fertility in a certain community.

However, in rural Bangladesh, the folk healers do not suggest any clinical examination to identify infertile bodies. Some studies show that local people recognize types of infertility such as *banja* and *utlura* and compare infertility with the sterility of women's reproductive bodies. Moreover, the preference for having a male child encompasses the idea of infertility with the concept of *utkura*, where the women reproduce only daughters or one child (Islam, 1985). Additionally, researchers observed that the son is the indicator of fertility and the life of a man is made permanent through the agency of his son, which makes the son a very important requirement according to the South Asian belief systems practiced (Bharadwaj, 2003). Like other south Asian communities, the social recognition of infertility is more visible in the context of Bangladesh. Thus, the meaning and definition of infertility are culturally constructed and cannot be judged by the

demographic data or clinical identification in Bangladesh. As a matter of fact, the social expectations and scrutiny have obviously increased the stigma among the community, and thus the fear and stress of infertile couples have never met a solution.

Infertility and its sufferings

Most of the social research on infertility is connected with its sociocultural sufferings around the world (Balen & Inhorn, 2002; Bharadraj, 2003; Inhorn, 2003; Ireland, 1993; Morell, 1994; Nahar, 2012b; Rowland, 1992; Ussher, 1989; Ulrich & Weatherall, 2000). Many of the studies show that the stigmatization of infertility provokes other social factors to deal with the overall scenario of infertile people, which involves socio-psychological and economic suffering. As mentioned earlier, there is still a dearth of research on infertility studies in Bangladesh, but most studies focus on the traumatic socio-psychological and economic sufferings of the infertile couple, especially the infertile women. Both physicians and social scientists have observed the sufferings of the infertile women here in Bangladesh. As a patriarchal community with a predominating Muslim population, the suffering of women with involuntary childlessness is devastating (Nahar et al., 2000; Habib, 2020). However, the picture of their counterpart is hidden by the egoistic nature of men, as observed. Therefore, the sufferings are not lesser for the men who face infertility in Bangladesh, and here, the infertile people as a couple or individual struggle with their psychosocial situation by their own means (Habib, 2020).

Conversely, both rural and urban infertile people of Bangladesh undergo the same trauma and neglect. However, the educational background, social position, and way of life in certain cultures offer people the opportunity to confront their experience with infertility differently (Nahar, 2007; Nahar & Annekmiek, 2011). The majority of infertile people is stigmatized and struggle secretly with their reproductive failures, but the constant social scrutiny weakens their self-esteem, so they exclude themselves from social gatherings. Marital disruption, divorce, and second marriages desiring a natural pregnancy are common social impacts of infertile life. In her study, Nahar (2007) stated that the social-economic consequences of infertility exhibit emotional stress among infertile women. They have investigated and found that the urban childless respondents did not experience marital violence like their rural counterparts, but they had a fear of abandonment. She also explained that men are not at all socially blamed for infertility; sometimes infertility in men was attributed to psychosexual and physiological disorders. However, women pay the greatest burden due to infertile though the men also go through social stigmatization and forced to remarriage to normalize family. In Bangladeshi society childless marriage holds a dead relation and cannot be successful as a family. Except for a few studies (Unisa, 1999), most of the studies around the world provide evidence of marital disruption. Similarly, Lutfun, Jeronen and Van's (1997) study shows that here the rural childless women not only fear the social abandonment but also distress of getting divorced easily in

the context of Bangladesh, where Muslim law and society uphold the position and rights of a husband to divorce wife more easily (Nahar, 2007). Apart from the social sufferings discussed above, a few studies have also found out the economic travails and psychological traumas of infertility in Bangladesh. Childlessness among rural and urban couples brings poverty. The social stigmatization of infertility restricts the women to go out and earn (Nahar, 2007; Habib, 2020). In Bangladesh where children are considered as assets and good source of income for poor parents, many poor infertile couples lacks their scope of earning by all means. Besides, there is no social welfare system infertile people go through tremendous financial crisis during old age. The economic impact of infertility in rural Bangladesh is devastating. Infertile rural poor are discouraged to have micro-credit by NGOs. Moreover, the long-term spiritual, folk, or biomedical treatments of infertility offered financially cost them a lot. Nahar (2012b) investigated material and non-material poverty due to infertility among the rural infertile people in Bangladesh, as the infertile women experience a lack of mothering that devalues them in society. A rigorous study on infertile women's mental health exhibits that anxiety, dissatisfaction, and depression are more strongly found among the infertile women compared to the fertile women of Bangladesh. It also represents that the anxieties due to physical irregularities for not having a pregnancy within expected time even prolong the physiological problems of infertility among the infertile couple (Saha, Saifuddin, Zaman & Nisha 2015).

In brief, Bangladeshi infertile people are coping life with strong stigma, feelings of guilt, role failure, loss of self-esteem, marital abandonment, social isolation and privation, where women are thrown as vulnerable victims. Yet, class and social exposure to the broader world may affect their experiences, coping strategies, and agency (Nahar, 2012b; Habib, 2020). Both rural and urban infertile people experience psychosocial and economic crises to deal with their infertility, though they accomplish their journeys with the hope of overcoming their psychosocial sufferings.

Womanhood with infertility

Infertility studies around the world exhibits infertility as a feminine issue to be addressed as the cultural orientation to the causes of infertility has been explained for years. However, the medical identification of infertility does not depend only on the female reproductive body; thus, the patriarchal context of the culture has let the society identify women with infertility and accuse them without any biomedical inspection. In Bangladesh, women are expected to be mothers, and motherhood is viewed as normative. Thus, the cultural expectation to reproduce children is a natural and inevitable part of women's lives, and childlessness is deviant. In fact, studies have observed that motherhood is believed to provide identity and status for western women, too (Rowland, 1992; Morell, 1994; Ussher, 1989; Ulrich & Weatherall, 2000; Ireland, 1993).

Infertility studies in Bangladesh showed that women are not only accused of childless marriage but also blame themselves, as if infertility is a fault and an inadequacy of the feminine body. Thus, typically, they tolerate indecencies from their husbands or in-laws and blame themselves constantly. Moreover, patriarchal society usually does not let go of this subordination, and perpetually impugning infertile women does not reach an end (Blanchet, 1984; Islam, 1985; Kotalova, 1993; Nahar, 2007; Habib, 2020). In most cases, as Nahar (2007), Kotalova (1993), and Blanchet (1984) have explained, motherhood is the only option for Bangladeshi women, though Sultana (2013) holds a different position for urban Bangladeshi women. In her study, Sultana explores the fact that urban childless women in Bangladesh have an eagerness to be mothers and experience motherhood, but they do not act like victims of their infertile status; rather, these women express their motherly love and care by other means. According to Sultana, these practices of motherly love and care are produced through performativity, reiteration, and citation of the existing norms of motherhood. She also states that childless women can negotiate with their childless timespan and hold themselves not as victims of the situation but as individuals who build up agency by their own means. However, most of the studies in developing countries show that fertility is so central to women's identities that people with fertility problems may resist labeling themselves infertile (Barden-O'Fallon, 2005).

Here, patriarchy shapes the overall conception, understanding, and treatment of infertility. Thus, in Bangladesh, remarriage of the male is considered a treatment, and causes of infertility are given to women (Nahar et al., 2000). Like Egyptian women, many Bangladeshi women also take the burden of infertility upon themselves, though they know the cause is with their husbands (Inhorn, 2003; Habib, 2020). It has been observed that, though both men and women experience infertility with stigma, they respond to their situation differently. Bangladeshi men are not less stigmatized, and they also play a covert role in their experience of infertility. As a result, many times the wives feel ignored by this covert response of their husbands to experiencing infertility (Habib, 2020). Thus, womanhood with infertility suffers in a further catastrophic way in patriarchal Bangladesh.

Infertile people as marginal victims

Bangladesh as a pro-natal community seems to not deal with infertility treatment as an imperative because the country is still fighting to improve the wellbeing of maternal and fetal health, which is also common for other South Asian cultures that are strong pro-natalists (Culley et al., 2004). Moreover, the overpopulation of the country with limited resources has tumbled downed the socio-cultural consequences of infertility effectively. Thus, the infertile people are being addressed as marginal victims, but they continue to suffer their miserable lives with limited hope.

As mentioned earlier, infertility is established as a social suffering in Bangladesh, and accordingly, it has a social solution. The victims of infertility are suffering

physically, emotionally, and financially. As the state policy does not accommodate the expensive biomedical solution of infertility with subsidy, these infertile people, especially the women feel helpless and out of water (Patel, Sharma, Kumar & Binu, 2018; Nahar et al., 2000; Habib, 2020). The broader picture of our reproductive health services shows negligence towards infertility treatment. However, the victims of infertility seek folk treatments and religious advice from elderly and indigenous experts (Maloney, 1980; Islam, 1985; Begum, 2015). Apart from folk treatments, biomedical solutions are also available in urban Bangladesh. Many infertile people seek biomedical consultation (Sultana, 2013; Habib, 2010), but only a few could afford the expenses, and when it requires lengthy course of treatments, it turns difficult for many both psycho-socially and financially (Habib, 2020). However, Culley and others (2004) have a different view about the infertility treatment in Bangladeshi Muslims. They stated "While as we shall see, most communities felt that people would seek medical help for infertility, there was also a degree of suspicion about infertility treatment, especially in the Bangladeshi Muslim Community (Culley et al., 2004:18-19)" On the other hand, studies have shown that infertile women in Bangladesh are largely ignored by not only their family members and society but also the policy makers, who do not acknowledge the rising concerns of infertility and treat the infertile as if they are invisible (Nahar, 2012a). Similarly, Patel and others (2018) have clearly mentioned how infertile men and women in developing countries face low social security and family acceptance. They also mentioned that subfertile individuals were socially perceived as deprived, blemished, incomplete, and sexually incompetent. The situation for infertile men and women in societies like Bangladesh is socially harsh. The cultural glorification of motherhood and fertility has revealed the trauma of unwanted childlessness. As a result, many of these people suffer as victims of their fate. However, Sultana (2013) has displayed that not all women do not end up as victim of their infertile state, as they show agency evidently with innovative ways, such as with motherly gesture and technology. But, still the technological solution of infertile people cannot be an affordable choice for the majority of the developing countries, like Bangladesh.

Conclusion

As infertility is socially defined and its consequences are predominantly socio-cultural in Bangladesh, social researchers essentially approach this issue with greater empathy. The study of Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) observes that 12.7 percent married women in Bangladesh are infertile (Roy, Halder & Singh, 2021), which is alarming in a pronatal society like, Bangladesh.   The country's current fertility rate is 1.954 births per woman in 2022, a 1.26% decrease from 2021(Macrotrends, 2022). Several researchers (Nahar, 2012a; Sultana, 2013; Siddiqua et al., 2019; Habib, 2020) have warned that the cases of infertility are rising in Bangladesh, so more research is required to unfold the untold stories of the people struggling with infertility. In brief, the paper firstly, discussed how infertility

was defined in the studies from the cultural context of Bangladesh. Secondly, an elaborated discursion on the multi-faced sufferings of infertility as disclosed by the researchers has been summarized. The last part of the paper indicated how infertility studies in Bangladesh are connected with womanhood within patriarchy. Finally, the paper observes how the infertile couples are represented as the victims and thrown to the gaze to explore the corridors to a solution that fit them. The studies on infertility have drawn attention to gendered infertility and the suffering and stigma of infertility among the people of Bangladesh. Still, many sensitive issues concerning fatherhood, the social consequences of male infertility, and the methods of infertility treatments are burning questions for future research. The social researchers need to be more responsive on the social aspects of reproductive hinders to encourage the policy makers, so that the state could work more on health rights of the infertile people and social awareness towards infertility rise.

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An analysis of suicide during the Covid 19 Pandemic in the Jhenaidah district

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Abstract: *On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that the Covid 19 epidemic had reached pandemic proportions. To lessen the likelihood that the virus would spread throughout their countries, most nations, including Bangladesh, resorted to preventative measures that did not involve medical treatment. These measures include social isolation, self-isolation, quarantine, lockdowns, etc. It was assumed that the spread of the Covid 19 epidemic was responsible for the rise in the rate of suicide in Bangladesh, which has been found to be the primary cause of unexpected deaths in Bangladesh. The southwestern district of Jhenaidah in the Khulna division of Bangladesh is the 19th most populous and alongside, a leading region in terms of a high number of suicides committed in the country. Within the context of the pandemic-stricken world, discussions have revolved around Emile Durkheim's concept of anomie and how suicide should be understood as a social rather than an individualistic act. This study found inconsistencies with previous research on a number of factors related to suicide, including the age and education level of the victims, the time of year, and the motivations for their actions. On the other hand, the gender, marital status, employment status, and income level of the victims showed a pattern that was comparable to what it was before the pandemic. The pattern of suicide in the Jhenaidah district is relatively comparable to the findings of the pre-Covid 19 study, and the pandemic has minimal impact on the decision of the people living in this area to commit suicide.*

Keywords: *Suicide, Anomie, Pandemic, Covid 19.*

Introduction

A person is assumed to have committed suicide when they make the conscious decision to take their own life. It is a huge problem that affects public health all around the world. Not only does suicide hurt the individual who takes their own life, but it also affects their family and the larger society. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 8,28,000 people worldwide take their own lives each year, making suicide the fourth leading cause of death (WHO, 2016). Suicide accounts for approximately one-fiftieth of one percent of all deaths that occur worldwide. The vast majority of suicides take place in low- and middle-income

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countries. Bangladesh is a South Asian country with a rapidly expanding economy and a large population. Approximately, more than 10,000 people commit suicide every year (Masherky et al., 2013; WHO, 2014; Begum et al., 2017 & Shahnaz et al, 2017). According to reports from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), there were 10,749 suicides in Bangladesh in 2016. In 2017, there were 10,256 suicide-reported cases, and in 2018, that number increased to 11,000.

Economic loss due to the Covid-19 pandemic, death of relatives or acquaintances from Covid-19, and close interaction with Covid 19 patients were also associated with increased suicide risk according to various reports (Bhuiyan et al., 2021, Mamun, 2021, Bodrud-Doza et al., 2020). Notable is that risk factors related to Covid-19, such as living in a high Covid-19-exposure area, increased suicidality by 1.34 times, whereas respondents stated financial damages due to the Covid-19 pandemic and experiencing relatives or acquaintances died from the Covid-19 increased suicidality by 2.295 and 1.299 times, respectively (Rahman et al., 2021). However, a recurrent home isolation strategy seriously negatively affected an individual's psychological well-being. The frequent lockdown phase during the Covid 19 outbreak has significantly increased the prevalence of mental health issues (Islam et al., 2020). It is understood in various ways depending on the country and location.

Problem Statement

The Khulna Division includes the Jhenaidah District, situated in the southwest of Bangladesh. With a population of over 2,52,000, it is the 19th most populous district in Bangladesh. The district is one of the locations in Bangladesh that has the highest rate of people committing suicide. According to data provided by the WHO, an average of 28 persons take their own lives across the country each and every day, whilst the city of Jhenaidah alone records an average of one death each day (Jahan, 2019). An organization named the Society for Voluntary Activities (SOVA), which has been working in Jhenaidah for more than ten years to prevent suicide, estimated that there were 2,332 suicides in the seven years leading up to 2016. From 2010 to 2016, approximately twenty persons per one hundred thousand residents committed suicide in the district. In addition, throughout the period, there were a total of 17,697 people who attempted suicide. According to sources from the Jhenaidah District Law and Order Council and the civil surgeon office, 2,550 people in this district attempted suicide in 2019.

Although Jhenaidah is a Bangladesh district with a high suicide rate, relatively little is known about the risk factors, and the area has not yet been examined systematically. The limited research has shown that there is an issue with incidence, seasonality, and masculinity (Arendse et al., 2021, Khan et al., 2020). Given these circumstances, determining the elements that put people in this region at risk for suicide and, as a result, contributing to a policy to prevent suicide on a national scale is a pressing and unmet need. This study aims to identify and investigate

the demographic and risk factors contributing to the high suicide rate in this geographic region. In addition, the study investigates the prevalence of suicide across Jhenaidah district's six Upazilas, which are the administrative subunits.

Suicide death rates have been reported to rise during every outbreak, including the Covid-19 pandemic (John et al., 2021). During and after viral epidemics (e.g., 1889–1894 Russian Influenza outbreak (Smith, 1995), 1918 influenza outbreak (Wasserman, 1992), 2003 SARS epidemic (Cheung et al., 2008), etc., an increase in suicide rate has been observed. As an example, during the 2003 and 2004 SARS outbreaks in Hong Kong, for instance, the suicide rate among the elderly skyrocketed and did not return to 2002 levels (Cheung et al., 2008).

Objective of the Study

Several researchers have documented the psychological consequences of repeated lockdowns and incarceration throughout the Covid 19 pandemic (Hossain et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the first study on suicidal ideation, conducted in April 2020 among a national sample, discovered a 5% prevalence (Mamun & Griffiths, 2020a); but the prevalence rate jumped to 6.1% in a second study conducted a few days later (Mamun et al., 2020b). Later, it was noted that the incidence of suicidal ideation rose with time; particularly, a study from April to May 2020 (Tasnim et al., 2020) reported a prevalence of 12.8%, which climbed to 19% in a subsequent research investigation conducted in July 2020 (Rahman et al., 2021). This study attempts to better understand the suicide problem and other connected concerns in Bangladesh during the Covid 19 Pandemic and more specifically in the district of Jhenaidah.

The objectives of this paper are-

- Identify the similarities between suicidal factors in pre and post Covid 19 era in Jhenaidah.

- Understand the differences between suicidal factors in pre and post Covid 19 era in Jhenaidah.

So, the research question of the paper is, whether the Covid 19 pandemic has any effect on the different factors of suicide in the Jhenaidah district of Bangladesh.

Theoretical Relevance

Anomie, as described by Durkheim, has significant parallels to the Covid-19 suicides. Due to the sudden breakout and rapid transmission of the virus, the pandemic has caused widespread confusion, fear, and panic. As panic further results in alienation and further isolation from surroundings, Durkheim's theory can justify the relevancy of this study. According to Emile Durkheim's Anomie theory, a sense of direction or purpose in society might contribute to a rise in suicide rates. In the context of post-COVID, the epidemic has caused broad

social and economic disturbances, leaving many individuals feeling disoriented. Unemployment, solitude, and financial hardship are all variables that may contribute to an upsurge in suicides. The ordinary social conventions and the innate conduct of individuals have been altered by this unexpected crisis condition. Eventually, the breakdown of social norms throughout the pandemic results in profound and rapid shifts in community interactions as well as in the social, political, and economic structures that sustain society. As a result, individuals feel alienated due to society's unanticipated shift toward 'normlessness,' as Durkheim put it, causing them to cease communication with others. Durkheim conceived the notion of 'normlessness' to explain anomie as a social situation characterized by the dissolution or loss of previously shared societal norms and ideals. Through his research, he determined that anomie happens either during or after periods of extreme and quick change in society's social, economic, or political institutions. People who lived through times of anomie generally feel estranged from their society because they no longer see the rules and values that they consider important are no longer mirrored in society itself. This results in a sense of alienation and a lack of genuine connections with people. Besides, it is observed that the absence of a clear direction and the subsequent reemergence of vital principles and standards during the Covid-19 pandemic, to fill the void have contributed to the occurrence of anomalies in anomic suicide which Durkheim explained this situation as a transition period in which the standards and principles prevalent during one period are no longer relevant, but new ones have not yet emerged to replace them (Crossman, 2020). For some, this may imply that their identity and the role they play are no longer acknowledged by society. As a result, anomie can develop a sense of purposelessness which is evident throughout the pandemic, since individuals tend to exhibit severe psychological complications, such as emotional emptiness and loss of hope and purpose.

Moreover, Durkheim's concept of 'Anomie' can be applied to the context of the Covid-19 outbreak since prolonged uncertainty and insecurity throughout the pandemic have exacerbated instability in the social and economic sectors. Considering all of Durkheim's writings on anomie, it is clear that he viewed it as the disintegration of the bonds that bind individuals together to form a functional society, a state of social disorder. The social power of norms and values that would normally offer stability is diminished or absent during times of anomie, making for a tumultuous and unpredictable environment. Societies in which individuals can indulge their desires without consequence are characterized by anomie (Boudon, 2018).

Durkheim methodologically proposed the constitution of social categories of suicide by classifying their causes, rather than their characteristics (Durkheim, 1989). He lists egoistic, anomic, altruistic, and fatalistic suicides. Individualistic suicide would result in societal collapse. People would struggle to comprehend their existence in isolation. A surplus of collective consciousness could lead to

altruistic suicide by focusing the group's attention on the worthless individual. Society commits anemic suicide when it ceases to manage its passions. Less confined by communal emotions and values, the more people would articulate their preferences freely and become frustrated with their inability to fulfill them. Fatalistic suicide occurs when people lose control of their lives due to excessive regulation (Oliveira, 2008; Almeida, 2013).

Among all these aforementioned types of suicide developed by Durkheim, the implications of 'Anomie Suicide' developed by Durkheim can best explain the higher rates of suicides throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Durkheim claimed that everything happens for a reason (Durkheim, 1989). Suicide by association, or 'anomic suicide,' is a phenomenon wherein 'no longer is it clear what is feasible, what is not possible, what is fair, what are reasonable expectations, and what exceeds the means. This form of anomic suicide occurs when people are always competing with one another, have high expectations and high demands of life, and are always troubled by the pain that results from the gap between these two, a condition of anger and repulse, aggravation related to the many opportunities for deceit offered by contemporary life, and repulse stemming from a consciousness of the divisiveness of society (Aron, 1994). Fear of virus transmission, as well as losing or witnessing the deaths of family members, relatives, or friends, have been identified as significant suicide stressors, causing people to be genuinely worried. Meanwhile, as a result of the pandemic, people are expected to experience a variety of psychological effects such as exhaustion, anxiety, panic, traumatic distress, and so on, which might intensify other common mental health issues and eventually lead to suicide ideation and attempts.

The increasing rates of suicide ideation and attempts during the Covid-19 pandemic can be considered significant evidence of Anomie suicide because these are associated with anxiety, frustration, and depression. Furthermore, extreme economic loss, unemployment, and failure to meet academic and other expectations have all fueled the rise in suicidality. Durkheim asserted that Anomic suicide is triggered by a lack of social restraint and occurs when people are stressed and frustrated. Anomic suicide is caused by abrupt and sudden changes in one's life. For example, when someone faces extreme economic loss, the frustration and anxiety they experience may motivate them to commit suicide as a way of escaping. According to Durkheim's definition, anomic suicide 'results from an absence or weakening of norms and expectations, and 'tends to result from a particular ineffectiveness of social norms, from an easing of religious practices, or social instability, a sudden change in standards, as in periods following turmoil, revolutions, severe economic crises, etc.' (Paiva, 2014: 371).

Moreover, several non-therapeutic tactics employed by the government of Bangladesh to counteract the transmission of the virus, such as social distancing, self-isolation, home quarantine, and frequent lockdowns and shut-downs, had

devastating psychological effects on individuals, as they restricted their individual liberty and aspirations. Due to recurrent long-term lockdowns, isolation, and quarantine, individuals have accumulated significant emotional intermediaries such as grief, concern, anxiety, frustration, irritation, anger, self-loathing, emptiness, boredom, and distress, which increase the risk of psychological suffering including severe depression and suicidality along with their chronic disease.
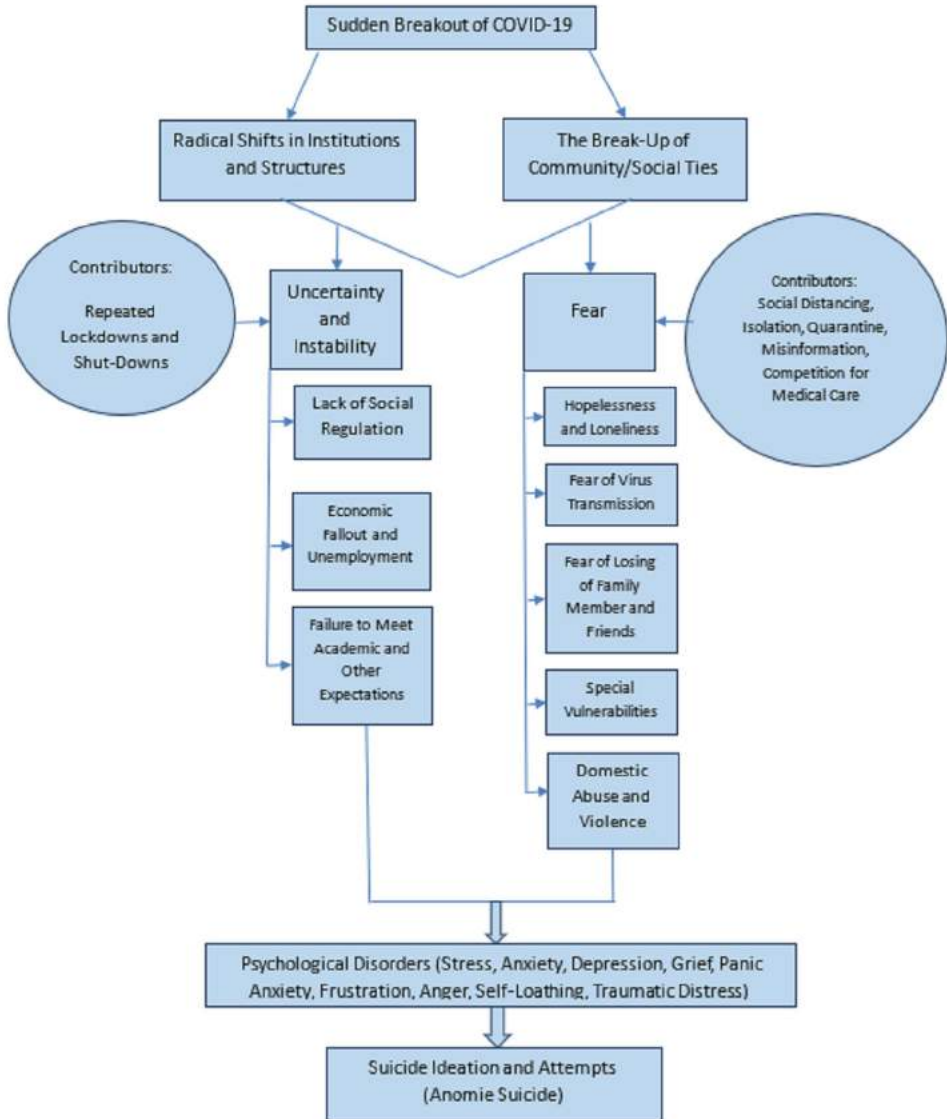
Figure 1: Theoretical relevance of suicide during the Covid 19 Pandemic.

Methodology

The study was carried out in the country's southwest region in the Jhenaidah district. There are six Upazila under this district; Moheshpur, Harinakunda, Kotchadpur, Kaligong, Shoilokupa, and Jhenaidah Sadar. The timeframe of the study was from January 2021 through December 2021. To respond to the study question, the researchers used both primary and secondary data. They received support from the civil surgeon's office and the Jhenaidah police super office. The cases of suicide were documented in the official case files that they had. The researchers looked through those files and contacted the victims' family members and other close relatives to obtain primary data. After that, they surveyed with the use of a semi-structured questionnaire to get a better understanding of the state of suicide during the Covid 19 pandemic. As it is a mixed-method study, in addition to providing a rich and in-depth understanding of the experiences of a particular group of individuals, they investigated the case files to gather further information. During the mentioned period, there were 303 cases of suicide, and of those, 204 family members agreed to engage in this study. The remaining family members refused to participate or could not reach out to them. The research was conducted solely based on reported cases; this is the main drawback of the paper.

The data were collected with a survey using a pre-structured questionnaire. Socio-economic information on the suicide victims was collected from the case files. The data were generated and updated using the most recent version of Microsoft Excel 2019, and SPSS was used for statistical analysis. Data were analyzed and researchers primarily portrayed the descriptive information. The comparative evaluation of the situation of pre and during Covid 19 was conducted by following a bi-variate data analysis tool and, more specifically, using percent analysis. Here, the case of suicide is the dependent variable, whereas other variables like gender, age, season, method of suicide, causes, etc. are independent variables. Since the incident of suicide is quite sensitive, the researchers were concerned about ethical issues. They used pseudonyms and assigned identification numbers to the respondents who participated in the survey. Only the information received from them was analyzed for academic purposes and their actual identities were not exposed at any stage of this research.

Findings

In Bangladesh, the number of suicides is increasing every year. Since it is an offense in Bangladesh (Section 309 of Penal Code Bangladesh); therefore, the media, police, forensic reports, and courts are the main information sources. The total number of suicides was 303 in the Jhenaidah district in the study period and among them, family members of 204 agreed to participate in this study.

Demographics of Participants:

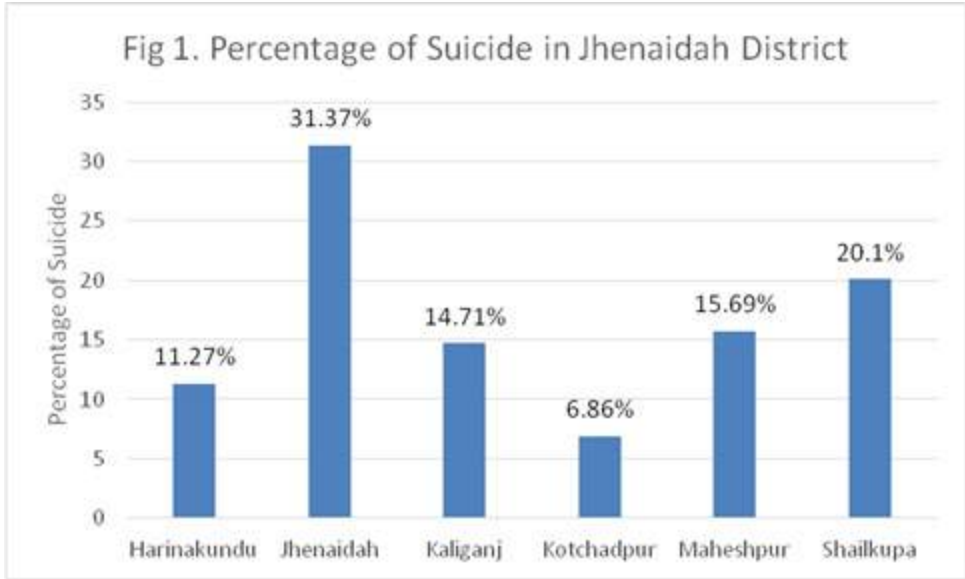- **Suicide distribution of Jhenaidah district**

Figure 1: Percentage of suicides in different Upazila of Jhenaidah district (Field survey, 2021)

To have a better understanding of the nature of suicide in the Jhenaidah district, the researcher conducted interviews with 204 family members, as well as police personnel. The number of individuals who choose to take their own lives is displayed in the above bar graph. According to the percentage of people who committed suicide, which was greater than thirty percent, it is pretty evident to us that Jhenaidah Sadar is the most dominant. In addition to Jhenaidah Sadar, the Upazila of Harinakundu, Kaliganj, Maheshpur, and Shailkupa each have a substantial population of individuals who choose to end their own life by attempting suicide. Kotchadpur, on the other hand, had the smallest proportion overall, coming in at just 6%.

Modes of suicide and previous suicide attempts

Modes	Frequency	Percentage
Hanging	139	68.14
Poisoning	65	31.86
Total	**204**	**100%**

Table 1: Distribution of Modes of suicide (Field survey, 2021)

Among the total suicidal cases, 139 individuals chose to end their lives by hanging themselves as their method of choice, which accounts for 68.14 percent of the total. On the other hand, poisoning was a factor in the deaths of 65 people out of a total of 204 people who committed suicide, which amounts to 31.86 percent of the total. It is possible to conclude from the information that has been presented that the

likelihood of someone killing themselves by hanging themselves is almost twice as likely as the likelihood of someone killing themselves by poisoning themselves.

According to the information, 15.69% of the total number of persons, or 32 people out of 204, have attempted suicide at some point in their lives. On the other hand, 172 people had never attempted suicide before; this is equal to 84.31% of the total number of persons.

- **Gender and Age of the suicide victims**

It has been demonstrated that women are substantially more likely to enthrall suicidal thoughts than men, whereas the risk that men will have suicidal thoughts has been demonstrated to be significantly lower. For females, the percentage was 59%, but it was just 41% for males.
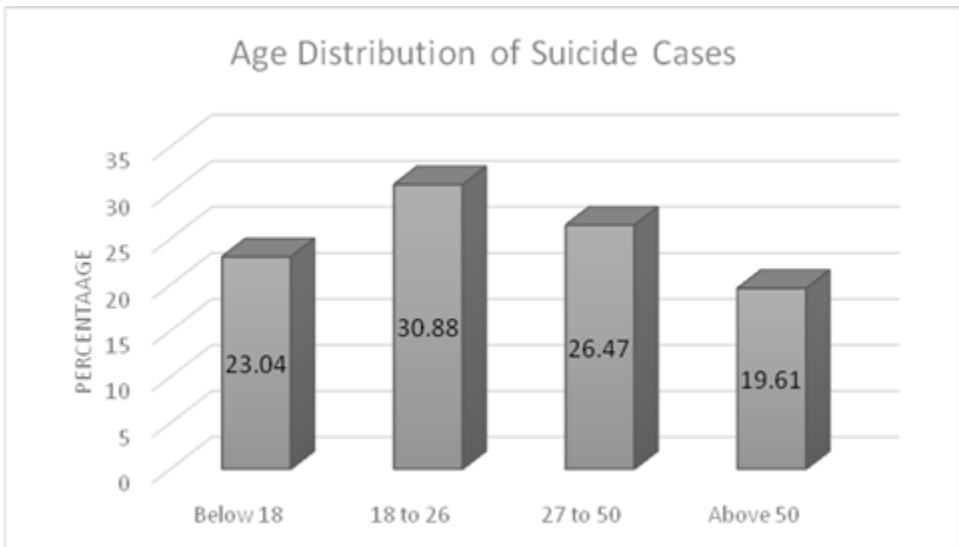
Figure 2: Age Distribution of Suicide Cases (Field survey, 2021).

This bar graph depicts the age distribution of those who have taken their own lives by committing suicide. Individuals between the ages of 18 and 26 have been found to have a higher risk of committing suicide, whilst individuals above the age of 50 have been found to have a reduced likelihood of committing suicide. The rates for other age groups are somewhat similar. Suicide occurs at an alarmingly high incidence among people under the age of 18 and between the ages of 27 and 50; specifically, the rate of suicide is more than 20% and 25% respectively in both of these age categories.

- **Marital status of suicide cases**
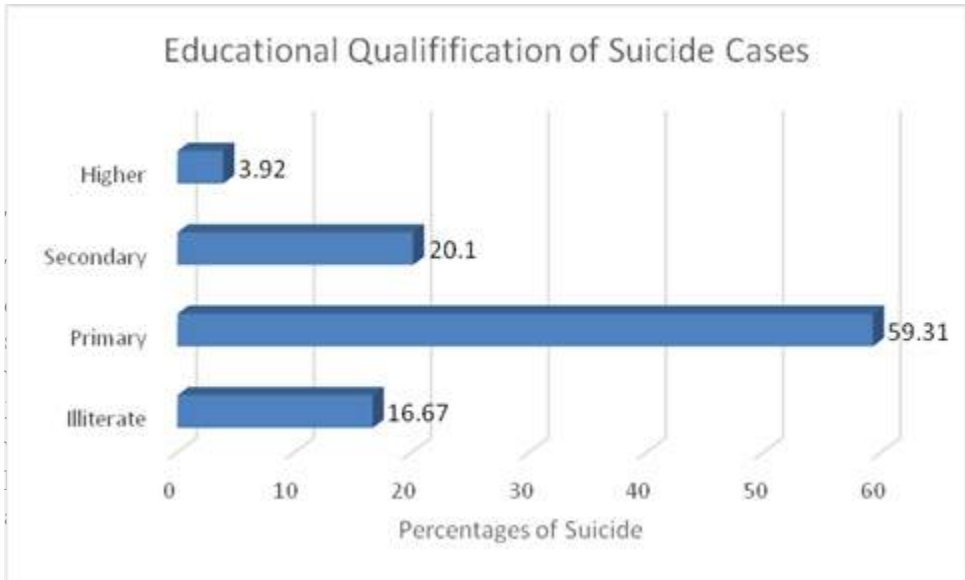
Educational qualification, Employment status, and monthly Income of suicide cases

Figure 3: Educational Qualification of Suicide cases (Field survey, 2021).

The facts indicating the amount of education acquired by people who have attempted suicide are shown in the form of a bar graph. It reveals that people who have not completed their primary education have a higher suicide rate than those who have completed their primary school. On the other hand, the statistics suggest that the risk of suicide is lower among people who have completed a higher degree of education. The ratio of people who commit suicide after completing their secondary education is higher than the ratio of people who commit suicide after completing their higher education. However, this ratio is lower than the ratio of people who commit suicide after completing their primary education. It is essential to keep in mind that although there are several illiterate individuals who choose to end their own lives, this proportion is not even close to being as high as it is in the categories of people who have completed elementary or secondary education.

According to the survey, 72% of unemployed people committed suicide, whereas only 28% of employed people took their own lives. Because being unemployed is a circumstance that causes people to experience feelings of disappointment and makes them feel uncomfortable, the rate of those who are unemployed who entertain thoughts of suicide is substantially higher than that of the general population (Mathieu et al., 2022).

Those with a monthly income of less than 10,000 taka had the highest prevalence of suicidal ideation among the study's participants. People whose monthly earnings

are between 10,000 and 20,000 taka had a slightly decreased risk of suicide compared to those in higher-earning categories, but they nevertheless commit suicide at a rate greater than the national average. There are dishonest individuals among those who make more than 20,000 takas annually, even though this sum is insignificant enough to be disregarded.

- **Distribution of place of residence of suicide cases**

Residence	Frequency	Percentage
Urban	14	6.86%
Rural	190	93.14%
Total	204	100%

Table 3: Distribution of Place of Residence of Suicide Cases (Field survey, 2021).

People who live in rural areas have a higher risk of taking their own life, while people who live in urban areas have a lower risk of taking their own lives in comparison to people who live in rural areas. According to the data, 93.14% of persons who live in rural areas end their own lives by suicide, while just 6.86% of people who live in urban areas do the same. People who live in rural areas have a suicide rate that is 13.58% higher than those who live in metropolitan areas.

Timeframe and causes of Suicide:

- **Season and Place of suicide**
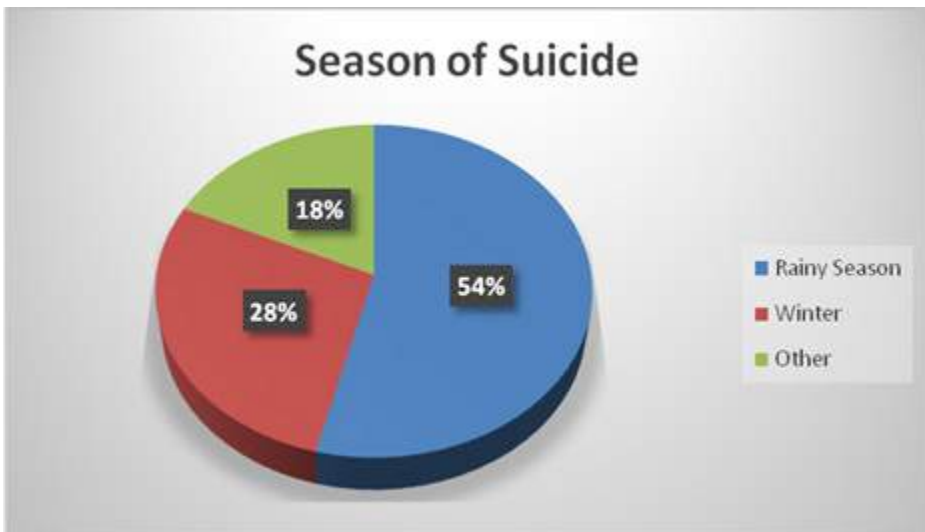
Figure 4: Season of Suicide (Field survey, 2021)

The association between the different seasons and the number of suicides is depicted by the pie chart. The graphic makes it quite evident that 54% of suicides take place during the rainy season, whereas 28% of suicides take place during the winter season, and 18% of suicides take place throughout other seasons. Because of things like flooding, heavy rain, the generally broken condition of the outside environment during the rainy season, and less production in every sector during the winter season, people become frustrated, and as a result, 82% of all suicides take place during the rainy and winter seasons.

According to the data, 79% of all suicides take place in the victim's own house. On the other side, just 21% of people who commit suicide do so in a location other than their own home which is a very small number.

- **Causes of suicide**

Causes	Frequency	Percentage
Poverty	38	18.63
Long term disease	63	30.88
Failure in Examination	1	0.49
Failure in Love	7	3.43
Unhappy in conjugal life	14	6.86
Family Feud	71	34.80
Unknown	10	4.90
Total	**204**	**100%**

Table 4: Distribution of causes of suicide (Field survey, 2021)

The table above offers a breakdown, expressed in terms of percentages, of the numerous factors that contribute to the occurrence of suicide. We can see that, out of the numerous distinct factors that contribute to suicide, family strife is the primary reason people take their own lives in Jhenaidah; this factor accounts for 34.80% of all suicides. Another prominent cause for people to take their own lives is poor performance on tests, which has the lowest suicide rate at 0.49%. The percentage of people who take their own lives, for this reason, is the lowest. In addition, the table includes several other factors, such as living in poverty, having a chronic illness, experiencing romantic disappointment, and being dissatisfied with married life. The respective percentage rates for each of these factors are 18.63%, 30.88%, 3.43%, and 6.86%.

Discussion

According to social analysts and human development organizations, when a person's knowledge, conscience, and understanding power vanish; leaving them feeling hopeless and helpless; they lose their religious beliefs and commit suicide (Lawrence et al., 2016). The act of suicide is fraught with complications, and

many people believe that various mental diseases are to blame for it (Fegg et al., 2016). Many sociologists and psychologists believe that the responsibility for suicide lies not just with the individual and their mental condition or their genetics but also with society as a whole or with individual members of society (Lester, 1993). Individuals in psychiatric hospitals, patients with depression, bipolar mood disorder, personality disorder, schizophrenia patients, drug abusers, and anxiety sufferers have a far greater suicide rate than the general population (Pompili et al., 2008, Dome et al., 2019). Stresses such as academic expectations from schools or jobs and relationship problems such as breakups, divorce, bullying, or harassment are often associated with suicidal tendencies. Reports in the media, such as newspapers and television programs that are inaccurately portrayed might inspire suicidal behavior (Posselt et al., 2021). For instance, when it is widely reported with a great deal of sympathy that a famous actor or actress has committed suicide, the likelihood of suicide among admirers increases. Even if there is a history of suicide in the family, there is always a chance that the risk may increase (Ping Qin, 2003).

- Age, Gender, and Marital status

It is alarming that fact young children are now killing themselves (Daily Sun, 2018; Salam et al., 2017). According to Arafat (2017 & 2019), the most vulnerable age range is under 40 years old, and more particularly, the age range of 20 to 30 years (Khan et al., 2022).

To sum up, research shows that the age range for committing suicide is (10-78) years. The field study of this research revealed that the majority of the people who committed suicide belonged to the age category of (18-26) years. Approximately 31% of the total group of people who responded to the survey fit into this category. The outcome is very similar to the time before the Covid 19 invasion. As a result, the pandemic did not have any effect whatsoever on the ages of the people who committed suicide.

In line with this finding, every study done in the past has revealed that women have a significantly increased likelihood of suicidal tendencies (Torres & Nowson, 2007; Mamun et al., 2020c; Tasnimet al., 2020; Mattioli et al., 2021). The one and only baseline survey in the region, which was carried out by SOVA in 2005 and titled Surveillance and Reduction of Women's Suicidal Trends in Jhenidah: A Hot Spot with High Suicide Rate in Bangladesh, found that approximately eighty percent of the women who committed or attempted suicide were housewives. 44.7% of these housewives had no formal education, 15.8 percent had primary education, and 39.5 percent had secondary education (Jahan, 2019). According to research, women are more sensitive to emotions and experience stressors more deeply in response to poor psychological consequences, such as the loss of family members and friends (Matheson et al., 2014; Droogenbroeck et al., 2018). Suicide is more common in women, and the main risk factors for suicide are their low socioeconomic status and low literacy.

In the context of Covid-19, several studies point to an increase and intensification of violence against women and girls. For example, self-reported violence against women during the epidemic is evidence showing suicide ideation among women is substantially correlated with violent experiences (Santoni et al., 2021). We saw women (59%) commit suicide more than men in our data analysis (41%). So, our research also supports existing literature that women are more vulnerable to suicidal tendencies than men. There are several reasons including an intensification of domestic violence or abrupt confinement for a long time during the pandemic or poor or hyperactive emotional or experience stressors.

Females still commit more suicide than men, but the gap is narrowing gradually. Women who were divorced or widowed were more likely to be suicidal than those who had never been married. Hence, higher suicide risk was associated with females, divorced or widowed marital status (Payne, 2008; Vijayakumar, 2015 & Goktaş & Metinyaş, 2019). Previous studies show that married women have a greater tendency than others in suicide commission. In our data analysis, we see this exact illustration as 66.18% of our total suicide victims were married and 33% were unmarried.

- Income, Employments, and Education

As a consequence of the outbreaks, many individuals and families have ended up losing their source of earnings (The World Bank, 2020), which may contribute to the pervasiveness and growth of suicidal behavior. The youth unemployment rate more than doubled between 2010 and 2017, while the general population unemployment rate was 4.4% (The Daily Jugantor, 2019). Consistent with earlier research (Assari, 2018; Israfil et al., 2020). The Covid-19 outbreak was related to an increased risk of suicidal behavior.

A current analysis revealed that the Covid-19 situation has had severe economic consequences for the underprivileged people of Bangladesh. Specifically, the per capita income of slum dwellers reduced by 82% from $1.30 (US) in February to $0.32 (US) in early April, compared to a 79% decrease among rural impoverished people (i.e., $0.39 from $1.05) (Kamruzzaman, 2020). According to a study, 46% of suicide deaths were attributed to unemployment-related economic issues (Boshra et al., 2020).

Despite the government's efforts to assist such individuals and address the crisis through cash support (Daily Bangladesh, 2020); misconduct and corruption also took place in the distribution of relief supplies (e.g., food, medicines, household daily products, and sanitary goods, which are essential for livelihood). Consequently, the rapid economic downturn has caused those in need to consider suicide. It is well-established on a global scale that joblessness, economic hardship, and economic instability are linked to suicide and that as these factors increase, so do suicide rates (Goldman-Mellor et al. 2010; Oyesanya et al. 2015). According

to our analysis, the rate of Covid-19 related suicides is higher among lower-class people with a minimum income.

It is usually hypothesized by academicians that people having more knowledge or with a higher level of academic qualifications are more vulnerable to suicidal thoughts compared to the other groups. Individuals with higher levels of academic attainment (for example, a bachelor's degree or higher) were more likely to have suicidal thoughts compared to others. Previous research (Pompili et al., 2013) found that people with higher academic achievements were more likely to commit suicide. The disparities in results could be attributed to Covid-19's current state. This research presents an opposite picture of the anticipated relations between academic education and suicide rates. We see around 59.31% of suicides were caused by a person who had completed only a primary level of education whereas people with higher education only have a rate of 3.92% in suicide commission.

- Methods and Season of Suicide

Suicidal behaviors are complex phenomena that encompass a variety of actions such as suicidal thinking, preparation, attempt, and completion. In Bangladesh, hanging, and ingestion of poison or insecticides are suicide's most well-known and widespread techniques (Ahmad & Hossain, 2011). In metropolitan regions, people use different techniques, including a barbiturate overdose, burning, slashing one's neck, leaping in front of locomotives, falling from tremendous altitudes, drowning, and firing a rifle (Shah et al, 2017). However, the ease of accessibility and availability, high mortality, and local customs which affect the option selection, and the mass media as a profound social conduit have all contributed significantly to the spread of suicide techniques (Wu, Chen, & Yip, 2012). Insecticides are dangerous, readily available, and easily accessible might be the factors in selecting either hanging or poisoning (Feroz et al., 2012; Wu, Chen, & Yip, 2012; Ali et al., 2014; Talukder et al., 2014).

The study of the methods used in committing suicide is indeed interesting. According to previous studies, Dupatta (Orna) (Ahmad & Hossain, 2011; Wu, Chen, & Yip, 2012; Talukder et al., 2014) and rope are the most popular restraint substances used for hanging (Hossain et al., 2012). The majority of suicides happened at night, followed by the early morning (12 a.m. to 6 a.m.) and evening.

According to a previous study, poisoning was the most common method of suicide attempt for both males (77.07%) and females (77%). Even while previous studies found that 77% of people who try to kill themselves do so via poisoning themselves, the evidence from our dataset does not support this claim. According to the findings of this research, about 68.14 percent of all suicides are the result of the victim hanging, and 31.86 percent of all suicides are the result of the victim ingesting poison.

The incidence of suicide is reported to be higher during summer for both sexes, though males deviated with a high incidence in winter too. As an important variable, seasonality may contribute significantly to the explanations of the complex phenomenon of suicide. This study not only contributes to the knowledge between suicide and seasonality in Bangladesh but also paves the way to investigate the other risk factors related to suicide in this region. Arendse et al., (2021) claimed that the highest average overall suicide rates occurred during the hot, summer monsoon period, ranging from April to September. This period represents the time when Bangladeshis experienced the highest average temperatures. There is speculation that and specific season might somehow contribute to suicide occurrence rates. Our data analysis also reflected this assumption as we saw around 54% of the total suicide cases happened during the monsoon and 28% of suicide cases occurred during the winter season.

• Causes of Suicide

Meanwhile, it's arguable that less developed and underdeveloped nations are struggling more than industrialized countries, with more small and medium-sized businesses filing for bankruptcy during Covid-19 period (Fernandes, 2020). As a result, the mental health of certain individuals might become extremely fragile (Lin, 2020). The nationwide lockdown hindered all economic activity, resulting in greater economic restrictions. By the circumstances, it was estimated that Bangladesh's GDP would decrease by 1.10 percent and that 9 million people would lose their employment (Banna, 2020).

Suicidal ideation and preparation were more common among Bangladeshis during the Covid-19 pandemic, with rates of 19.0% and 18.5%, respectively in 2020 and 2021 (Rahman et al., 2021). In a Bangladeshi study conducted during the pandemic, depression was found to have a 13.81-fold higher incidence of suicidal thoughts than anxiety or stress, which was 6.45 and 9.53-fold higher (Tasnim et al., 2020).

The general populace is exhibiting increased degrees of psychological and attitudinal issues as a result of the unanticipated lockdown, including exhaustion, separation, impatience, poor focus, degradation in work productivity, etc. which further increased typical mental health problems like melancholy, sleeplessness, posttraumatic stress, anxiety symptoms, etc. (Hossain et al., 2020; Brooks et al.,2020). Moreover, there was a strong correlation between suicidality and drug use, inactivity, poor self-reporting health, comorbidity; increased anxiety along with risk and fear of Covid-19infection (Mamun et al., 2021). Among the mentioned risk factors, marital discord (10.33%) and familial disharmony (22.14%) were the most common risk factors for suicide. Further reported risk factors were sexual harassment, failure in examination, breakage of romantic relationships, domestic violence, financial constraints, and physical illness (Shah et al., 2017).

But our practical study doesn't agree with these claims that much. The majority of the people who committed suicide were either a patient of long-term disease (30.88%) or a victim of a family feud (34.80%) which is diametrically different from the claims which were made in the literature. Poverty played a significant role in this role and we saw 18.63% of people committed suicide due to this social problem.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 outbreak has transformed into an international public health emergency. Due to the rise in infection cases and fatalities; as a result, this sudden outbreak has caused disruptions in daily life lowering living standards and increasing fear and panic about the outbreaks (Mamun et al., 2020b). An array of psychological effects from commonly experienced psychological disorders like melancholy and anxiety, as well as extreme ones like suicide, have been linked to the unpredictability of the pandemic and the uncertainty of how soon the circumstances will be under control (Huang & Zhao, 2020; Moghanibashi-Mansourieh, 2020).

The people of Bangladesh have been shown to be negatively impacted by financial stress and other difficulties throughout time, which eventually leads to suicidal instances. Restrictions related to the pandemic (such as geographical separation, disconnection, self-quarantine, etc.) have an impact on economic sustainability and well-being. Also, like other developing countries, Bangladesh has experienced some psychological consequences, including self-harm, as well as psychological ramifications (e.g., anxiety, depression, traumatic stress, and panic) as a result of Covid-19 misinformation (Rajkumar 2020; Sahoo et al. 2020; Tandon 2020). Covid-19-related stress causes insomnia, irritability, and family chaos. Fear of Covid-19 transmission (self and/or family members and/or relatives), limiting anticipated study schedule and potential profession, and financial difficulties have been recognized as the leading causes of stress in people. The correlation between financial difficulties and food crises, which produces stress for a large number of people, as well as hinders regular education and career goals, causes tension and panic among career seekers. Suicidal events were principally associated with men's failure to fulfill social expectations of hegemonic masculinity (River & Flood, 2021). The rigid and restrictive dichotomization associated with gender roles needs to be countered to reduce rates of male suicide, as such restrictive expectations could be extremely health damaging for men.

The developmental transition era of any country is connected with the number of suicides since it directly affects the quality of life. For example, the fall of GDP of Bangladesh by 1.1% and unemployment of 9 million people during Covid-19. Moreover, the aftermath of Covid 19 with psychological issues like stress, melancholy, and anxiety also contributed to the rapid growth of the suicide commission and experienced a suicide increase due to depression 13.81 times and 6.45 times owing to anxiety. The year 2020 took a toll on all of us. It snatched

jobs and financial securities from a big chunk of our population and researchers opine that it may influence one to develop suicidal tendencies and persuade one to ultimately commit it (Kawohl & Nordt, 2020). Moreover, in that period, poverty was prevalent like never before in many areas. The per capita income of Bangladeshi citizens was reduced by 82% from 1.30 US dollars. A study specifically revealed that 46% of suicide death cases were strictly attributed to unemployment issues negative stereotypes or social embarrassment and a lack of social safety net. Economic instability, unsettling food security, and economic hardship also tend to disrupt the normal flow of our daily lives. Regarding this, our data completely aligns with the claims and findings of the literary studies. About 72% of total suicides can be traced as the result of unemployment and 28% of people who were employed in any other job committed suicide. So, we see a connection between employment, income structure, and suicide rates.

Adopting comprehensive policies that need coordination and cooperation across several sectors; including the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sectors. A holistic strategy for preventing suicides should address various issues, including health, education, employment, law enforcement, and political and social institutions. These are only some of the crucial areas that should be addressed. When coming up with measures to prevent suicide, a comprehensive understanding of the issue is of the utmost importance. It is important to develop a strategy that includes critical issues related to hegemonic masculinity. The study proposed that addressing sociocultural and religious issues associated with men's troubles may help to prevent suicide. At the same time, changing the restrictive gender roles and masculinity-related ideals is also needed to counter the problem.

Suicide is an avoidable issue. If the correct steps are taken at the right time, it is possible to stop someone from taking their own life. "Creating hope through action" will be the focus of World Suicide Prevention Day for the next three years, from 2021 to 2023. This theme serves as a gentle reminder that suicide is not the only option and that there are things that may help us all feel confident and driven to shine brightly.

It is crucial to put in the effort to develop family bonds and spend quality time with each family member. Providing children and teenagers with the choices they need to develop their social skills and ability to make decisions should be encouraged. Children should be raised and cared for to come to terms with success and failure throughout their growth. If someone you care about has mental health issues or suicidal thoughts, we should get them in to see a psychiatrist as soon as possible. The family should make an effort to show compassion for one another. We must seek the assistance of a trusted member of the family, close friend, or health care practitioner as soon as possible if we become aware of someone who is struggling with thoughts of self-harm or if we know someone who may be considering suicide.

We must help someone realize they are not alone by giving them that impression.

In order to solve this problem, every educational establishment should offer some kind of psychological counseling service or other peer support organizations. When reporting on suicide, the media should always stick to the norms that have been established. When it comes to publishing comments and photographs concerning suicide, users of alternative internet-based media and social networking sites should exercise the same degree of caution that they would when using traditional forms of media. The administrators of social networking sites should also have their own policies on this subject.

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Rescuing Masked Doctor-Patient Relationship Enforced by Covid-19: Integrating Empathy in the Healthcare System

Suchana Sova*

Abstract: *The Covid-19 pandemic has posed a critical moral challenge for medical professionals due to its highly contagious nature that can cause severe respiratory disease and death. As a result, conventional doctor-patient relationships have collapsed since the pandemic. Patients and medical personnel are negatively impacted when social distancing is enforced due to concerns about viral transmission. How to provide high-quality services and maintain professional moral standards in such critical conditions is discussed in this paper, emphasizing empathy as a key moral virtue for professional practice. As moral philosophers offer and advance persuasive arguments, the definition of empathy has been examined to eliminate ambiguity and highlight the distinctions between emotion, passion, compassion, and sympathy. It has been argued that empathy gives medical professionals direction to take the proper perspective in a critical pandemic like Covid-19. Cases are discussed in relation to actual occurrences to argue the moral virtue of empathy and uphold professional standards in medical practices. Empathy can reduce malpractice claims significantly, increase patient satisfaction, and contribute to the good governance of healthcare service management.*

Keywords: *Empathy, Compassion, Sympathy, Informed consent, Interpersonal skill, Covid-19, Doctor-patient relationship, professional standard*

Since the global COVID-19 pandemic, professional integrity, high professional standards, and reflection of moral values in practice has been extensively scrutinised by policymakers, serving institutions, professionals, and societies. Covid-19 is a highly communicable and transmissive disease caused by a coronavirus that can cause severe respiratory disease. The symptoms can vary from non-noticeable to mild or high fever, loss of taste, sore throat, cough, pneumonia, fatigue, myalgia, complicated dyspnoea, and death (Ambika, 2021, Alvarez de-la-Cadena, 2021). The world's governments, hospitals, and educational institutions have faced the greatest challenge of the 21st century in combating the spread of the virus, eliminating infection, and reducing mortality. Because of its highly transmissive nature, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed human behaviours globally.

People fear getting infected with the virus if they practice conventional social norms, such as handshaking, greeting with a hug or sitting too close to each other,

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travelling by public transport without a mask, or going to a public gathering without appropriate hygiene measures in place. The transmissive nature of the virus created fear among people, which has influenced ordinary people's behaviours and behaviours of Health Care Personnel (HCP), such as doctors, nurses, and medical technicians. Resulting of the fear of Covid-19 transmission, the doctor-patient relationship is also in a conundrum, and the HCP must be required to maintain extra hygiene practices mandatorily and wear personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, face shields, masks, aprons, and full-body suits in everyday practice. Before Covid-19, wearing PPE by the HCP to attend to a patient mainly suffering from fever or seasonal flu-like symptoms was almost non-existent other than in surgical wards. Therefore, the previous practice of welcoming and greeting patients with a warm interactive (including verbal, non-verbal and gestures), which facilitates a connection between the doctors and patients, is now under threat. The Covid pandemic has created critical challenges in the doctor-patient relationship and quality healthcare. Thus, encompassing empathy, a moral virtue driven by an altruistic disposition, must incorporate healthcare practices to meet the challenges. In this paper, I investigate some cases in Bangladesh and argue for creating a space for empathy in health governance to improve the quality of the doctor-patient interaction and increase patient satisfaction for increased trust in the HCP, so the positive image of the doctor-patient relationship can be rescued. Such changes in practice will ultimately help to enhance quality healthcare. I also consider how empathy can be integrated into practice, which may be required more time allocation for each patient by HCP. As HCP are overwhelmed by the numbers of patients, morbidity, and mortality, and they all work tremendously long shifts or extended hours, this needs to be changed to restore the empathetic bond between healthcare service providers and healthcare service recipients.

What is empathy, how to recognise empathy, and why is it essential in health care?

Empathy is an ability that enables someone to understand another person's feelings, thoughts, and behaviours in a non-judgmental way and communicate to the person about their feelings to feel that their feelings were acknowledged and validated (Wiseman, 1996, p.1165). Empathy is different but closely related to sympathy, compassion, piety, and passion[**]. For example, a person (a doctor) may be sympathetic to the people of Ukraine suffering from war and express interest in serving them. In contrast, someone who lacks sympathy or piety may argue that

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[**] For Morrow (1923) these "other regarding impulses", and specially sympathy is regarded a key moral value by David Hume and Adam Smith. Glenn R. Morrow (1923) noted that "Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, not to mention Butler, insisted that the 'other-regarding' impulses-including, of course, pity, compassion, sympathy-are an essential part of human nature." Source: *The Philosophical Review*, Jan. 1923, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Jan. 1923), pp. 60-78 Published by: Duke University Press on behalf of *Philosophical Review*, p.62.

Ukraine deserves such suffering. The person (a doctor) may be compassionate and donate relief materials to the war victims. Compassion is a kind of rational feeling or expressed emotion for others necessary for civil and political society (Snow, 1991).

Furthermore, the above person's passion may lead to going on to rescue mission in Ukraine to save their relatives. These concepts look similar but have different meanings. According to the moral philosopher, a mother become pregnant and give birth to a child taking pains and risk (Rosan, 2014, p.162). Such disposition comes from compassion. Similarly, the Bangladesh government permitted to enter and stay Rohingya refugees to compassion. To illustrate the relationship between compassion and empathy, for Dalai Lama, "empathy is just the beginning of compassion" (Quoted in Barad, 2007, p.22). And "compassion is understood mainly in terms of empathy-our ability to enter into and, to some extent, share others' suffering (ibid, p. 22)". For him, compassion," a combination of empathy and reason," "belongs to that category of emotions which have a more developed cognitive component (Quoted in Barad, 2007, p.16)". So, people act from the passion for personal ground. And from sympathy, a person engages further and does something for someone. The difference between these concepts will be illustrated further below.

For example, "when subjects are told to imagine what another person is feeling, they are being instructed to empathise, not to feel sympathy (Darwall,1998, p.273)". But for this moment, I assume empathy is a rational disposition that may be mixed with some sympathy and compassion but are categorically different from each other. According to Morrow (1923, p.62), "sympathy involves a mutual sharing of sentiments among all individuals, a common participation in a moral world which is objective, and yet formed by the contribution of all individual". Hume made sympathy synonymous with benevolence and humanity (Morrow,1923, p.66). In this regard, sympathy is closely associated with compassion but far from passion, i.e., self-regarding. Sympathy, passion, and compassion are more associated with and controlled by emotion, while empathy is emotional feeling guided by reason and displayed for others regarding keeping control to become emotional.

Patients' disappointment with their doctors is frequent: doctors do not allow enough time and attention to their patients, and their fees are reasonably high for their services, considering how much time doctors give to their patients in many countries (Stanton and Noble, 2010). For the doctor-patient relationship, considering patients' backgrounds and perspectives is necessary for better outcomes, increasing trust, and understanding each patient's illness and reactions. A patient may be in pain and experience fear and anxiety. A holistic understanding of patients thus should equip a doctor to form a better professional diagnosis and understand the needs of the patients in a more caring way. Therefore, empathy is essentially an emotional skill (Halpern, 2001, p.29), the ability to understand and read the emotional makeup of others and be able to demonstrate that as an HCP

interested in assisting a patient who is seeking services of HCP, recognising the emotion of others to avoid complaints of detachment and manage own emotion would be highly beneficial (McMullen, 2003). Empathy supports assessing patients' needs from their body language, pre-existing clues, verbal clue, and vocal tone (McMullen, 2003, p.130). Empathy is helpful in better understanding what illness is, what treatment is required, and eventually becoming a good doctor/ professional.

Further, communication skill is an essential part of empathy. Empathy assists in acknowledging and validating patients' views in treatment; therefore, a core value of biomedical ethics, respecting patients' autonomy, can be maintained and prevent the risk of malpractice (Stanton and Noble, 2010). The practice of empathy is a prerequisite for informed consent (Halpern, 2001, p.159). It shifts from detachment to "equanimity"*** to further engagement with patient needs (Sokol, 2007, p.101). Halpern (2001) argued that empathy is an intellectual form of knowledge rather than an emotional form of knowing. Empathy involves non-verbal and verbal communication between doctor and patient (Halpern, 2001). For Halpern (2001), "empathic communication enables patients to talk about stigmatized issues that relate to their health that might otherwise never be disclosed, thus leading to a fuller understanding of patients' illness experiences, health habits, psychological needs, and social situations (p. 94)" that may require "multiple modes of cognition, including affecting imagery and reflective thought (p.96)". Empathy requires imagining and not just logical reasoning (2001, p.11). It is not just observing a patient's emotional state but noticing what is salient. For Halpern, "a richer clinical empathy, involving emotional *and* cognitive empathy, makes for more effective medical care" (Halpern 2011, p. 229). Halpern (2007, p. 696) further notes "empathy" is "engaged curiosity about another's particular emotional perspective". For her, there are "five specific ways for physicians to foster empathy during conflict are described: recognizing one's own emotions, attending to negative emotions over time, attuning to patients' verbal and nonverbal emotional messages, and becoming receptive to negative feedback (Halpern, 2007, p. 696)". The benefit of empathy in healthcare is that it facilitates patients' understanding of treatment options and participation in making decisions concerning their health and care plans. By feeling empowered in the therapeutic process, patients are more inclined to follow their medical treatment plan (Halpern 2014, cited in Guidi &Traversa, 2021, p.580).

There are some barriers to practicing empathy. For example, during the covid pandemic, hospitals, clinics, and doctors are inundated by patients and their families.

*** For Sokol (2007) Contrary, apathy, i.e., "absence of emotions", is understood opposite of empathy and synonymous with "metriopatheia"- meaning "measured or moderate emotions" (Sokol, 2007).

Such a situation makes clinical professionals anxious, and the increased volume of patients has to serve within a limited period. Empathy is essential to build a trustworthy relationship with the patient in the clinical care environment. This is not the case; we must view a patient as a client or consumer, and doctors and nurses must not think they are God or father. Medical professionals are trained to be trustworthy if they can demonstrate a high skill level in their professional practice to cure diseases. Kerasidou & Horn (2016, also in Maslach, 2003, p.5) note that a lack of empathy spoils the medical professional and is directed towards depersonalising patients.

Integrating empathy along with clinical competency in medicine during Covid-19

For well-functioning healthcare systems, I assume empathy is both a moral[****] and social value to be inculcated in all levels of governance to put into practice. However, some common misunderstandings involve applying empathy in professional clinical practice (Kerasidou & Horn, 2016). Consequently, researchers in professional practice undermine or question the value of empathy. This happens when empathy is mistakenly linked with emotion. For example, Kerasidou & Horn claim that "there is a tendency to favour the technically skilful, rational, and emotionally detached physician rather than that of the compassionate or empathetic doctor (2016, p.2)". Such a tendency does not allow giving space for empathy in clinical practice. For them, adding empathy is considered a weakness of personal character, and to uphold images of the doctors, they must put aside empathy. In addition, empathy is sometimes seen as a secondary requirement or superfluous (Kerasidou & Horn, 2016).

However, I differ with them because patients may feel firm and distant from such doctors to disclose important information regarding their health and well-being. Thus, a lack of empathy within doctor-patient relationships may cause a barrier for patients to communicate effectively with their doctors. As a result, some crucial elements of the diagnosis and prognosis may leave out and create complications in the process, regardless of the clinical competency of the doctors. Therefore, practice with empathy should be seen as a strength rather than a weakness for professionals. The issue can be further resolved using various cases and examples, clearly defining empathy and showing the difference between sympathy and compassion.

According to Kerasidou and Horn (2016), it is an interactive skill to understand the "inner life (Osler, 1963, p.29)" of a patient. The value of empathy is recommended for health professionals by Albert Camus in *The Plague*. The skill of empathy is understood as a piece of interwoven multi-colour cloth using both patient perspectives and clinical skills. Empathy is like "walking a mile wearing the shoes

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**** Empathy is a moral value in the sense that it has altruistic elements in it. On the other hand, empathy to provide services, a disposition in a person's character, is considered virtuous (Snow, 2000)

of others*****." An empathetic HCP must use their clinical expertise to see and understand the problem from the patient's perspective to deliver better treatment and care plans. Thus, adding empathy in clinical practice facilitates better patient condition detection, contributing to better patient satisfaction (Hickson, 2002) and improving professional outcomes.

At times, detachment from a patient's feelings is considered a "prerequisite for patient care" and is utilised to shield against stress protection and enhance professional competence (Maslach, 2003, p.4)*****. However, Maslach (2003, p.4) notes that such an act, i.e., detachment of empathy, turns out to be cold indifference to others' needs and a callous disregard for their feeling". But it may ruin it as well. There is a tendency to emphasise emotion in delivering healthcare services, and such an emphasis causes some problems. For example, people may amalgamate emotion, sympathy, and empathy. This negatively impacts anyone understanding that paying extra sympathetic attention involves treating people empathetically. This impacts the health of clinical professionals and causes burnout. Thus, choosing empathy for health care professionals requires further training.

According to Kerasidou & Horn (2016, p.2), empathy is the middle way between emotional over-and-under involvement. A healthcare professional may pay extra attention to patients' emotional aspects and fails to consider side effects. For example, a medical professional buys medicine for a patient out of sympathy. A sympathetic response of such kind, regarded as compassion, will cause expectations among patients and cause trouble for other professionals. However, compassion is not empathy. Empathy is different from sympathy. We can express our sympathy by joining with someone else feeling. Thus, sympathy can lead a person to over-involvement and ruin the service delivery mechanism. In contrast, empathy implies. one must certainly take care of himself and add a reasonable emotion for delivering service without causing any side effects, as exemplified above. Without blending both professional skills with emotion delivering service may fail to address patients' needs.

On the other hand, a lack of empathy may hinder effective communication, cause over-involvement, and undermine the ethical standards essential for autonomy and meaningful consent and maintenance of professional standards. Empathy is a well-balanced perspective of a person that requires processing cognitive and

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***** To care for and show compassion for patients takes emotional strength and resilience. It requires staff to see the person in the patient, listen to their fears, concerns and worries, to empathise and to imagine yourself in their shoes, not least to be able to help them improve. https://www.theguardian.com/healthcare-network/2014/jul/02/nhs-culture-empathy-gap-schwartz-rounds/25/07/2021.

****** Healthcare staff come into the profession to help others. If nurses cannot give the care that they want to give, they experience moral distress and cope by erecting a shield to protect themselves.

emotional domains together. The clinical professional applies her problem-solving skill, knowledge, and experience to understand the patient's inner experience. This is a way to understand the world from a third-person perspective, and it can join someone else's knowledge and skills with their learning and emotion.

Empathy is, in another way, to address the needs and feelings of the service recipient. Empathy drives a person to behave compassionately to address someone's needs and feelings without meandering towards too much emotion. In contrast with sympathy, empathy can be helpful as empathy contributes to understanding others' needs and situations better. A person can serve without projecting emotion to serve others (Kerasidou & Horn (2016, p.2). Kerasidou & Horn (2016, p.2) further notes that "empathy entails the ability to be attentive to the difference between own and others' feelings". It is the capacity to manage emotion and satisfy the healthcare needs of a patient. Empathy is associated with interpersonal skills and care (Riss******* et al., 2012, Hickson et al., 2002, Kelley******** et al., 2012). Being empathetic, a doctor remains emotionally detached from serving the patient considering their situation. The strategy to work with empathy helps deliver the service correctly and minimises malpractice complaints. For this research, I define empathy as a rational emotion blended with knowledge and professional skills essential for serving patients by regarding dignity, rights, autonomy, and feelings of patients to enhance the quality of professional practice. In addition, empathy contributes towards the fundamental goals of medicine (Callahan,1998).

The Effect of Covid-19: Missing Empathy and nonverbal communication

This section explores whether HCPs have a moral/legal duty to treat suspected or confirmed Covid-19 patients. If the HCP must treat covid-19 patients, should they be expected to have a reciprocal duty of providing a safe workplace for the government to provide care and treatment to Covid patients?

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 4 million deaths and 194 million infection cases have been reported globally on the 27 of July 2021 (WHO, 2021). The HCP is the frontline worker and exposes themselves to hazards. According to the WHO, "hazards include pathogen exposure, long working hours, psychological distress, fatigue, occupational burnout, stigma and physical and psychological violence".

According to the WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (2021), the HCP should be protected first in combating COVID-19. Moreover,

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*******Empathic communication skills are associated with increased patient satisfaction(Hickson,2002),8 improved adherence to therapy,9 decreased medical errors,10 fewer malpractice claims,8 better outcomes,11–14 decreased burnout15 and increased physician wellbeing.15

******** Empathy has been defined as process with both cognitive and affective components which enables individuals to understand and respond to others' emotional states and contributes to compassionate behaviour and moral agency.

hospitals and healthcare providers have been instructed to consider and revise their services' occupational health and safety (OHS) standards. The healthcare providers have been asked to provide the HCP with adequate PPE to not compromise with the OHS standards. Additionally, many governments have introduced telehealth/ telemedicine services, and elective surgeries were put on hold in hospitals like Australia during the peak of the infection period in 2020. In Australia, Victorian clinics have changed policies for contact tracing, and now a patient must answer several questions before check-in for any visits with a QR Code to the hospitals. However, treating a patient with respect, dignity and compassion advice, the WHO remains in place.

Being fearful about the highly contagious virus of the Covid-19 pandemic, doctors and HCP are mandated to wear PPE and maintain possible physical distance to avoid spreading the virus. During covid-19, the HCP seems to focus on treating the virus rather than treating a patient with the virus. Thus, a climate has been created by using PPE, practising physical distance and upholding fear of being infected with the virus or unknowingly infected by a family member. Nwoga HO, Ajuba MO, Ezeoke UE. (2020) state that doctors should have two skills for patient care "instrumental, or conducts related to the task, and socio-emotional conduct (p.4691)". Empathy is crucial for meeting and upholding socio-emotional conduct in practice. A high level of uncertainty, stress, mental anxiety, not being able to live with a family, hug or see loved ones create additional anxiety, and not being able to relax or filter their emotions makes it more difficult for the HCP to continue to uphold the high quality of their service in a calming manner. Telehealth consultation and maintaining social distancing by the doctors have significantly impacted the non-verbal communication skills of the HCP performances. Therefore, their services have been disrupted and changed, and the doctor-patient relationship developed through communication and mutual trust between doctor and patient, which is often driven by empathy, has gradually disappeared in many settings and faces a threat.

Consequently, one of the fundamental values of biomedical ethics is respecting a patient's autonomy through obtaining informed consent may face a threat of disappearing, as obtaining informed consent requires allowing time and disclosing relevant information with empathy to a patient. Using PPE and consulting patients over the telephone makes it challenging to occur non-verbal communication between doctors and patients, thus creating a significant gap in this relationship (Nwoga HO, Ajuba MO, Ezeoke UE.,2020). The doctor-patient relationship develops through trusting, respecting, exercising empathy and communicating freely between doctors and patients.

Empathy should not be a single-line train. Instead, empathy should be practised like a train running parallel lines. Adequate PPE should be available to the HCP to protect themselves and their patients from being infected and infecting others. Without PPE or shortages of PPE (such as medical masks, gloves, face shields, gowns, respirators, goggles, and aprons) as a frontline worker, the HCP

will be left ill-equipped to treat and care for patients with covid and will have a severe, dangerous effect on the human healthcare resources of any given country. Governments and administrations must give empathetic attention to doctors and nurses by providing necessary support for delivering services. They must realise what would happen if asked to serve in a similar situation without self-protective equipment. In this regard, policies and training programs are necessary for administrators and citizens to acquire empathy-based skills. The hospital's management, patients' relatives, and government agencies should approach service delivery empathetically. Because HCP, such as doctors and nurses, work tirelessly for extended hours with no meal break or with a short break between shifts and, at times, must accept extra shifts. They may also avoid their family members to protect their loved ones and save lives through their services. These circumstances may cause much stress to them.

Due to fear of serious calamity, governments must slash human freedom in various ways and further implement measures to combat and control the spread of the virus. For example, governments want to encourage the moral responsibility of not harming others by introducing' social distancing' and lockdowns. Further, isolation encourages an infected person to be isolated from everyone, including their doctors, nurses, and even their loved ones. Mandatory vaccination encourages the collective responsibility of all to combat the pandemic.

In Bangladesh, there are cases that law enforcement agencies are harassing medical professionals on their way home and to the workplace. In this regard, law enforcement agencies should ask themselves what would happen if they were harassed on the way to work and must take empathy as a guiding principle of service in their work practice if we expect quality services from health professionals. The PM of Bangladesh seriously reacted when some medical college intern medical students refused to work during the Covid pandemic. The news raises the question: how can intern medical students show such a reaction? Such a situation can be avoided if the governance of the healthcare delivery system is reformed, considering empathy as a critical moral and social value of professional practice. The lack of training in "empathy" as a professional value may lead intern doctors to react opposite to their professional oath in a critical pandemic situation. Thus, intern-medical students as soon as must be taught and practised empathy during their resident training period.

Similarly, empathy can be imparted among the students during their learning period. They must be given examples and take a stand on what they will expect from the doctor in a similar situation. That is what perspective a doctor or nurse must take during a pandemic to save lives. The medical professional must understand and acquire knowledge and skill to help them take an empathy-based professional attitude and act accordingly to treat patients. And, in turn, by being guided by empathy, medical professionals may reduce malpractice, enhance patient satisfaction at a high level, and promote trust in healthcare services.

Case Study

In Bangladesh and many other developing nations, primary health care services are provided by a combination of government, non-government, and private facilitators. Most people feel fear, panic, and anxiety when they want access to better healthcare facilities. They become the target of misinformation by social media; thus, access to better healthcare is a severe issue and has great mistrust. Increased fear of infection and the spreading of Covid-19 caused many private hospitals to close their services, and many senior HCP has also been restricted in their private practices (Jain, 2020).

According to the Daily Star editor Mahfuz Anam, a 24-year-old woman was pregnant and was sitting near central Mytre's Remembrance Memorial, Dhaka, in Bangladesh. She nearly fainted and leaned on her husband to take a rest. She was about to deliver a twin in one month, but she felt the labour pain suddenly at dawn on the 22 of May. She and her husband went to nearby hospitals, but none of the hospitals admitted her because she had the symptom of fever. In search of a hospital, the couple found a clinic in Mirpur at Dhaka, which also offers ambulance services. When the couple reached the hospital in Mirpur, the hospital staff said they could not admit her without the COVID-19 negative certificate due to her temperature. Thus, the couple was advised to attend Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMC). They were told to go to the COVID-19 unit when they reached the DMC Emergency Department. They declined to go to the COVID unit, fearing getting infected there.

In the meantime, the woman started bleeding and contractions when the photojournalist requested the passing ambulance driver to take them to a hospital. Consequently, the ambulance went to several hospitals in Dhaka, but none came forward to assist her. Thus, the couple decided to return to where they live in Gazipur, a nearby district of Dhaka. A small clinic in Gazipur finally helped the woman give birth to a twin through C-section delivery. Two other cases were reported in the same daily newspaper on 21st May 2020, heading "Victim of Denial."

However, following the news, the Ministry of Health, Bangladesh, has issued a circular that the service provider could not decline a patient to offer from receiving treatment if any service can be served. The government's circular has drawn much attention, and the question is how far their professional obligation should be extended. These examples highlight the broken healthcare system and the moral degradation and unprofessionalism of the HCP, where people face increased vulnerability during pandemic situations.

Case Analysis

Refusing to treat a pregnant woman by the hospital authority and the health care professional is breaching an essential biomedical ethical principle: non-maleficence. Because seeking treatment in such a condition and getting referred to the COVID-19 units first to obtain a negative test result for accessing primary

healthcare posed a significant risk to herself and her unborn twin. Further, not knowing and facing the uncertainty of receiving medical care could be life-threatening and significant psychological stress to the woman. Consequently, the broader community fears they will not be treated if they become infected with COVID-19. Some individual HCPs threaten the overall public trust in healthcare services. Empathy was non-existent in these cases.

How can the HCP fulfil the gap induced by Covid-19 in their professional service and profession and uphold and maintain their professional service standards?

Doctors and the HCP should demonstrate comprehensive knowledge about the patient's conditions and be responsive to the patient's needs on time. Doctors should also be compassionate that patients cannot receive warmth and non-verbal communication to reassure them from a doctor or health care professional due to personal protection equipment. They may be isolated from their loved ones, and in many settings, visitors are restricted from visiting their loved ones in-hospital care. Only healthcare professionals are there for the patients, and they are mandatorily wearing personal protective equipment to protect themselves and others from the potentially highly contagious virus. The personal protective equipment prevents the HCP from being close, like care provided to the patients pre-covid-19. The patients could connect easily with their caregiver and HCP and feel reassured by their professional knowledge and care and their non-verbal communication, such as presenting with a calm and confident facial expressive appearance and gestures.

Providing a sense that the HCP may be masked, and the patient may be isolated. However, they are there for the patients, and the HCP is mindful of their situation. Thus, the HCPs should try their best to meet patients' needs promptly. Reducing the gap induced by the pandemic is only possible by being more responsive to patient care and needs.

Hospital administration can take empathic attitudes among their staff and patient group by providing a safe work environment with adequate PPE and ensuring staff are provided with ongoing professional development opportunities, meal breaks and adequate break time between shifts. The senior professionals adequately supervise the newly appointed fresh graduates, and senior professionals should be made legally liable for their juniors' medical errors in patients' outcomes. Thus, empathy should be embraced in all forms of healthcare delivery, as empathy reduces negligence and malpractice in HCP (Wiseman 1996, p. 1162). In addition, enough time should be allocated to the respective professionals, and the doctor-patient ratio should be increased gradually to improve the service. Otherwise, showing empathy to the patients may not enhance professional moral standards and drain other emotional aspects necessary for treatment and public health, an important area for further research.

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Covid-19 and Bangladesh: A Study of the Public Perception on the Measures Taken by the Government

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Abstract: *After the eruption of Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, every country had to fight this virus with whatever measures they could take as a prompt response. Due to resource constraints, the third world governments could not provide sufficient opportunities for their people. Bangladesh despite having many limitations has taken some effective measures in tackling this virus including stimulus packages, free testing, free treatment and free vaccination. Besides, there are measures which were taken on a limited scale in the immediate phase of the epidemic in 2020. The measures which were taken by the government were not properly communicated to the public properly. This lacuna of communication has allowed disinformation to spread widely. This study has attempted to understand how people perceived the government measures and to what extent they were satisfied with the initial measures (March and April 2020). Conforming to the consideration of the pandemic as a war, this research contends that the actions taken by the various agencies of the state could have been taken beforehand. In addition, much robust processes were necessary to prevent this pandemic at the very early stages. This paper understands that if the government could ensure improved inter-organisation coordination; the curve of infection could have been lower with proper preventative measures such as lockdown, social distancing and aftercare treatment. The amount of time Bangladesh got before the pandemic hit in Bangladesh could have been utilised to strengthen the existing hospitals and health care facilities which subsequently could help the government to fight the pandemic in a more holistic way. Finally this study presents a list of policy recommendations so that Bangladesh can counter any further pandemic with a proper policy plan.*

Keywords: *Coronavirus, Bangladesh, Covid-19, Public Perception, Government, Pandemic, Health*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has kept its mark in the world in a devastating way which apparently has cost hundreds of thousands of lives around the world. As of October 16, 2022; 6,567,441 people have died by COVID-19 and 624,661,861 persons have got infected by it (Johns Hopkins, 2022). As of October 16 of 2022, 9,091,630,218 doses of vaccine have been administered to counter the virus and

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to increase human immunity against it (Johns Hopkins 2022). Arguably, the Covid-19 virus started spreading in Wuhan, Hubei province of China in late 2019 (BBC 2020). But a formidable escalation was accentuated when this virus spread almost all around the world in early 2020. After much speculations in the public sphere, this global crisis was declared a pandemic by the WHO (WHO, 2020). Despite having a very resilient healthcare structure, the Western countries were wriggling to curb the toll. The US President Donald Trump opined that he would be pleased if the number of casualty could be restricted underneath twenty million. In addition, the UK was targeting to maintain the toll below twenty thousand (The Guardian, 2020). Albeit the virus started spreading from China, robust measures such as lockdown helped China to contain the virus in a much better way than the western countries (Zhao, 2020).

In contrast to many countries, the Bangladesh government could control the infection rate in the early two months such as there were only 88 infected cases and death toll was 9. People have had a mixed elucidation on the data conveyed by IEDCR (Siddika and Islam 2020). The country went on a complete holiday (lockdown in principle) from 26th of March 2020 for two weeks and it was to be stretched after a few months as well. As of October 16 of 2022, 29, 401 people have died and 2,032,443 people got infected in Bangladesh (Johns Hopkins 2022). During the early days when Covid-19 hit in Bangladesh, the government started reintegrating social distancing and quarantine for all the expatriates. In addition, they claimed that Bangladesh is ready for fighting COVID-19 despite Dhaka centric low number of tests and lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the frontline fighters including doctors, nurses, volunteers (Alam et al., 2021, Siddika and Islam, 2020). The response of different countries differs due to social structure, economic capacity and resources (Alam et al., 2021, Jones, 2020). That's why the UK strategy of fighting COVID-19 might not be the same as China due to their political structures (Graham-Harrison, 2020). Corresponding to this point, the Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declared this fight as a war and insisted people to join the fight by staying home (BBC, 2020). Hence, the public responses in social media were mixed (Siddika and Islam, 2020). It was pertinent to look Bangladesh case as the country itself has been facing different socio-political crisis for years (Islam and Siddika 2022, Mostofa, Islam and Siddika,, 2021, Karim et al., 2021).

In such contexts, this research aims at understanding public perceptions on various initiatives taken by the Bangladesh government in the first two months of the pandemic. Another aim of the study is also to apprehend to what degree the public understanding of the government's actions resembles the factual data and how people perceive the early measures of the government. This study claims its originality from epistemological point of view by bridging public perceptions and the Bangladesh government's actions to counter the pandemic which subsequently will help the policy makers to communicate their actions to the public audience with proper strategy.

Literature review

When this research was initiated, there were only a few academic papers on Covid-19 which compelled this study to continue with the limited resources. In addition, an earlier version of this study was kept in EdArXiv (a preprint server) so that it can contribute to knowledge production. Moreover, over the last two years, there is a good total of publications on Covid-19 and Bangladesh in peer reviewed journals. Professor Ahmed Mushfique Mobarak of Yale University led a study on the impact of mask wearing in Bangladesh. By using randomised control trial (RCT), a current popular trend of social science to understand impact which was developed by Abhijeet Banarjee and E. Duflo, Mobarak et al (2021) argued the importance of mask wearing. In their study, Mobarak et al (2021) have shown a positive correlation between masking and reduced threats of infection.

Al-Zaman (2020) in his critical exposition has described how vulnerable the healthcare system of Bangladesh is. In addition, he showed some healthcare problems in a broader spectrum which would impact the countering Covid policy. Islam, talukdar and Siddique (2020) in their highly cited paper showed how challenging the tackling of Covid-19 was for Bangladesh. Besides providing few arguments from policy perspectives, the authors augment the challenges of health care sectors in Bangladesh as well. Islam et al (2020) in their paper has asserted that Covid-19 has significantly increased anxiety of people in Bangladesh. Based on a wide perception based study, they demonstrated a correlation between stress and Covid-19. Siam et al (2021) based on Bangladesh's first seven months encounter to Covid-19 have tried to compare the situation with developed countries and prescribed some robust measures for containing the virus.

As described in various research on the impact of Covid-19 in different sectors (Siddika and Islam,2020; Mostofa, 2021; Islam and Siddika, 2023), the study of Dutta and Smita (2021) discussed about the effect of Covid-19 on education, especially in tertiary level in Bangladesh. Due to educational institutions' closure, students and faculties had to suffer and this loss would be difficult to cover in the long run. The study of Kumar and Nafi (2020) is important because they showed the detrimental threats of Covid-19 in tourism sectors in Bangladesh. Many people lost their jobs and since there were no opportunities to create new jobs in this sector, the entire tourism sector could contribute to the national economy. Yeasmin et al (2021) argued that this pandemic has already kept a longstanding psychological influence on the children. Staying home, school closures and other family and social issues accelerated the crisis. Bodrud-Doza et al (2021) have also studied Covid-19 and its implications on psychological, social and economic issues and showed how people became marginalised due to this pandemic. Banna et al (2022) have completed a nationwide cross sectional study to understand the effect of Covid-19 on psychological health of people, adults in particular. Other notable works that this study reviewed includes but not limited to Islam M.A. et al (2021) on depression and anxiety and their relation to Covid-19, Sifat (2020)

on the effect of Covid-19 on domestic violence in Bangladesh, Islam and Siddika (2023) on the implications of the Covid-19 on extremism and efforts like CVE or deradicalization (Islam 2019) in South Asia and Mostofa (2020) on the security implications of the pandemic.

Lacuna in this genre of research is twofold. Firstly, no research in Bangladesh has been conducted which specifically tried to understand public perception on the government measures before this study was conducted in 2020. Secondly, no study has been conducted on the government's measure solely based on the early interventions. To fill-up the gaps in the literature, this paper has attempted to unearth how the general people viewed the early responses from the government in Bangladesh and a set of recommendations have been provided to counter such pandemics in future.

Methodology

Predominantly a stretchy research strategy was prepared contemplating the necessity of the study (Schmitter, 2008). This research was piloted by employing a mixed method strategy; incorporating both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative approach enables (Della Porta, 2008) this research to apprehend the general COVID-19 condition and to evaluate the government actions. During this study, data was collected by using survey method and by secondary literature searching which includes journal articles, books, websites and newspapers. To get a broader picture of the public opinion regarding the actions taken by Bangladesh, the survey method enabled this research to understand their positions from diverse groups.

After defining the research problem, a survey questionnaire was developed and was posted on Facebook walls of the members of the research team and Facebook friends were asked to participate in this survey(Siddika and Islam,2020). Survey was open for 48 hours and 190 responses were collected. The response rate was low because no professional agency was involved in this study to boost up this Facebook post asking for filling up survey forms. The survey responses were analysed accordingly with statistical calculation (Siddika and Islam, 2020).

Bangladesh's response to COVID-19

Bangladesh relatively got an extended preparative period to get equipped to fight the pandemic as the first confirmed case was found in early March, which is at least two months longer than many western countries. Immediately Bangladesh helped the return of 312 Bangladeshi students from China and reserved them quarantined at Haji Camp, Dhaka (Siddika and Islam, 2020, The Daily Star, 2020). Besides, the airport authority purchased a few thermal scanners, albeit some of them got technical problems (Siddika and Islam, 2020). Institutional quarantine was commenced relatively late for the confirmed Covid-19 infected; for the returnees from overseas, home quarantine was the option unless he or she has high temperature reckoned at the airport (Siddika and Islam 2020).Instead of taking

proper measures, some of the ministers including the health minister started portraying that they were capable of countering the virus at the very outset which made some veteran leaders of the rulings party uncomfortable due to unnecessary remarks of those ministers (The Daily Star 2020). Moreover, Bangladesh lacked dedicated hospitals, testing kits, labs, training for the front-line fighters, PPEs etc. until 29 March, and as of March 30, 2020 Bangladesh could set up 10 dedicated hospitals for COVID-19 patients (Alam et al 2021, Siddika and Islam, 2020). Albeit the health Minister claimed that Bangladesh purchased 90,000 testing kits, yet the IEDCR did not use those kits for not being gold standard (Siddika and Islam, 2020).

A positive change was visible when Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister addressed the nation on 25th and 31st March 2020 consecutively outlining her strategies to counter the pandemic and requesting the people to stay home. The March 25th address appears to be the foremost structure of Bangladesh in facing the pandemic. She said that the government is preparing specialised hospitals and establishing a good number of testing labs countrywide (Siddika and Islam 2020). Apart from her medical advices; she requested people to maintain social distancing and self-isolation. During the long holiday period, the government started to provide aid to the low-income people in different financial means whereas a bail out of 5 thousand crore Taka for the Garment industries was declared. She ordered the government to fight any rumour and help the administration accordingly (Siddika and Islam, 2020).

From the very outset, WHO (2020) recommended threefold measures to be implemented in every country- mainlining social distance; keeping an individual in self-isolation if infected to suspected and complete closure of social mobility which is also called lockdown. According to Jones (2020) social seclusion is the situation of complete dearth of communication between people and society. Resonating the prescriptions of the WHO, the government of Bangladesh started implementing such strategies from late March 2020 with an argument that such an initiative would curtail the Covid-19 infection rate.

A good number of academic research also claims that social distancing significantly lowers the chances of the Covid infection (Zhou, 2020; Milne and Xie, 2020). For example, Milne and Xie (2020) in their paper have argued that the curve of infected people dropped considerably where social distancing was applied. This strategy has been viewed as the best method to stop spreading this disease. A flatten curve enables a relatively dawdling spread of this virus and it helps to treat the patient accordingly. For instance, China could contain this virus from spreading after two months in China by employing these stated techniques (Alam et al., 2021).

Following the scientific data, WHO requested everyone to follow the scientific mechanisms which were co-opted by the Bangladesh government immediately. So, the initial response of the government sprung from scientific advice from the

WHO.   Thus, precisely the government suggested fivefold actions: long holidays (shadow lockdown), social distancing, isolation and home quarantine, aid for the marginalised, and empowering hospitals for testing and treating infected patients.

But from a critical point of view, how the public in general respond to such strategies can be a matter of discussion. Different accounts in media (The Prothom-alo, 2020, The Daily Star, 2020) exhibited that people of many places in Bangladesh despite a hard call from the law enforcing agencies didn't maintain distancing and they violated the rule; albeit social distancing is a must policy in this situation (Siddika and Islam, 2020), it is difficult to make people obey such interventions since it creates severe economic impacts (Baker, 2020).

Young people especially did have the most negative impact of lockdown because of staying home which cost their mental health along with economic, educational or social life (Gao, et al, 2020). Jones (2020) notes that a damaging consequence will be a side-effect of social distancing if actions are not taken to shrink this psychological burden for persons remaining home. Such impact facilitated some frustrated youths to become radicals because of relentless online usage (Islam and Siddika, 2023). Fearing the repercussions of staying home, the United Kingdom was reluctant to start nationwide lockdown in the early phases of the Pandemic (BBC, 2020). Like any other countries, people with low income seemed to be affected most and to minimise the implications, the Sheikh Hasina government initiated some stimulus packages.

The government affirmed a 72,750 crore BDT bailout for the RMG and other business sectors to minimise the economic impact of COVID-19 in the early months of the pandemic (Alam et al., 2021). The first 5000 crore was for the RMG sectors, the second 30,000 was given to the affected industries and service sectors as working capital on soft loan, the third 20,000 crore was disbursed to small and medium enterprises as working capital, the fourth was given to increase the Bangladesh Banks Development Funds from 3.5 billion dollar to 5 billion dollar so that they could help the importers of raw materials and the last 5000 crore was for Pre-shipment Credit Refinance Scheme under Bangladesh Bank (Siddika and Islam, 2020, The Daily Star, 2020). The prime minister was applauded from different sectors for such packages, albeit it did not cover agro-based sectors initially which was covered on later packages. But such packages were only given as a soft loan; not exclusively as aid. Critics made some points regarding the lack of detailed policy plan of the spending of such stimulus packages (Alam et al., 2021). As the chief executive of the country, she advised people to stay home and not to engage in panic buy.

Bangladesh started locked down (public holidays in particular) on 26th March shutting down offices but emergency services were kept accessible (Alam et al 2021, The Daily Star, 2020). Since the lock down situation, Bangladesh found limited cases of COVID-19 with less causality in the early weeks of the pandemic

(BBC, 2020). This method was hugely inspired from China who could contain the virus relatively better than the UK, Italy or the USA because of strict lookdown measures. Qiu (2020) in his study also mentioned that the initial success of China was brought due to lockdown. As a result, the Bangladesh government did have no alternative path rather than asking people to stay home.

Data demonstration

Respondents and their knowledge on COVID-19

From an open invitation, 189 responses were registered within the stipulated time frame of which 185 respondents disclosed their professions. A significant percentage of the respondents (63.8 percent) are students while 36.2 percent are professionals. Since the call for participation in this research was posted on Facebook, therefore it is likely that students will register more responses. Because young students have a propensity to spend much time online. In addition, researchers have many followers on social media. From our original data of this study, the following result can be mentioned.

" The respondents (n=189) who took part in the survey seem to be aware of the facts of COVID-19. In response to the question to what extent they have knowledge on Coronavirus, on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 designates minimum knowledge and 5 designates very good knowledge, 73.4 percent responded that they have good knowledge on COVID-19 whereas 3.2 percent respondent have low level of knowledge. 23 percent have an average knowledge. The respondents were mainly professionals and students over 18. That is why, most of them were aware of the facts of COVID-19 through different media. Among the respondents, nearly 99 percent are maintaining social distance corresponding to the government's request." (Siddika and Islam, 2020).

Mass support on declaring Covid-19 as war and PM's bailout plan

The pandemic has astounded the world leaders with the velocity it demonstrated around the world. The world leaders both from the global north and global south considered the situation as a war. Eventually they declared war against the pandemic. Seemingly, the prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declared a war against this virus to protect people from getting infected and to cure the patients (The Dhaka Tribune 2020). Subsequently, to reduce the economic impacts, the Sheikh Hasina government introduced a bailout plan, primarily for the Ready-made Garment sector and later on opened it for other sectors.

The respondents in this survey have echoed with the Prime Minister and her initial strategies. Among the respondents, 73.5 percent have shown their support for the prime Minister's declaration of war. In contrast, only 13.2 percent respondents did not support this position while the rest of the respondents were not certain whether to support or not to support such initiatives. Siddika and Islam (2020) writes: "The position of the respondents depicts that they are also considering this situation a crisis

not only for the country with high death toll, but also for a country like Bangladesh where population density is higher than any country of the world. If it once spread, the situation could be much worse than the other states have anticipated earlier."

In the initial phase of the pandemic, economic activities were shrinking and Bangladesh as one of the leading exporters of finished garment clothes started facing threats. To ease the threats, the government declared a stimulus package of BDT 5000 crore (The Financial Express, 2020). But most of the respondents, 66 percent, did not agree with the primary packages considering such an amount scant. The respondents considered that the amount should be increased and proper steps must be needed so that marginalised people are benefited through such incentives. A low of 9 percent participants thought the amount was enough for the RMGs as a primary bailout. Albeit the government declared a huge amount of stimulus packages for all sectors, but this study was conducted when only the first packages were declared.

Bangladesh's competence of countering COVID-19, and overall health care

Bangladesh has recently graduated to a Middle Income Country (MIC) from LDC which demonstrates the improved economic strength of the state. The development based philosophy of the existing government received enormous appreciation but the pandemic started challenging the overall state of socio-economic spectrum of the country by raising the very questions to what extent the state was ready to fight such pandemic from economic and health perspectives. Despite the progression in many visible development genres, the government, like the other developed countries in Europe and America started demonstrating the vulnerabilities regarding health issues. The participants of the survey conducted in the early months of the pandemic thought that the state was not capable of facing such a pandemic. Above 86% individuals who took part in the survey considered that the state lacks the capability to fight such pandemic in an effective way. Albeit, nearly 14% survey participants demonstrated a positive attitude towards the existing health systems.

Hospitals and Health centres are not functioning under an integrated system like the famous NHS of the United Kingdom. The health care facilities are disintegrated. Government hospitals face a lot of challenges, especially with lack of resources. Besides, private health care facilities are very expensive. When the Covid started spreading, such challenges were very evident both in public and private hospitals. There are reports where the private hospitals closed the treatment for the Covid infected patients, though they came back from that stance after the Prime Minister strictly ordered them to open the treatment from humanitarian grounds (The Daily Star, 2020).

The possible reason for public concern aggravated with the dilemma of Covid-19 equipment such as PPE, ventilators, disinfecting sprays etc. In addition, initially, the front line doctors and nurses were not well guarded since they did not receive

proper protective equipment, and training for effective delivery of treatment (The daily Star, 2020). For example, Bangladesh received only 29 ventilators as of late March. The number of daily tests of suspected Covid cases was initially limited which might contribute to the transmission faster in later months.

In this study nearly "92 percent people consider that the number of tests per day should be increased. This position corresponds to the position of WHO (2020) which suggests only more tests as the ultimate solution against combatting COVID-19. Most of the media reports showed that suspected COVID-19 patients were not admitted in any hospitals as they were not well equipped (The Dhaka Tribune, 2020). Testing kits were very limited as of March. More than 60 percent of respondents have the least belief in Bangladeshi hospitals that can fight COVID-19." (Siddika and Islam, 2020).

Lockdown, public closure and public support

After the Covid-19 outbreak, the government apparently wanted to begin a lockdown policy with immediate effect but instead the government did follow a strategic decision. The government declared a public closure of all kinds of offices and businesses for two weeks which was in principle another name of lockdown. This public closure/lockdown started on 27th March 2020 and there was a mass call for public closure/lockdown in social media and mainstream media (The Prothom-alo 2020). As a result, the government could proceed with the policy as a public demand. The importance of early lockdown can be understood from China, Italy, USA or the UK case where a delayed lockdown could result in the worst situation whereas a proper lockdown could facilitate the rapid containment. The lack of early lockdown demonstrated a lethal effect in the UK or Italy where China could show success due to strict lockdown in early 2020.

Facebook's impression has been reflected in this research where more than "65 percent people think that Bangladesh should have gone to complete shut down since early March; 34 percent respondents consider that the moment Bangladesh started lockdown was the right moment 65 percent respondents think that this lock down should continue for 1 month whereas 25 percent think that it should be continued till late May; and 9 % people think that this lock down should be continued till June 2020." (Siddika and Islam, 2020).

Albeit lockdown policy is relatively an effective policy to contain the virus, yet the socio-economic contexts of Bangladesh does not facilitate the state to continue such policy for a longer time, which subsequently might contribute to more social unrest, economic inequalities and rise of criminal incidents. A stretched lock down could facilitate more effective containment but that could lower the overall GDP of Bangladesh risking more people to fall into poverty traps. Thus, there are practical considerations which also guide a government to determine for how long such policy should be continued in such a pandemic situation.

Public attitude towards the Ministers' comments

After the outbreak, ministers from different ministries started commenting on the government's policy in a segregated way. As a result, there was a gap among their policy options and strategies. Because of such segregated comments, public attitude towards such comments was not positive. In this survey, the participants over 80% opined that the remarks made by the relevant ministers were not appropriate and showed their dissatisfaction. For instance, a minister opined that Bangladesh is way more stronger than Covid since Bangladesh has plenty of experiences in fighting calamities (The Prothom-alo 2020). A negligible portion (1 %) participants have echoed such positions positively. In addition, ministers affirmed that the hospitals and health centres are well equipped with proper resources which received only 9% positive response from the participants of the survey. Therefore public attitude towards their remarks negatively.

To minimise such issues, the prime minister addressed the nation on 25 March 2020 which was the first kind of policy briefing. It became very common in different countries that the Prime Minister/ President delivers the policy plan to the public which was evident in the case of countries like the UK, the USA or France. So, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh delivered her policy plan to inform people about the goals and strategies; and most importantly as a joint call for collaboration. Since this address, there were visible changes in initiatives such as increasing covid testing, increase of delivering PPE and strengthening the hospitals with additional resources. As a result, 38 percent participants consider that the Prime minister should have been the sole spokesman to deliver her policy plan while 38 percent consider that she has a more robust policy job rather than delivering public speech. The data clearly shows that there has been a positive attitude and trust on the Prime Minister facing the media because "if the Prime Minister faced the media alone, this might help everyone to understand the policy of the government." (Siddika and Islam, 2020).

Satisfaction over government measures

There were speculations on how Bangladesh could have been economically in leverage. Since Bangladesh is a leading RMG exporter and has experience of making good quality clothing, Bangladesh could export PPE in the world. Because after the breakout, there was a massive demand for such PPE. In addition, as a reputed nation for exporting medicine, Bangladesh could get leverage from this side too. Despite the request from countries like the USA, Bangladesh could not initially supply PPE to them (The Prothom-alo 2020). According to the data, 51.6% participants opined that Bangladesh missed the chance to get economic advantages while more than 21 percent individuals considered that Bangladesh has yet time to get such benefits. Despite such limitations, "people have a belief that if Bangladesh would utilize her preparatory time by making medical equipment, she could be in a leverage position" (Siddika and Islam, 2020).

To face such an unprecedented calamity, the government showed a mixed response of which some policies were instrumental to contain the virus. The infection rate was relatively lower than primarily anticipated due to the lockdown policy. Yet, there was a visible lack of well-coordinated efforts to reduce the lethal impact. Precisely, based on the early weeks' measures taken by the government the survey participants did make their decision whether they were fully satisfied with the actions to fight the virus where more than 40 percent participants expressed their satisfaction and around 50 percent expressed their concerns with the measures. This paper has found that despite there was a visible improvement of taking quality policy steps to contain the virus, at least from early April 2020, yet public attitude was relatively unenthusiastic. The underlying reason was the massive explosion of rumours on social media regarding the pandemic and different policy measures around the world.

Research grants and innovation

A massive difference was evident between the western universities and the Bangladeshi universities. Soon after the pandemic, many universities in the UK or the USA came up with the Covid vaccine. Those universities received enormous research grants in doing such projects while such initiatives were not evident in Bangladesh. Albeit with such limited opportunities, scientists in Bangladesh especially in the University of Dhaka, ICDDR,B, BSMMU stepped up to conduct some research on such issues. In addition, they started genome sequencing on a limited capacity to identify the variants of the Covid spread in Bangladesh. Respondents who participated in this survey have opined (97 percent) that the government and external funders need to escalate the research grants for the universities. Respondents understand that the failure to impact globally in such innovation is due to the lack of proper financing in research.

Conclusion and suggestions

Despite some effective early actions to contain the virus and to assist the marginalised people, the public perception has been evident as relatively unsatisfactory. The reason for this variations could be of many such as whether it is because of the misinformation or rumours or is it because of the late reaction by the government (Alam et al., 2021). It is challenging to pull a deduction brusquely. Albeit numerous assumptions can be built which can lead to future research in the concerned field. Data illustrates that the government's reaction commenced relatively late. Since people around the world started experiencing its lethal impacts, people desired faster reactions. The Prime Minister's early address could ease the situation and people would get a far-reaching policy instruction. Besides, a huge slit of coordination was evident among the concerned ministries.

This research has found that there was a huge shift of active response after the first address of the prime minister. For example, a robust measure was commenced by incorporating many dedicated hospitals for Covid patients, purchasing protective

and testing equipment. This research shows that the prime minister should have communicated her policy plans to the public instead of a segmented way as the ministers did before her speech. The Ministry of health partially failed to communicate to the public properly regarding preventing and countering the virus. Instead they failed to perceive the public demands and needs. The Ministry of information is also partly responsible for not sharing the measures taken by the government. This increased a vacuum and facilitated the rumours on social media (Alam et al., 2021). Based on the study, a few policy suggestions can be offered for working in a more comprehensive way to counter any pandemic.

Firstly, the government's policy should be communicated by the honourable Prime Minister directly to the media once such a big crisis comes. Otherwise, there is a chance of miscommunication. Secondly, the government must create a dedicated and inclusive scientific advisory committee who will be accountable to the prime minister. Thirdly, the health system must be revolutionised and the government must have the maximum share in health investments. Fourthly, the bailout plan should have been communicated in a more inclusive and better way. Fifthly, all the hospitals need to act in collaboration where each hospital must be kept open with appropriate shields for the vanguard doctors and nurses. Sixthly, there must be a well checked list of the marginalised people so that the government can send them aid when time comes. Finally, this paper emphasises on improved public relation offices of every ministry so that they can properly communicate their measures. Because the lack of proper communications helps to spread misinformation regarding the crisis.

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Notes : A pre-print of this study with raw data analysis was submitted in pre-print server Edaxiv and osf for knowledge dissemination. This study was one of the earliest studies in such field in early 2020.

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University Students' Productive Engagement: A Study from COVID-19 Pandemic in Bangladesh

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Abstract: *The purpose of the study is to encapsulate the engagement of university students in diversified productive activities during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the pre-COVID situation. A total of 215 responses from university students representing both males (60.5%) and females (39.5%) were collected through an online survey and the questionnaire included both open and closed-ended questions. The result shows the involvement of 32.1 percent of students in different volunteering, 61.4 percent in different self-development, and 53.5 percent in various income-generating activities during the period of COVID-19 academic shutdown together with various challenges faced by the students for not being engaged in any of these productive activities during this period. The findings also revealed that time spent on each category of activities remained higher during the COVID-19 situation than in the pre-COVID period. Online involvement (27%) during the COVID-19 restricted period and physical involvement (40.9%) in the pre-COVID period have dominated their manner of participation in productive activities. The outcome of the present study and the model generated by the authors will promote the scope to know more comprehensively about students' engagement in different productive activities giving them important insight to utilize their valuable time and future course of action amid the loss of the COVID-19 pandemic with the support from public and private organizations, educational institutions. The value of these findings and the associated model can be used to create a suitable ambiance for doing productive activities for university students and for being proactive.*

Keywords: *COVID-19, academic shutdown, productive involvement, skill development, income generation, volunteerism.*

Introduction

The whole globe is bemoaning the risks and lethal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have been with us since its inception in December 2019. The COVID-19 restricted period may impose many detrimental impacts on the physical and recreational activities of people; however, there are things that one can do to get help in studying, devolving their skills, and dealing with other issues more effectively in general. During the lengthy time of the COVID-19 restricted period, people have been trying to strike a great balance between rejuvenating themselves

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and still being productive, which has been the case throughout the whole situation (Nandini, et al., 2020). Social interaction and assisting people around oneself are proven to open the scope of the most useful way to feel well under the stressful lockdown period (Finnerty et al., 2021). Listening and practicing music is one of the most effective ways that young people have found to deal with stress, according to research conducted with different age groups (Vidas et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a widespread crisis in the learning of students from primary to tertiary level (Roe et al., 2021; Rapanta et al., 2020). Universities help the economy to grow by teaching students advanced technology skills and management approaches through their academic programs (Fejes et al., 2019), which was hindered in some way by the fact that traditional education was immobile for a long time during the restriction to continue in-person education. Following the unexpected outbreak of COVID-19 in Bangladesh in March 2019, all academic activities were abruptly halted. The higher education sectors especially the universities of Bangladesh remained shutting down to conduct any face-to-face teaching-learning activities for their academic sessions from March 2020 (Khan and Abdou, 2021). From March until August, though many private and public universities continued taking online classes with short syllabuses, public universities officially resumed their in-person classes in September 2021 [*]. University students who used to be occupied with multiple tasks and physical classes were then trapped indoors and were trying to find alternatives to make their time useful. University students' spending their time effectively in creative learning, and their engagement in extracurricular activities are rudimentary contributors to their overall wellbeing. It has been shown that participation in extracurricular activities is a key factor in the facilitation of problem-solving, the permitting of emotional expression, the enhancement of flexibility, and the contribution to the development of interpersonal skills (Fares et al., 2016). The utilization of COVID-19-restricted time with proper productive practices will contribute a lot to students' future endeavours. The first step in achieving a new level of imaginatively structured education that is based on the interests and goals of students is to shift the focus of education toward productive learning. When a socially beneficial product is being generated that has tangible utility for education and self-education, this is an example of productive learning, which shows creativity in the process of people's attempts to choose their destinies. These productive learning are thus described as an arrangement of individual and social activity that displays the search-based, creative, transforming character of learning and individuals can acquire the cumulative social experience as a new product from this learning that is subjective to them (I. S., 2017).

Students have no option but to supplement their hard talents with soft skills if they want to show their genuine potential and stand out from the crowd. In contrast to hard skills, which are acquired via formal education and work experience, soft skills are acquired through informal means such as self-study, interpersonal interaction,

communication, and other experiences. According to the literature, hard talents make up just 15 percent of a person's achievement, while soft skills make up the other 85 percent (Wats and Wats, 2009). New opportunities for learning and evaluation are provided by ICT for students who have grown up in a society where technology is integrated (Zahra et al., 2019). Knowledge of ICT also serves as a facilitator between the teaching of the curriculum and the development of business skills, and innovation strategies (Iqbal et al., 2022). In some contexts, access to learning and skill development was maintained through a sudden transition to online learning in technical and vocational education and training due to the COVID-19 pandemic (ILO and The World Bank, 2021). Still, students in higher education should be aware of the various needs and uses for technological skills in various areas of competence so that their future development can be more balanced in each of these areas and so that they can reflect on new ways of teaching and learning in higher education with quality (Rodrigues et al., 2021). Thus, practicing various software, apps, and tools during the COVID-19 period will serve fruitful purposes for the future professional careers of university students. As part of productive activities, university students are working relentlessly in this pandemic with the determination to help the community people in the crisis period. The young students are doing various volunteering works in commitment to support and aware people (Evans and Yosuf, 2022). They are also found to engage in volunteerism (31%) amid the crisis and they are much more active in donating to the Covid response (27%; ILO, 2021). The income-generating activities of young university students also were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study by ILO (2021) on global young people studying at the tertiary level revealed that around 42 percent of young people experienced their income reduced in time of the pandemic.

In this pandemic, the lives of students have changed, new issues have emerged, and new practices have developed as online business, home office, etc. To adapt to the fast-changing world and to attain the target of sustainable development goal 8.5 which calls for 'full and productive employment and decent work for all', it is time, for university students should allocate their valuable time wisely after productive activities. This survey represents the first one to be conducted in Bangladesh on the productive engagements of university students in pre and current COVID-19 context analysis. The analysis of their engagement in a variety of productive activities under the lens of gender, income, time spent, locality and academic level will help to evaluate students' motives in spending their valuable time and identify activities they are keener to practice.

Objectives of the Study

The motivation for this online survey included the desire to analyse the diverse activities students performed in the COVID situation, intending to fulfil their targeted goals ahead along with the pre-COVID activities. Therefore, the specific objectives of the study are-

    i.   To explore differences in students' involvement in different productive activities considering gender, locality, academic level, and university type.

    ii.   To evaluate the amount of time spent in different categories of productive activities during the restricted period of COVID-19 and pre-COVID period;

    iii.   To find out students' dependency on online or off-line activities during COVID-19 and pre-COVID situations; and

    iv.   To figure out the reasons for not being involved in any productive activities during the COVID-19 restricted period.

Methodology of the Study

Study Design and Survey Population

To elicit the engagement of the students of both public and private universities in diversified productive activities from the city, rural, and suburban areas of Bangladesh, an online survey was undertaken with a semi-structured questionnaire from September 22 to October 16, 2021. That was the ideal time to conduct the online survey as students were in their respective locality due to the countrywide lockdown and were participating in teaching-learning through online platforms. Online surveys facilitated the protection against the COVID-19 virus spread, which would not be possible if it involved offline engagements that were through face-to-face surveys. In the selection of survey respondents (n=215), snowball-sampling methods were carefully chosen where the Google forms were shared with colleagues, friends, and classmates via online platforms especially Messenger, emails, WhatsApp, etc. Then the recipients shared the Google form with students from different public and private universities and they participated in the survey with their consent. In addition, through online meetings using Zoom, Google Classroom, and messenger platform many respondents were informed about the objectives of the study and ways to answer the questions. Attention was given to having both male and female students assess the gender difference by engaging in productive activities considered from different dimensions like time spent, challenges, income generation, etc.

Study Instrument

In alignment with the research problem, students' engagements were studied based on three major categories of productive activities namely volunteering, self-development, and income-generating activities. Pretesting of the questionnaire was also conducted on ten (n=10) students, each from a different academic level, gender, and locality of the University of Dhaka to ensure the clarity of outcomes and to make necessary corrections to the questionnaire. Analysis of the responses found from pretesting was conducted to identify any inconsistencies, ambiguities, or omissions in the replies, with some reformulations being made to clarify the questions. To examine their pattern of time spent and associated material benefits from different

productive engagements in pre and current pandemic situations, students were asked about their daily average time spent after the activities along with the associated income they generated monthly by engaging in different income-generating activities.

Statistical analysis

For analysing the collected data, the SPSS 25 program along with excel based calculations was used to show the frequency and traits of productive activity types, the pattern associated with their online and offline engagement, time spent after each activity, etc. To assess the association between students' involvement in different productive activities with the general characteristics of the students, the *Pearson chi-square (χ2) test was conducted keeping the significant value at a 5% interval. In this regard, the null and alternative hypotheses are:*

i. for general characteristics (locality, gender, university type, academic level, etc.)

Ho: There is no significant mean difference between locality, gender, university type, academic level, and students' engagement in different productive activities (Volunteering, Self-development, and Income Generation).

Ha: There is a significant mean difference between locality, gender, university type, academic level, and students' engagement in different productive activities (Volunteering, Self-development, and Income Generation).

To estimate intergroup differences in students' involvement in productive activities, the Independent Sample Test (t-test) and Paired t-test were also carried out. The significance level was set as α=0.05. In addition, Levene's test for equal variances has been considered as a gauge to decide whether equal variance is assumed or not to incorporate the independent sample t-test results, since the test results are generated automatically in SPSS.

The assumed hypothesis for the independent sample test is categorized into three separate time spent activities during the restricted period of COVID-19 and the pre-COVID period. In addition, test results are checked in two groups, one for gender types (Male and Female) and the other for academic levels of students (Undergraduate and Postgraduate).

Therefore, the assumed null and alternative hypotheses in general consideration of COVID-19 and pre-COVID period are:

ii. for gender types (male and female)

Ho: There is no significant mean difference between male and female students' time spent in different productive activities (Volunteering, Self-development, and Income Generation).

Ha: There is a significant mean difference between male and female students' time spent activities in different productive activities (Volunteering, Self-development,

and Income Generation).

iii. for academic levels (Undergraduate and Postgraduate)

Ho: There is no significant mean difference between Undergraduate and Postgraduate student's time spent in different productive activities (Volunteering, Self-development, and Income Generation).

Ha: There is a significant mean difference between Undergraduate and Postgraduate student's time spent in different productive activities (Volunteering, Self-development, and Income Generation).

Finally, a paired t-test result has been calculated to find out the significant difference in income earned by the students in BDT between the pre-COVID and COVID-19 periods. Hence, the assumed null and alternative hypotheses are:

iv. for monthly income (BDT)

Ho: There is no significant mean difference between COVID-19 and pre-COVID amount of students' income in BDT.

Ha: There is a significant mean difference between COVID-19 and pre-COVID amount of students' income in BDT.

Findings

This part focused on the results of the present study. The tabulation of the study results is summarised and explained in detail with related references.

Profile of Students

Students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate levels from different public and private universities in Bangladesh are the respondents of this study. Of the total 215 respondents, undergraduate-level students represented 66 percent (n=142), and postgraduate-level representation was 34 percent (n=73). Among all the respondents, 60.5 percent were male (n=130) and 39.5 percent (n=85) were female students. The tertiary-level students in Bangladesh are generally aged 18 years; however, the mean age group of respondents in this current study is 23 with a minimum age group representation of 19 and a maximum of 27. In public universities, the dormitories accommodate most students coming from different districts. Other students are often found to arrange personal accommodations in different areas of the respective cities. This study found that most of the students were from the city area which represents 62.8 percent (n=135), the rest of the students were from the village (23.7%) and suburban (13.5%) areas.

Students' involvement in different productive activities

During the month's long academic shutdown owing to the high transmission rate of the novel Coronavirus, students had vigorous involvement in different types of activities. In the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the majority (83.7%;

n=180) of respondents answered positively when asked about their involvement in any productive activities whereas 16.3 percent (n=35) were not engaged in any productive activities. In many cases, the types of activities they performed during COVID-19 are quite different from their pre-COVID situation where they were seen to get involved mostly in different academic-related courses, content or article writing, field data collection, etc. activities. Among the three main categories of productive activities namely, volunteering services, self-development activities, and income-generating activities, about 61.4 percent (multiple responses, n=132) of students spent their lockdown time for self-development activities like getting involved in various skill development and learning courses. Furthermore, 32.1 percent (n=69) of surveyed students were involved in different volunteering activities and 53.5 percent (n=115) of students' involvement was recorded for income-generating activities. These findings positively portray that university students preferred to develop themselves through various activities during the pandemic situation most, without wasting their precious time by being passive.

Students' involvement in different types of volunteering activities

Volunteering activities of students under different social organizations or community service depict diversified social actions taking place in the community and on a personal level. Multiple responses were obtained (n=94; N=180) while asking for the types of volunteering activities they had been engaged in during the COVID-19 situation. The highest percentage of student involvement was recorded in engagement with different community-based volunteering organizations (12.2%; n=22; N=180) mainly focusing on Covid response-related activities, 10 percent students were involved in public awareness-related campaigns, 6.7 percent in relief aid assistance, and 6.1 percent students were recorded to involve in Covid related data collection activities (Figure 1). In addition, volunteering in the vaccination management program and mask distribution were stated by 3.3 percent of students. Having options for other volunteering services, students mostly preferred serving the community in their time of need and taking risks in their own lives. The volunteering activities hardly offer any economic benefit for the students nonetheless they had strong participation in assisting others in terms of psychological support (2.8%), free teaching (2.8%), helping people (2.2%), social services (2.2%), club activities (2.2%), and fund collection for needy students (1.7%), etc. Volunteering involvement in the pre-COVID represented differences compared to the COVID-19 situation (Figure 1). Specifically, in pre-COVID time highest number of students preferred to engage with various organization-based activities (20%), followed by public awareness (8.3%), free teaching (6.1%), data collection (6.1%), etc. activities. Here, the decline in the free educational service during the COVID-19 academic shutdown situation was remarkable (from 6.1% to 2.8%).
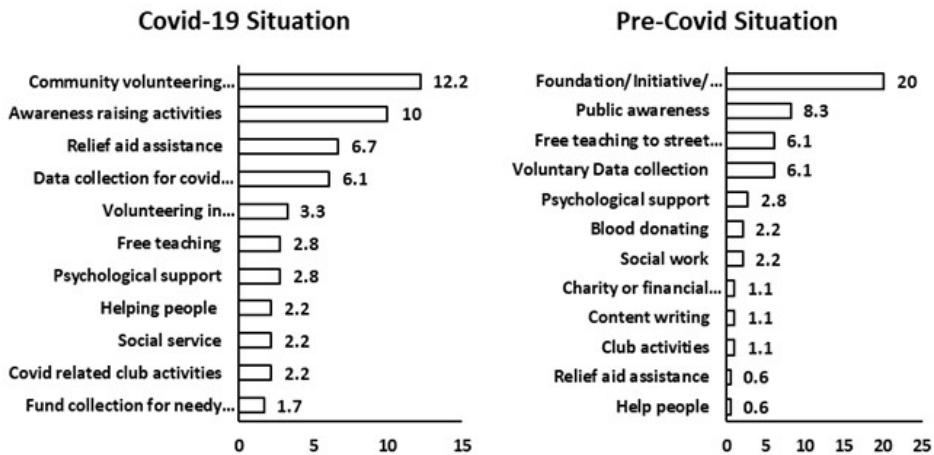
Figure 1: Students' (%) involvement in different volunteering activities during COVID-19 academic shutdown and pre-COVID situation

Conspicuously there was a six-fold increase in the involvement of students in relief aid assistance works (6.7%) during the current pandemic than the pre-COVID situation (0.6%). During the pandemic, they were also seen to get involved in club activities specifically focused on Covid-related issues (2.2%) though in pre-COVID time, only half of the students (1.1 %) did general club activities (1.1%). Activity like helping others (2.2%) also increased in the pandemic from the pre-COVID situation (0.6%) and it was the lowest performed activity among the students before the pandemic outbreak. Negligible numbers of students (1.7%) were also found to work for fundraising during the pandemic time (Figure 1).

Students' involvement in self-development activities

Amid many challenges of the COVID-19 situation, students who were involved in different self-development activities (Figure 2) showed extraordinary self-reliance. The study revealed that students in both the pre-COVID and COVID-19 situations were engaged not only in multiple skill development works or in activities. Figure 2 demonstrates the comparative analysis of their self-development activities in these two time frames. Most of the students were found to be engaged in computer skill-development-related courses (11.7%), graphic designing (11.1%), and leadership skills development courses (10%) during the pandemic. Besides, students were well documented to do other language learning courses (8.3%), various courses from the online based educational platform Coursera (8.9%), English language learning or IELTS practice (6.1%), learning different data analysis software (5.0%), digital marketing (3.9%), took preparation for their future endeavours such as internship (2.8%), app or web development, programming (2.2%), research and workshop (2.2%), GIS training (1.7%), writing articles (1.1%), etc. during the period of academic shutdown. Their interests in photography (7.8%), video making and editing (3.9%), drawing or painting (3.9%), book reading (1.7%),

religious practice or yoga (1.1%), etc. with various other activities (3.3%), were also recorded out from the responses.
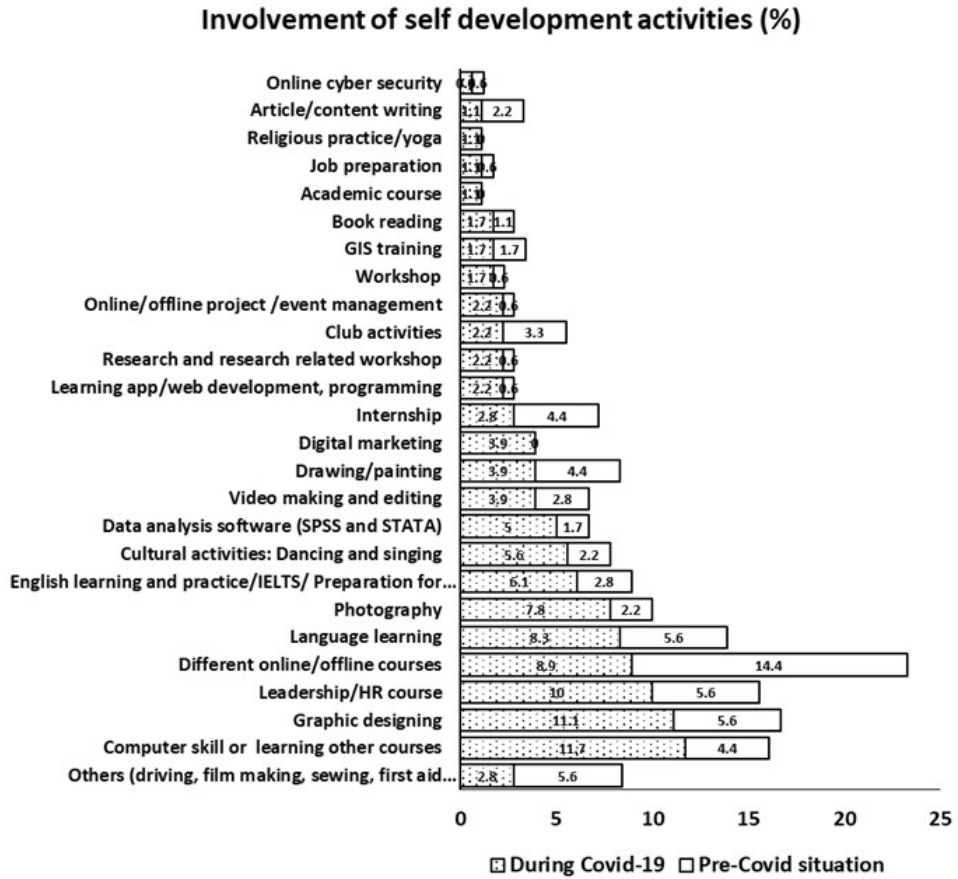
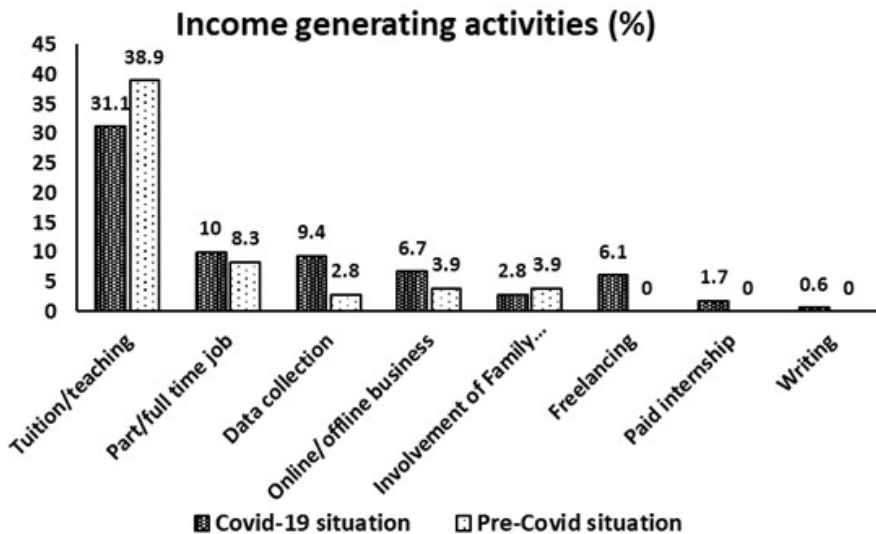## Involvement of self development activities (%)

Figure 2: Students' (%) involvement in different self-development activities during COVID-19 academic shutdown and pre-COVID situation

During the academic shutdown, increased participation is observed for a few self-development activities like computer skill development or learning courses where more than 11 percent of students strived for it during the pandemic than in the previous COVID-19 situation (4.4%). Besides, rise in preferred skill development activities in the COVID-19 restricted movement period were found for learning data analysis e.g., SPSS and STATA (5% from 1.7%), graphic designing (11.1% from 5.6%), leadership or human resource management courses (10% from 5.6%), digital marketing (3.9% from 0%), language learning (8.1% from 5.6%), cultural activities like dancing and singing (5.6% from 2.2%), etc. On the contrary, the reduction rate in participating in different online or offline-based courses (8.9% from 14.4%) and internships (2.2% from 4.4%) was also well documented during the pandemic.

Therefore, it is obvious from the findings that due to strict regulation to have COVID-19 safety protocols during the lockdown, university students prefer offline or physical activities, and they are more inclined to be engaged with activities that are based online and relatively safer to practice at home.

Students' involvement in income-generating activities

The participants pointed out many diversified sources from where they earned money to support themselves and their families both in pre-COVID and during the COVID-19 academic shutdown situation. Tuition (31.1%), part-time or full-time job (10%), data collection or field survey (9.4%), online or offline business (6.7%), and freelancing (6.1%) were the main income-generating sources for them during the COVID-19 restriction period (Figure 3). It was found that tuition was the main source of earning for students both in pre-COVID and during the pandemic situation. The findings also revealed that in the pre-COVID situation, 38.9 percent of students did tuition whereas in the COVID-19 pandemic, almost 7.8 percent less (31.1%) engagement was identified in this activity. In the case of doing part-time or full-time jobs, the respondents were seen to be involved a little more in pandemic time (10%) than the pre-COVID time (8.3%).

Figure 3: Students' (%) involvement in different income generating activities during COVID-19 academic shutdown and pre-COVID situation

The increased participation in income generation during the pandemic was observed for activities like data collection (9.4% from 2.8%), and self-business: online or offline (6.7% from 3.9%). Interestingly students found new sources to earn during the COVID-19 academic shutdown time which included freelancing (6.1%), paid internship (1.7%), and writing (0.6%) while they were not involved in those activities in the pre-COVID period (Figure 3).

Amount of money earned from income-generating activities

During the COVID-19 restricted situation, a minimum of 400 BDT ($4.66) to a maximum of 65000 BDT ($757.62) has been earned monthly by the students with a mean±SD of 11393±12239 ($132.79±142.66; Table 1). On the other hand, in the regular pre-COVID period they had earned a minimum of 100 BDT ($1.17) to a maximum of 100000 BDT ($1165.57) per month with a mean of 13772±17855 ($160.52±208.12). The majority of students in the pandemic shutdown period (18.6%) earned BDT 1000-5000 monthly and the second highest income range was BDT 50001-10000 for 12.1 percent of students.

Amounts earned	COVID-19 situation			pre-COVID situation		
	n	%	mean±SD	n	%	mean±SD
>1000	3	1.4	550±180.3	2	0.9	350±353.6
1000-5000	40	18.6	3887.5±1232.5	34	15.8	3882.4±1255.6
5001-10000	26	12.1	7807.7±1575.3	24	11.2	6637.5±3359
10001-15000	13	6.0	13923±1552.5	8	3.7	13500±1603.6
15001-20000	3	1.4	17333.3±2309.4	6	2.8	18666.7±2065.6
20001-30000	8	3.7	23441.6±1723.4	4	1.9	24000±1825.7
30001-40000	4	1.9	37500±2886.8	6	2.8	38333.3±2582
40001-50000	2	0.9	50000±0.0	2	0.9	50000±0.0
<50001	2	0.9	60000±7071.1	3	1.4	85000±25980.8
Total	101	47.0	11392.9±12239.3	89	41.4	13771.9±17855.2

Table 1: Amount of money earned (monthly) from income-generating activities

Source: Survey, 2021

Time spent in different productive activities

To learn the necessary technical and soft skills and to get engaged in other productive activities apart from academic study, students in both pre and during-COVID-19 situations segmented their daily, weekly, and monthly time frame after such activities. From Table 2, it is comprehended that a higher percentage of students had one-to-three-hour time spent (daily) on different productive activities both in COVID-19 and pre-COVID situations.

Regarding spending specific hours after each productive activity, the findings reveal that most university students (13.9%) were active workers in volunteering activities during this pandemic, and they have worked for two hours daily in this regard. The highest percentage of students (19.4%) worked in volunteering activities for one hour daily in pre-COVID situations. On average students spent three hours daily (mean±SD=2.9±1.7) during the COVID-19 restricted period and two hours daily (mean±SD=2.0±1.5) during the pre-COVID situation doing

various volunteering activities. This finding illustrates the strong motivation of university students to act selflessly and efficiently to serve their community during this pandemic time. In self-development activities, students in the highest percentage were recorded to spend one hour daily both during COVID-19 (27.8%) and the pre-COVID situation (22.2%). The average time spent on self-development activities during the COVID-19 period is higher (mean±SD=2.7±2.7) than in the pre-COVID period (mean±SD=2.2±1.7). To generate income highest percentage of students were found to spend two hours daily (12.8%) in the COVID-19 period whereas the highest 15 percent of students spent one hour daily (Table 2) in the pre-COVID period. On average, students were found to spend more time after income-generating activities in the COVID-19 situation with a mean hour spent of 2.8 than in the pre-COVID situation where they spent an average hour of 2.7 (Table 2).

Though they spent more time, their amount of earnings remained lower during the COVID-19 period than the pre-COVID normal period (Table 1). Table 2 also demonstrates that daily time spent on volunteering activities remains high followed by income-generating and self-development activities.

Time Range	Volunteering activities				Self-development activities				Income generating activities			
	COVID-19 situation		pre-COVID situation		COVID-19 situation		pre-COVID situation		COVID-19 situation		pre-COVID situation	
	n	%	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1 hr	16	8.9	35	19.4	50	27.8	40	22.2	21	11.7	27	15.0
2 hrs	25	13.9	9	5.0	21	11.7	18	10.0	23	12.8	16	8.9
3 hrs	12	6.7	9	5.0	22	12.2	8	4.4	15	8.3	22	12.2
4 hrs	11	6.1	3	1.7	5	2.8	5	2.8	10	5.6	5	2.8
5 hrs	5	2.8	3	1.7	1	0.6	3	1.7	8	4.4	4	2.2
6 hrs	4	2.2	---	---	2	1.1	1	0.6	3	1.7	1	0.6
7 hrs	1	0.6	2	1.1	4	2.2	5	2.8	12	6.7	7	3.9
<7 hrs	2	1.1	0	0.0	8	4.4	---	---	10	5.6	10	5.6
Total	76	42.2	61	33.9	113	62.8	80	44.4	102	56.7	92	51.1
mean±SD	2.9±1.7		2.0±1.5		2.7±2.7		2.2±1.7		2.8±3.8		2.7±3.4	

Table 2: Time spent after different productive activities in both COVID-19 and pre-COVID situation

Source: Survey, 2021

Mode of engagement in different productive activities

In reaction to the escalating coronavirus outbreak, education officials have been compelled to postpone physical classes throughout the world and it is reported that the use of the internet among students stood high during this time (Jahan et al.,

2021). The current study findings (Table 3) show that students were less engaged in in-person productive activities during the pandemic situation (19.5%) than in the pre-COVID situation (40.9%) whereas online involvement of respondents during the pandemic double (27%) of the engagement in pre-pandemic time (14%). Students' mode of engagement, both online and offline, was higher throughout this pandemic situation (35.8%) compared to the pre-COVID situation (27.4%). This result gives important insight into the support for online facilities and supportive devices for students during COVID-19 time, so that, they can better utilize their time and get involved in different productive activities.

Mode of Engagement in Productive Activities	In COVID-19 Situation		In pre-COVID Period	
	n	%	n	%
Physical engagement	42	19.5	88	40.9
Online engagement	58	27	30	14
Both	77	35.8	59	27.4

Table 3: Students' preferred mode of engagement (%) in different productive activities during COVID-19 restricted and pre-COVID period

Source: Survey, 2021

Reasons for not being involved in any productive activities during Covid-19 academic shutdown

University students are more likely to be involved in various active works, although in the current study, 16.3 percent of participants chose not to get involved in any productive activities during their leisure in the COVID-19 restricted period. In open-ended questions, students marked multiple reasons (n=64; %=29.8) for their non-involvement in any productive activities during this period. Among the 64 responses, reasons such as 'no internet access' (5.6%) and 'mental pressure' or related 'issues' (5.6%) remain the highest for their non-involvement in any productive time during the above-mentioned period. Other reasons for being non-productive includes financial problem (4.2%), lack of devices (3.3%), no support from family (2.8%), family problem (1.9%), physical issues (0.9%), unwillingness or being lazy (0.9%), lack of motivation (0.9%), no time (0.5%), personal problem (0.5%), psychological retardation (0.5%), etc. Very few students also identified various other reasons for being non-productive includes want of financial support, caregiving, etc.

To understand the association of students' engagement in different productive activities with their gender, academic level, University type, and locality has been examined by Pearson chi-square ($\chi2$) test. The results reveal that the participation of university students in two types of productive activities such as self-development and volunteering was independent of their locality (city, urban, and suburban area), gender (male and female), university type (public

and private), and academic level (Undergraduate and Postgraduate) which indicate that there is no association in the cases of attributes. However, in the case of students' involvement in income-generating activities, a positive association is found with the university type (public and private) as the *p-value is less than 0.05 (0.005<0.05). Again, for the academic level and students' involvement in income-generating activities, a close association is observed with a p-value of 0.024 (0.024<0.05) (Table 4).*

Attributes	Pearson Chi-Square ($\chi 2$)		
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
General characteristics vs. students' involvement (Yes/No) in volunteering activities during COVID-19			
Locality	0.601	2	0.741
Gender	1.082	1	0.298
University type	0.500	1	0.479
Academic level	0.179	1	0.673
General characteristics vs. students' involvement (Yes/No) in self-development activities during COVID-19			
Locality			
Gender	2.372	2	0.305
University type	0.330	1	0.566
	3.017	1	0.082
Academic level	0.419	1	0.518
General Characteristics vs. Students' Involvement (Yes/No) in income generating activities during COVID-19			
Locality	2.190	2	0.334
Gender	0.080	1	0.777
University type	7.713	1	***0.005
Academic level	5.104	1	***0.024

Table 4: General characteristics vs. students' involvement (Yes/No) in productive activities during COVID-19 academic shutdown

*P < 0.05; **P < 0.01; ***P < 0.001

An *Independent sample test (t-test)* on gender with total time spent in different productive activities is done for both the COVID-19 pandemic period and pre-

COVID period (Table 5), and the assumed null hypothesis was set as *"There is no significant mean difference between male and female students' time spent in different productive activities (Volunteering, Self-development, and Income Generating)"*. At 5% level of sig. (2-tailed) the value for male and female time spent in each productive activity for the COVID-19 shutdown period denoted 0.875>0.05, 0.473>0.05, and 0.116>0.05 respectively. Alternatively, in 95% of the confidence interval, the difference in time spent for volunteering, self-development, and income-generating activities consecutively ranges between 2.007 to 2.353 hours, 0.639 to 1.369 hours, and 0.016 to 0.226 hours (Table 5). Likewise, the male and female students' involvement in volunteering, self-development, and income-generating activities back in the pre-COVID situation show insignificant results at a 5% level of significance and the calculated values are 0.308, 0.186, and 0.579 respectively which all are greater than 0.05 (Table 5). It depicts that irrespective of any situation (COVID-19 shutdown and pre-COVID) both male and female students remain active and spend time in different productive activities equally, though time spent in volunteering activities remains higher in the COVID-19 period than pre-COVID period (Table 5).

However, the mean difference in time spent between Undergraduate and Postgraduate level students in different productive activities shows statistically insignificant results for both pandemic and pre-COVID periods. The sig. (2-tailed) values of mean differences for volunteering, self-development, and income-generating activities of Undergraduate and Postgraduate level students correspondingly show 0.319>0.05, 0.163>0.05, and 0.709>0.05 during the COVID-19 period whereas the sig. (2-tailed) values of the mean difference in time spent between Undergraduate and Postgraduate level students in different productive activities during the pre-COVID period stands for 0.489>0.05, 0.08>0.05, and 0.276>0.05 respectively (Table 5). Similarly, at a 95% confidence interval, differences in time spent range between 0.661 to 1.131 hours in volunteering activities, 0.245 to 1.470 hours in self-development activities, 0.908 to 1.329 hours in income-generating activities in the COVID-19 academic shutdown period, and during the pre-COVID period and the values are ranges between -1.077 to 0.521 hours, -1.403 to 0.083 hours, and -1.787 to 0.516 hours respectively for the same series of activities (Table 5). Therefore, following the alternative hypothesis, *Ha: There is a significant mean difference between Undergraduate and Postgraduate students' time spent in different productive activities (Volunteering, Self-development, and Income Generating),* it can be said that both Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels students equally spent their valuable time in different productive activities but with different values in the period of both pre-COVID and during COVID-19 period. Though the overall results show indifferent participation regarding time spent on different activities from gender and academic level, the amount of time spent on volunteering, self-development, and income-generating activities is higher in the pandemic situation than in the pre-COVID situation in the case of both male and female and Undergraduate and Postgraduate level students. It is also noted that

both Undergraduate and Postgraduate level students remain more active in income-generating activities during the COVID-19 period than in the pre-COVID period.

t-test on Gender and Academic level with time spent in volunteering, self-development, and income-generating activities						
	Items	*t*-test for Equality of Mean			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
	Time Spent in Volunteering Activities					
COVID-19 academic shutdown period	*Gender	0.158	0.875	0.173	2.007	2.353
	**Academic Level	-1.003	0.319	1.145	0.661	1.131
	Time Spent in Self-development Activities					
	Gender	0.720	0.473	0.365	0.639	1.369
	Academic Level	1.415	0.163	0.613	0.245	1.470
	Time Spent in Income-Generating Activities					
	Gender	-1.584	0.116	0.895	0.016	0.226
	Academic Level	0.374	0.709	0.211	0.908	1.329
	Time Spent in Volunteering Activities					
	Gender	1.028	0.308	0.409	0.386	1.205
	Academic Level	-0.695	0.489	0.278	-1.077	0.521
	Time Spent in Self-development Activities					
pre-COVID period	Gender	1.334	0.186	0.497	-0.244	1.237
	Academic Level	-1.767	0.08	0.660	-1.403	0.083
	Time Spent in Income-Generating Activities					
	Gender	0.558	0.579	0.327	-0.837	1.491
	Academic Level	-1.097	0.276	0.636	-1.787	0.516
Paired sample t-test for the significant measurements between COVID-19 and pre-COVID amount of Income by the students in BDT						
Pair		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	

Amount of income in BDT during	Mean	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Lower	Upper
COVID-19 and pre-COVID period 2762.179	-1.6	0.104	-6101.748	577.389	

Table 5: Independent sample test (t-test) and Paired sample t-test for time spent and amount of income by the students during COVID-19 restricted and pre-COVID period

(*Male, Female; **Undergraduate, Postgraduate)

Furthermore, according to the suggestions of *Levene's test*, all the results are true for equal variances in three of the productive activities corresponding to their group variables. According to the results of the paired sample t-test assuming the null hypothesis of "*there is no significant mean difference in the amount of students' income (BDT) between COVID-19 and pre-COVID situation*" listed in Table 5, is not statistically significant since the *p-value* is 0.104>0.05. Though students are spending more time on productive activities in the COVID-19 restricted situation, their average income (BDT) remains lower than in the pre-COVID period and the value for the mean difference in income is 2762.179 (BDT).
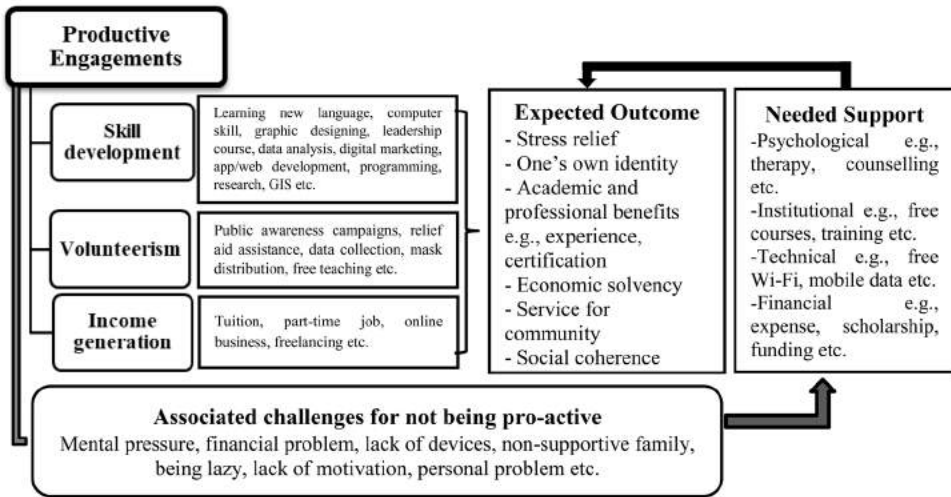
Figure 4: Tentative model of becoming better version of oneself by being pro-active

Discussion

The present research aimed at identifying university students diversified productive involvements during the pandemic restriction period and pre-pandemic situation. Findings from the study showcased that during the COVID-19 period, students participated in a variety of voluntary activities relating to COVID-19 needs,

fundraising, providing psychological assistance to distressed individuals, assisting people in overcoming trauma, etc. (Figure 1). The results depict the extraordinary support the community received from the university students in this critical juncture of the COVID-19 pandemic. They worked to protect their society, and family members, and thus had a significant impact on cumulative national afford to overcome the COVID-19 situation. Holdsworth and Brewis (2014) emphasized that young people's expectations and ambitions should be integrated into institutional processes that promote and support volunteering.

In terms of self-development engrossment during the COVID-19 period, the study findings reveal that students were engaged in various skill development activities such as different leadership courses, preparation for higher education, different language learning, graphic designing, software learning, etc. to improve their excellence or fill in gaps. Same as the case study findings of Zubayer and Obaidullah (2020), conducted on Bangladesh's university students where students were also recorded working productively throughout the academic shutdown time by taking various online courses. Again, the study of Nandini et al. (2020) reveals that 93.3 percent of respondents reported having gained new knowledge because of their self-isolation during the lockdown. Our current study also demonstrates similarity in students' being engaged in different self-development activities (61.4 %; n=132). The fulfilment of different interests like dancing, drawing, painting, and singing was also well documented in this current study (Figure 2).

The lockdown resulted in the loss of jobs and decreased chances to generate cash, particularly for those working in the informal economy in the developing country, the majority of whom are young people (United Nations, 2020). In the case of Bangladeshi, though there was a country-wide lockdown for several weeks for two phases and strict health safety measures were imposed, the restricted situation severely impacted the university students mentally (Hossain et al., 2021) which might be sourced from the sudden shift in academic, personal, and professional life. The current result shows that young students (more than 50% of respondents) still managed to be involved with income-generating activities either on a part-time or full-time basis. Except for the tuition-based income earning, students also seemed to depend on online-based income-generating activities, notably freelancing, and online business (Figure 3), and these activities were quite popular among the students during this COVID-19 temporary shutdown period.

In this current study along with the evaluation of different productive engagements of students, several challenges were also addressed that caused hindrances to the students' direct engagements in different productive activities during the COVID-19 restricted period. Want of internet access, mental pressure or related issues, financial problems, lack of device, want of family support, physical issues, lack of motivation, etc. challenges were identified in this study. A similar study by Rawlings et al. (2022) conducted on the impacts of COVID-19 on university

students in Uganda reveals that due to challenges like poor internet connectivity, expensive internet data packages, and lack of access to computers, the students are behind in accessing online-based learning platforms.

A tentative model of the process of ensuring students' engagement in different productive activities during the pandemic period and the regular period has been developed (Figure 4) which illustrates that increased participation in different activities will generate benefits for the student's future academic and professional career. They will be able to gather experience and have a sense of purpose and motivation in life, which in turn allows for more participation in productive activities and social cohesion. Economic benefits will empower the young students along with the scope to support their families. To achieve sustainable goals 4 of 'to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all' focusing the target 4.5 of 'eliminating all discrimination in education' the nation needs to focus more on the groups of students who were disadvantaged and lagged from achieving these goals. Our current model reveals that developing single or multiple skills and self-confidence may help students to better perform in the workplace, as well as may lead to a more positive student identity. Thus, students require combined support from the government, non-government, and institutional sectors to identify their needs and overcome their challenges. A model of the development of student identity adopted by Liljeholm et al. (2021) also confirms that academic and personal lives will flourish if such productive activities are well-planned and practiced properly. Students can also generate their own identities by making the best use of not only the restricted period of COVID-19 but also any type of leisure period. The activities students are involved in during the COVID-19 pandemic situation that can generate productive outputs for their personal growth, social welfare, and economic solvency will give them an identity to embrace a very impactful future ahead.

Conclusion

Despite facing many difficulties during this pandemic, students are spending their time efficiently on a variety of constructive activities. Students are opting for various self-development facilities available online other than the university-facilitated face-to-face programs. The findings from the current study will give tertiary-level students an insight into this regard so that students can benefit from utilizing their productive activities in more fruitful ways for a future career with the support of public and private bodies. The activities that were popular among university students as found in this study can be made more accessible, and less costly and the challenges identified will need special heed. Altogether the scope to earn from diversified but useful activities will help the students to become independent financially and meet their demands. Encouraging students to obtain the necessary skills, courses, and training and making extra investments in the internet and other forms of infrastructure may help them to become more efficient. University authorities and the overall national policy of Bangladesh especially for the young students thriving for learning and

competing with the outer world need to facilitate with proper support and required arrangements. However, more studies are required to understand the transitional experiences that students have while moving from traditional activities they used to do to online-based learning by which students can get help in conducting their productive activities more effectively in the future.

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Racialized Identity, Then and Now: Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, the Rise of Donald Trump, and the Role of Academia

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Abstract: *This paper explores the formation of racialized and gendered identities in Toni Morrison's novel The Bluest Eye. To this end, the intervention aims at analysing how these identities are constructed along the colour line and also reconnoitred in the novel by putting W. E. B. Du Boas' seminal term "double consciousness" into operation. The study also zeroes in on the sea change taking place in the United States in the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election and beyond to demonstrate how various racial constructions are still at work in assorted forms and practices and reinforced under the guise of Donald Trump's slogan of "make America great again". It, further, tries to show how we can address these issues by drawing on the course Critical Race and Ethnic Studies taught in the American academia that can eventually, to certain extents, help us to identify several critical tools and paradigms to deal with the politics of the "personal and spiritual" with a view to envisioning a future in relation to emancipation and equity.*

Toni Morrison, in her first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), takes issue with the predominant white standards of beauty and makes it evident that the concept of beauty is socially constructed. Morrison also identifies how taking whiteness for granted as the standard of beauty (or anything else) devalues the worth of Blackness, thus undermining or destabilizing that very tendency in her novel. With her characters' insistence on taking pride in being Black, she also concentrates on the damage Black women have incurred by modeling themselves on the mainstream standard of feminine beauty in a racialized society. Hence, the current study examines the construction of racialized and gendered identities in Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*. My intervention aims at analyzing how these identities are fashioned along the color line and also reconnoitered in the novel by putting W.E.B. Du Bois' seminal term "double consciousness" into operation. The study also zooms in on the sea change taking place in the United States in the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election and during the four-year-regime of President Donald Trump to demonstrate how various racial constructions are still at work in assorted forms and practices and reinforced under the guise of his slogan of "Make America Great Again." It, further, manages to show how we can

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address these issues by drawing on some critical tools and paradigms growing out of the course like Critical Race and Ethnic Studies taught here at many universities in the United States: the selfsame critical tools that can help us to deal with what Lata Mani calls "the personal and spiritual as political" with a view to envisioning a future in relation to emancipation and equity (quoted in Vang, "Prompt," 16 Nov 2016). Now, before we address the issues of racialized beauty in Morrison's novel, it will be appropriate to dwell on Du Bois' concept of "double consciousness."

In defining "double consciousness," Du Bois looks at it as a dual identity experienced by the African American individual — both as a Black African and an American — a duplicated responsiveness encumbered with the anxiety/dilemma of living in an American society which "yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world" (5). He typifies the Negro two-ness as "an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being asunder" (5). The vital point in Du Bois' argument is that the American Negro desires to exist wholly and live completely, both as a Black African and an American, without any formidable constraints to professional advances, self-realization, and emotional assertion. Writers belonging to the African American literary tradition seek to forge, in general, special devices to deal with issues surrounding the American Negro's double-consciousness, with women writers giving particular weight to said issues. And in her works, especially in *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison links the Negro two-ness with that of the Negro woman and its conceptual and practical intimations and ramifications. Now, to problematize the issues surrounding beauty in its relation to double-consciousness, it will be apposite to explore the reactions of Morrison's characters in the novel. To this end, the paper will first consider constructions of femininity and then suggest how Morrison's Black characters respond differently to the prevailing white standards of beauty.

To begin with, the novel's protagonist, Picola Breedlove, epitomizes the conflation of the two-ness of femininity with a personal quest for identity, self, and humanity. During her quest, she advances an uncritical compliance to the values of white beauty while simultaneously discarding those of her Black culture. In her pursuit of the ideals of the beauty endorsed by the white world, Pecola undergoes a mental and physical disequilibrium, and her lunacy puts off her dream of forming her own brand of identity, self, and humanity. The reason Pecola Breedlove longs for blue eyes is that she sees herself, and is considered by most of the characters in the novel, as ugly and unappealing. The criterion of beauty that her peers endorse is represented by the white child actress, Shirley Temple, who was perceived as possessing the desired blue eyes. The novel opens with the description of an ideal white family where we encounter Dick and Jane and their gorgeous parents residing in a pleasant and cozy house with a pretty dog and cat. The Dick and Jane episode functions as a force demonstrating the supremacy of having "the bluest

eye," by which a dominant culture reproduces "hierarchical power structures," testifying to Foucault's assertion:

> A 'political anatomy', which was also a 'mechanics of power', was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus, the discipline produces *subjected body and practiced bodies, docile bodies*. (1995, 138, italic mine)

The Dick and Jane text implies one of the primary and most insidious ways that the dominant culture exercises its hegemony is through the educational system. It reveals the role of education in both oppressing the victim and — more to the point — teaching the victim how to oppress her own Black self by internalizing the values that dictate standards of beauty. The standard of white beauty has emerged at the expense of other forms of beauty, such as Black beauty, Asian American beauty, Mexican American beauty, and the like, thus turning them into what can be called, in line with Michel Foucault's assertion, "subjugated" or subordinated forms of knowledge, and by my extension, "subjugated" form of beauty:

> …by subjugated knowledges one should understand something else, something which in a sense is altogether different, namely, a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. (1988, 82)

Set against this hegemonic identity, the key Black characters in *The Bluest Eye* are portrayed as situated in three hierarchical families: first, Geraldine's family (light-skinned), then the mid-level MacTeers, and finally, the Breedloves at the bottom of the social order. The novel exposes how these Black characters act variously in response to the dominant white culture and undermines simple binary social divisions, thus giving rise to double consciousness along the color line.

Pauline Breedlove, Geraldine, Maureen Peal, and Pecola are Black characters who strive to conform to an enforced ideal of femininity. They are captivated and marginalized by the "cultural icons portraying physical beauty": movies, billboards, magazines, books, newspapers, window signs, dolls, and drinking cups. Pauline Breedlove, for example, learns about physical beauty from the movies. In Morrison's words,

> Along with the idea of romantic love, she was introduced to another — physical beauty. Probably the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought. Both originated in envy, thrived in insecurity, and ended in disillusion. In equating physical beauty with virtue, she stripped her mind, bound it, and collected self-contempt by the heap. (*The Bluest* Eye, 120)

Accordingly, in trying to adapt to the ideal of white femininity, the Black women characters deride their Blackness, which in turn leads to self-contempt. They see themselves through the eyes of white people, and their adulation of white beauty also has disparaging consequences on their own community. This is, as Du Bois argues, "a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (5).

Geraldine, for example, represses her Black characteristics that do not align with the white femininity she strives to achieve:

> Here they learn the rest of the lesson begun in those soft houses with porch swings and pots of bleeding heart: how to behave. The careful development of thrift, patience, high morals, and good manners. In short, how to get rid of the funkiness. The dreadful funkiness of passion, the funkiness of nature, the funkiness of the wide range of human emotions. (81)

Geraldine also eschews the company of Pecola when she sees her in her house as Pecola appears to exemplify all the undesirable aspects of her visions of Black girls: Geraldine

> …saw the safety pin holding the hem of the dress up. Up over the hump of the cat's back she looked at her [Pecola]. She had seen this little girl all of her life. Hanging out of windows over saloons in Mobile, crawling over the porches of shotgun houses on the edge of town, sitting in bus stations holding paper bags and crying to mothers who kept saying "Shet up!" (89-90)

Being well educated and having adopted white-perceived ways of life, Geraldine differentiates between "colored" and "Black." She deliberately teaches her son her conception of the differences between colored and Black:

> White kids; his mother did not like him to play with niggers. She had explained to him the difference between colored people and niggers…. Colored people were neat and quiet; niggers were dirty and loud…. The line between colored and nigger was not always clear; subtle and tell-tale signs threatened to erode it, and the watch had to be constant. (85)

Maureen Peal, a light-skinned Black girl at school, also thinks that she is pretty and Pecola is ugly, and Morrison notes a hierarchy of skin tone marking nearness and remoteness in relation to idealized physical attributes:

> A high-yellow dream child with long brown hair braided into two lynch ropes that hung down her back. She was rich, at least by our standards, as rich as the richest of the white girls, swaddled in comfort and care. The quality of her clothes threatened to derange Frieda and me. (60)

Maureen has captivated the entire school with her physical attractiveness and was treated well by others. When teachers called on her, they smiled soothingly. Even people from both communities — Black and white — looked upon her decently: "Black boys didn't trip her in the halls; white boys didn't stone her, white girls didn't suck their teeth when she was assigned to be their work partners; black girls stepped aside when she wanted to use the sink in the girls' toilet, and their eyes genuflected under sliding lids" (60-61).

Quite the reverse, Pecola, unlike Maureen, having been treated very badly by most people surrounding her, yearns to have blue eyes in the hope that people will love her. Therefore, in the process of trying to achieve beauty, the capability of Black characters strikingly differs from those of other communities. This can unmistakably be grasped in the ways that some of the Black women in Morrison's novel persevere, as shown above, in trying to emulate white American standards of beauty.

However, not all the Black characters adulate or are in awe of white standards of beauty. The novel also gives voice to Black people who are mindful of the jeopardy of espousing Caucasian standards of beauty. Claudia, the novel's primary narrator, recounts herself as apathetic to both white dolls and Shirley Temple. She also recognizes that she does not really hate light-skinned Maureen; rather she hates the thing that makes Maureen perceived by others as beautiful and striking: "And all the time we knew that Maureen Peal was not worthy of such intense hatred. The *Thing* to fear was the *Thing* that made *her* beautiful, I and not us" (74, emphasis in original).

As children, both Claudia and her sister, Frieda, are content with their variance, their Blackness: "We felt comfortable in our skins, enjoyed the news that our senses released to us, admired our dirt, cultivated our scars, and could not comprehend this unworthiness" (72). This may suggest that Claudia resists the pressure to conform to a white vision of beauty. Moreover, Claudia only later comes to love Shirley Temple: "I learned much later to worship her, just as I learned to delight in cleanliness…" (21). Nevertheless, when Claudia later learns to love Shirley Temple, she discovers that "the change was adjustment without improvement" (21) and modification or fine-tuning made by Black people to live up to white beauty standards remains a delusion in the long run. Towards the end of the novel, Claudia comes to realize, "We substituted good grammar for intellect; we switched habits to simulate maturity; we rearranged lies and called it truth, seeing in the new pattern of an old idea the Revelation and the Word" (204).

Nevertheless, from the above discussion of Pecola vis-a-vis other characters and their interactions with her, we can say that Pecola's ingenuous attitudes toward the ideals of the white culture reverberates the rational Negro's submissive disposition toward the white pattern — an attitude white society demands to fall short of perfection set by itself. Pecola attempts to arrange herself in line with whiteness, thus recklessly connecting her search for identity, self, and humanity

with the aesthetic values of Anglo-American culture. She innocuously accepts those values as true in her attempt to combine white beauty with her Black body and life by simply aspiring to possess a pair of blue eyes. The consequences of her erroneous aesthetic speculation are the devastation of her dream in that these have forced her to yield to the detrimental effects of the white values that systematically repudiate Black identity, self, and humanity along the color line. And Toni Morrison, in her first novel, challenges white American standards of beauty and has meticulously established that the concept of beauty is socially constructed. Morrison also identifies how taking whiteness for granted as the standard of beauty, or anything else, devalues the worth of Blackness, thus undermining that very tendency in her novel. With some of her characters' insistence on taking pride in being Black, she also concentrates on the damage Black women have inflicted upon themselves by modeling themselves on the rubric of feminine beauty based on double consciousness in a racialized society and, to some extent, goes beyond the paradigm of double consciousness by portraying characters like Claudia and Frieda. In this regard, her novel attests to both her ethical and political positions as an artist in which responsibility is an active process ingrained in common struggle and the ardent sharing of ideas. This is the very responsibility that she maintains robustly: "The best art is political, and you ought to be able to make it unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time" (Quoted in Dan Berger, 225).

Now that we have discussed in brief the issues of double consciousness in Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*, it would be relevant to shed at least a narrow light on the changes taking place in the United States in the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election and beyond to demonstrate how various racial constructions are reinforced under the guise of the slogan of "Make America Great Again".

Afterthought: Reflections on 2016 US Presidential Election and Trump's Regime

Before we get into any serious discussion on Trump and his rule in terms of racism and bigotry, it would be apt to shed some light, at least, narrowly on the nature and difference of racism portrayed in Morrison's novel and practiced in Trump's regime. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is predominantly about *internalized* racism, and how Black people in America have been conditioned, by the prevailing white society, to see themselves as "less than" in comparison, less good, less attractive, less clean, etc. — a set of beliefs deeply ingrained in their minds as natural (Rattansi 93-94). On the other hand, Trump regime is more about institutional or structural racism than an internalized one. Within institutions and power structures, institutional racism exists. This refers to the unjust rules and discriminatory practices of certain institutions (such as businesses, schools, judiciaries, etc.) that often result in racially inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people. When they support racial injustices, individuals within institutions assume the power of the institution (4 Types of Racism, nd, accessed on 24 January 2023). In addition,

racism that is institutionalized and pervasive in society is known as structural racism. This is due to the cumulative and compounding impacts of a number of social elements, such as institutional and societal relationships, history, culture, ideology, and cultural norms that consistently favor white people and disadvantage people of color ("Dimensions of Racism," 19-20 February 2003). So, when we problematize racism or any form of bigotry in relation to Trump and his regime, our discussions focus largely and inevitably on institutional or structural ones.

Immediately before, during, and after the US presidential election of 2016, massive discussions and debates cropped up around the nature and purpose of the upcoming government and governance. Many people expected that the party with a more liberal stance in relation to race, sex, gender, and class, might capture the majority of votes (both electoral and popular) and hence come to power to lead the nation in the days to come. Nevertheless, to our utter disappointment and displeasure, a party with a more conservative stance, bigotry, and prejudice won the majority of votes in the electoral college, resulting in Donald Trump becoming the 45th president of the United States.

Belying all the predictions made by different surveys, polls, and media projections, what came out in the long run is a disaster, and, to a certain extent, a total devastation, both for liberal and progressive-minded people. For me, the reasons are multifarious. To begin with, while people could discern the sharp difference between the Democrats and the Republicans at policy levels, they, to their displeasure, found very little difference on moral and ethical grounds in that the candidates from both parties were involved, more or less, in debauchery and complicit in illegitimate manipulation in election engineering. In the Democratic primary, people saw how one candidate with a distinct progressive and manifest mass-oriented stance was forced to succumb to defeat in collusion with media hypes. In this regard, it would be apposite to mention how media beguiled people and manufactured false expectations among people, setting aside the real scenarios from public sight, leaving them in a precarious state of being. Both progressive and liberal-minded academics, pundits, thinkers, and activists were truly concerned about Trump's meteoric but appalling rise. White fears and aggressiveness, some believed, were major factors, which had gone so far to bolster Donald Trump's candidacy and victory, which is so astutely and meticulously summed up by none other than Toni Morrison in her New Yorker article "Making America White Again":

> On Election Day, how eagerly so many white voters — both the poorly educated and the well-educated — embraced the shame and fear sowed by Donald Trump. The candidate whose company has been sued by the Justice Department for not renting apartments to black people. The candidate who questioned whether Barack Obama was born in the United States, and who seemed to condone the beating of a Black Lives Matter protester at a

campaign rally. The candidate who kept black workers off the floors of his
casinos. The candidate who is beloved by David Duke and endorsed by the
Ku Klux Klan. (21 Nov. 2016)

Nearly analogously, in a post-election panel discussion titled "Trump's America:
What's Next?" featured in the *Harvard Gazette,* by Cristina Pazzanese, Jennifer
Hochschild said: "This electoral process has been a triumph of group tribalism,
emotion, [and] passion at the expense of, or instead of, or over … ideology,
policy disputes, rationality, the role of facts/information/analysis, [and] fact-based
debate," (30 Nov. 2016). On the same panel, Claudine Gay and Wilbur A. Cowett
expressed that "He [Trump] is remarkably successful at casting isolationism,
bigotry, sexism, [and] nativism as expressions of working-class empowerment and
in using that to galvanize his base of supporters" (30 Nov. 2016). The panel was
also (correctly, as it turned out) concerned that Trump would likely get to nominate
several justices for seats on the Supreme Court and would administer a Department
of Justice that would be more impassive in monitoring voting limitations and more
concentrated on accusations of voter fraud (30 Nov. 2016).

At the other extreme, a critic like Mark Lilla, a professor of the humanities at
Columbia and a visiting scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation, maintains:
celebrating "differences"

> …is splendid principle of moral pedagogy — but disastrous as a foundation
> for democratic politics in our ideological age. In recent years, American
> liberalism has slipped into a kind of moral panic about racial, gender,
> and sexual identity that has distorted liberalism's message and prevented
> it from becoming a unifying force capable of governing. (*The New York
> Times*, 18 Nov. 2016)

While the Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton, showed her extraordinary
feat in upholding American interests in global affairs in terms of inclusion, she
seemed to lose that broad sight in domestic affairs, making a clarion call to African
American, Latino, LGBTQ and female voters everywhere, forgoing other groups
like white working-class men and evangelical Christians. Perhaps, which is why,
Lilla believes: "Fully two-thirds of white voters without college degrees voted
for Donald Trump, as did over 80 percent of white evangelicals" (*The New York
Times*, 18 Nov. 2016). What is more, only 46 percent of all eligible voters cast
their votes, demonstrating the sheer negligence/apathy toward the system. Among
many reasons, one that can be readily pointed out is distrust of the status quo or
the acceptance of the candidates on various grounds mentioned narrowly earlier.
Perhaps this is why in his *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, prominent
education columnist Dan Barrett rightly says: "'Voters' perception of race tended
to reflect their levels of exposure to people of different backgrounds, and was
refracted through categories like education level, party affiliation, class, religion,
and gender" (22 Nov. 2016).

Nevertheless, what is obvious from their argument and counter-argument is the horrific impact of the upcoming regime that will fall unduly on the undocumented, people seeking reproductive rights, people without protection, people with different color skins, LGBTQ communities and, above all, various types of immigrant and religious communities. Black, Muslim, Hispanic, gay, disabled, and female students — all feel panicked that their rights, security, and acceptance, on which they eventually fall back, are at a stake, thus bringing down their morale and spirituality to their nadir. I myself, as a Muslim student, was no exception, and my sense of insecurity was blatantly manifested when I asked my Instructor of Record (IOR) Prof. Vang if I should write anything (according to the prompt she designed for this semester final paper) critiquing the upcoming regime, informing her of the reported arrest of someone who overtly made comments against Donald Trump. This fearful self-censorship on what to say, what not to say, how to say, and how much to say clearly indicates how severely and gravely we have been intimidated by the looming regime.

When I have mentioned morale and spirituality above, these are not phenomena devoid of politics; rather these are political. Critical race theorist M. Jacqui Alexander, mentioning Lata Mani, rightly puts that "the personal is not only political but spiritual," which in our case happened to come about in the sacred space of the classroom (7). In this regard, I would like to focus on a classroom discussion in which our IOR Professor Vang let the students relate their experiences in relation to the recent election. My fellow students opened up and poured out their hearts in a free discussion, narrating their stories of hesitation, fear, and confusion. Some of them burst into tears while others faltered greatly in communicating their experiences — they are virtually besieged by panic, fear, insecurity, and vulnerability in their anticipation of the precariousness of the upcoming regime. This dispirited spirituality revolves around the issue that is absolutely political and secular that, in turn, threatens his/her niche of spirituality. Momentarily, the whole class turned into a healing theatre of a medical center, as it were, with Prof. Vang taking on the role of Baby Suggs of Toni Morrison's ground-breaking novel Beloved. Totally overwhelmed by the enormity of the situation growing out of this open discussion, I could not help intervening in this poignant discussion, though initially I was reluctant to partake as I thought it was not my business as a foreign student here in the United States. I tried to console my fellow students and assured them it was not the time for lamentation but to work hard together if we wanted to resist the bigotry and repressive design of the upcoming Trump regime.

Political scientists warned that candidate Trump's rhetoric and actions mimicked those of other politicians who ultimately turned authoritarian once in office. Some scholars have concluded that during Trump's tenure as president and largely due to his actions and rhetoric, the U.S. has experienced democratic backsliding (Kaufman and Haggard 417-432). Many prominent Republicans have expressed

similar concerns that Trump's perceived disregard for the rule of law betrayed conservative principles (Leonhardt, 23 May 2018). His racist and bigoted gestures and stances are blatantly evident not only in his caustic rhetoric but also in his biased policies for crucial issues such as: Immigration, Family Separation, Reproductive Rights, LGBT Rights, Travel Bans, George Floyd Incidence, 2020 Presidential Election and Its Aftermath, and U.S. Capitol Attack and Its Aftermath, to mention just a few, among others.

i. Immigration Policies

Trump's racist impudence is acutely reflected in his immigration policy and rhetoric made on many an occasion. Despite the fact that certain statistics show illegal immigrants have lower crime and jail rates than native-born Americans, Trump has consistently portrayed them as criminals (Rogers, 22 June 2018). Before entering office, Trump pledged to build a wall along the Mexico-U.S. border and deport the estimated eleven million illegal immigrants that reside in the country (Tareen, 18 Nov. 2016). While the number of illegal immigrants stayed stable under Trump's administration, legal immigration was significantly reduced. The administration sought to revoke Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for displaced persons from Central America, Haiti, El Salvador, and other countries (Nowrasteh, 20 January 2021) as well as making it unlawful for refugees and asylum seekers, as well as spouses of H-1B visa holders, to work in the United States (Mullen, 15 December 2017). The administration's attempt to deport TPS applicants was thwarted by a federal court who cited Trump's alleged racist "animus against non-white, non-European" people (Gomez, 03 October 2018).

By February 2018, the number of illegal immigrants arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) surged under Trump by 40%. Noncriminal illegal immigrants were arrested twice as often as they were in the last year of Obama's presidency. Undocumented immigrants with criminal records were arrested more frequently, but only marginally (Mirof and Sacchetti, 11 February 2018). Asylum seekers who were prevented by U.S. authorities from applying for asylum had been preyed upon by human smugglers, organized crime, and dishonest local law enforcement. Experts also noted that the Trump administration's immigration policies had increased criminality and lawlessness along the U.S.-Mexico border in 2018 (Sanchez et al, 20 June 2018). The administration manipulated data, presented purposefully false analyses of the costs associated with refugees (omitting data that showed net positive fiscal effects), and established the Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement to draw attention to crimes committed by undocumented immigrants in order to defend administration policies on immigration though there was no evidence that undocumented immigrants increased the U.S. crime rate (Lee, 01 March 2017). At a bipartisan immigration discussion in January 2018, Trump received harsh criticism for calling Haiti, El Salvador, and all of Africa's countries "shithole countries." Many world leaders denounced his words as racist (Ortiz, 13 January 2018).

ii. Family separation policy

Family separation is another example of Trump's xenophobic gesture to human bondage. In May 2018, the government said that it would remove kids from parents who were found breaking the law and entering the country from Mexico. Parents were frequently accused of a misdemeanor and put in jail; their kids were separated from them and there was no set process to find them or bring them back to their parents after they had served their time — usually only a few hours or days — for the offense (Stark and Hauck, 5 July 2017). Later that month, despite the fact that he had initiated the program, Trump falsely blamed Democrats for it and encouraged Congress to come together and approve an immigration law. Both Democratic and Republican members of Congress denounced the practice and said that the White House should resolve the divisions on its own (Woodward, 6 January 2008). According to a White House insider reported by The Washington Post, Trump decided to split up immigrant families in order to acquire political clout and persuade Democrats and moderate Republicans to support strict immigration legislation (Hsu and Wagner, 22 January 2018). Nevertheless, Trump changed the family-separation policy by issuing an executive order on June 20, 2018, in the face of widespread criticism and intense political pressure to do so, while previously saying "youkan's do it by an executive order" (Reeves, 14 August 2017).

iii. Reproductive Rights

Donald Trump's bigotry is also palpable in his obstructing the rights of reproduction. The Mexico City policy, which forbids funding to international non-governmental organizations that perform abortions as a means of family planning in other nations, was revived by Trump. Also, the government put in place a rule preventing taxpayer funds from going to family planning clinics that direct patients to abortion clinics, mention abortion to patients, or co-locate with abortion clinics (Belluck, 22 February 2019). As a result, Planned Parenthood withdrew from the program despite serving 1.5 million women with Title X birth control services (Chuck, 19 August 2019). Trump pushed for a ban on late-term abortions during his presidency and frequently made untrue statements about them (Cameron, 28 April 2019). In 2018, the administration forbade National Institutes of Health (NIH) researchers from obtaining fresh fetal tissue for research, and a year later all government-funded medical research that utilized fetal tissue was halted (Wadham, 7 December 2018).

iv. LGBT Rights

Trump's lopsided policy for LGBT Rights is another glaring example of his chauvinism. The administration repealed a number of LGBT rights, including those put in place under the Obama administration and addressing concerns with foster care, adoption, employment, housing, and the military (Berg and Syed, 22 November 2019). The government revoked regulations that forbade taxpayer-

funded adoption and foster care organizations from discriminating against LGBT adoptive and foster parents. What is more, the Department of Justice changed its mind on whether LGBT people were covered by the Civil Rights Act's workplace safeguards and claimed in state and federal courts that companies have a constitutional right to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Government contractors were free from adhering to federal workplace discrimination laws as long as they could provide a justification based on religion (Berg and Syed, 22 November 2019).

Regulations that forbade medical professionals from discriminating against LGBT patients were overturned by the government. Regulations requiring transgender persons to be housed in prisons in accordance with their gender identification, where appropriate, and to have equal access to homeless shelters were repealed (Diamond and Pradhan, 24 May 2019). The Census Bureau deleted "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" as potential topics for the annual census and/or American Community Study, and Health and Human Services (HHS) ceased collecting data on LGBT participation in its nationwide survey of older adults. Calls with LGBT organizations scheduled for quarterly conferences were canceled by the Labor and Justice departments (*Trump's Record of Action*, 20 April 2017).

v. Travel Bans

Trump's travel ban is another heinous instance of homophobic policy confirming his racist gesture. In January 2017, Trump issued an executive order that barred entrance for 90 days to nationals of Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, banned admission of all other refugees for 120 days, and suspended admission of asylum seekers fleeing the Syrian Civil War forever. By giving preference to immigrants of other religions over Muslims, the directive also established a religious test for refugees from Muslim-majority countries (Shear and Cooper, 27 January 2017). Later, it appeared that the administration had reversed some of the order, thereby exempting anyone possessing a green card (Baker, 29 January 2017). Following a legal challenge to the order in the federal courts, a number of federal judges issued decisions prohibiting the government from carrying out the directive. In response to the then Acting Attorney General Sally Yates' declaration that she would not defend the order in court, Trump dismissed her. Yates was replaced by Dana Boente, who asserted that the Department of Justice would defend the order (Schleifer, 31 January 2017).

Trump imposed further restrictions on the six nations included in the second executive order in September 2017 and added Chad, North Korea, and Venezuela. The majority of people from Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Chad, North Korea, as well as some government officials from Venezuela and their families, were essentially blocked from entering the United States as a result of the ruling (Liptak, 4 December 2017). Much later, Nigeria, Myanmar, Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan,

Sudan, and Tanzania were added to the list of countries with visa restrictions by Trump in January 2020 (Jackson, 31 January 2020).

vi. George Floyd Incidence

Donald Trump's caustic rhetoric came to fore after the demise of George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man from Minneapolis. As per *The New York Times* report, he was detained on May 25 after a convenience store clerk phoned 911 and reported that Mr. Floyd had purchased smokes with a fake $20 cash. Mr. Floyd was found pinned beneath three police officers, lifeless, and unconscious 17 minutes after the first squad car arrived on the scene. Later, by combining videos from bystanders and security cameras, reviewing official documents and consulting experts, *The New York Times* reconstructed in detail the minutes leading to Mr. Floyd's death. The video shows officers taking a series of actions that violated the policies of the Minneapolis Police Department and turned fatal, leaving Mr. Floyd unable to breathe, even as he and onlookers called out for help (Hill et al, 31 May 2020).

Consequently, the Police Department dismissed all four of the involved officers the day after Mr. Floyd passed away. On May 29, Derek Chauvin, the cop who can be seen most clearly in witness footage pinning Mr. Floyd to the ground, was charged with third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. According to a *Times* review of time-stamped footage, Mr. Chauvin, a white man, maintained his knee on Mr. Floyd's neck for at least eight minutes and fifteen seconds. According to the footage they reviewed, Mr. Chauvin continued to keep his knee in place even after Mr. Floyd started to lose consciousness and for a full minute and 20 seconds after the paramedics arrived (Hill et al, 31 May 2020).

Following Mr. Floyd's death many protests broke out in many states of the country, giving rise to unruly activities. In his reaction to this incidence, Trump tweeted the phrase "when the looting starts, the shooting starts," which was coined in 1967 by a Miami police chief and has been roundly condemned by civil rights organizations. The White House barrier would have been met with "the most terrible dogs, and most frightening weaponry, I have ever seen," Trump later said in response to demonstrators outside the building (Milman et al, 30 May 2020).

vii. 2020 Presidential Election and Its Aftermath

Donald Trump's reluctance to accept the 2020 presidential plection results and his subsequent manners and actions proved, beyond all doubts, how despotic and reckless he was in chasing his power goals. Former vice president Joe Biden of Delaware challenged Trump in the 2020 presidential election on the Democratic side. No candidate was declared the winner of the November 3 election for several days. The Associated Press and other major media outlets predicted that Joe Biden would win the election on November 7 (Koblin et al, 7 November 2020). And he won over Trump in the long run. Since Herbert Hoover's administration in 1932,

this was the first time an incumbent president had lost, and his party had, also, lost control of both houses of Congress (Blake, 6 January 2021).

Nevertheless, Trump refused to surrender, and it took until November 23 for the government to start working with Vice President-elect Biden's transition team (Holmes and Herb, 23 November 2020) . Biden and his transition team criticized political appointees from the Trump administration in late December 2020 for impeding the transition and failing to work with them on matters of national security, such as the Defense and State departments and the economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They claimed that many of the agencies that are crucial to their security suffered severe harm and were hollowed out, in terms of personnel, capacity, and a range of other factors (Forgey, 30 December 2020). Trump persisted in claiming victory throughout December 2020 and January 2021. He attempted to convince state and federal officials to reject the results, filed various lawsuits alleging electoral fraud, and pushed his followers to hold protests in favor of him (Holland et al, 6 January 2021).

viii. U.S. Capitol Attack and Its Aftermath

As per rule, Electoral College votes were to be verified at a joint session of Congress on January 6, 2021, confirming the election of former vice president Joe Biden as president. However, Trump-supporting rioters stormed the American Capitol in an effort to prevent that from happening. Earlier that morning, during his first rally, Trump urged his followers to march to the U.S. Capitol (McCarthy et al, 7 January 2021). Pro-Trump supporters then marched to the Capitol building, gathered with other protestors, and assaulted the structure. The Electoral College vote count and discussion of the election results were taking place while Congress was in session. Capitol security evacuated the Senate and House of Representatives chambers as the demonstrators showed up and secured a number of other structures on the Capitol site. Nevertheless, Congress reconvened later that night to review the results of the Electoral College vote and announced that Biden had won the election (King et al, 6 January 2021).

Later, on January 13, 2021, The House voted 232–197 to remove Trump from office on the grounds of "incitement to revolt" and the vote was joined by ten Republican lawmakers and all Democratic lawmakers. Also, president Trump happened to be the first and only one to have been twice impeached (Wagner et al, 13 January 2021). What is more, Trump broke with convention by declining to attend Biden's inauguration, making history by being the first outgoing president in 152 years to do so (Fortin, 20 January 2021)

Ratings of how effectively the American democracy was operating had dramatically declined since Donald Trump took office. In the United States, there had been a major democratic backsliding after Donald Trump's inauguration due to diminishing limits on the executive, according to the 2018 Varieties of Democracy

Annual Democracy Report ("Democracy for All?" 17 January 2021). Freedom House, also, conducted an independent evaluation and discovered a comparable, severe deterioration in overall democratic functioning ("Freedom in the World 2018: United States," 27 January 2018).

Now that we have known how different social and state apparatuses are pressed into the service racism and bigotry, we get to realize how crucial the role of Critical Race and Ethnic Studies at this hour of chaos, confusion, fear, and terror, for those of us who inhabit/cohabit spaces intersecting race, gender, class, sex, immigration status, and the like. Hence, from the above discussion of the predictions, apprehensions, warnings, opinions, and argumentations made by scholars and academics as to the precariousness of Trump's regime, we can say, with a lot more confidence and assertion, that the exigency and necessity of bolstering and drawing on Critical Race Study is both perceived and conceived, at this moment of sheer crisis, much greater and deeper and hence should be pronounced much louder than ever.

The necessity of Critical Race Study is crucial in the US in particular because Donald Trump, his allies and accomplices, as well as white supremacists did actually strengthen their bigotries, prejudices of all types, and other racist propagandas and agendas during his four-year regime. Thus, the section following is my humble endeavor to jot down some critical approaches taught under the rubric of the course Critical Race and Ethnic Studies that may help us to fend off or guard us against racism, to some extent, in academia. That being said, it will not be out of ordinary to mention here that the following section is a discrete or detached one, thematically in the least from the previous sections concentrating on several forms of racism. The only connection that we can attribute to the following section may be accounted for if we look at it as offering some kind of solutions (if any) to the said racial problems.

Some Approaches to Solution: Not in One, but in Many

And we cannot help being responsible as intellectuals working in academia for the sake of upholding the value of truth and justice and speaking the truth to power simultaneously — the role played so courageously by people ranging from Socrates, Galileo, Bertrand Russell, James Baldwin, Noam Chomsky, to Toni Morrison, Anita Hill and many more, regardless of their ideological stances and affiliations. They are the people whose legacy we are bearing forward to reinforce our mission as intellectuals — the mission which is so vividly depicted and immensely enunciated by Edward W. Said in his inspirational book *Representations of the Intellectual:*

> All of us live in a society, and are members of a nationality with its own language, tradition, historical situation. To what extent, are intellectuals servants of these actualities, to what extent enemies? The same is true of intellectuals' relationship with institutions (academy, church, professional guild) and with worldly powers, which in our time have co-opted the intelligentsia to an extraordinary degree…. Thus in my view the principal

intellectual duty is the search for relative independence from such pressures. Hence my characterizations of the intellectual as exile and marginal, as amateur, and as the author of a language that tries *to speak the truth to power*. (xv-xvi, italic mine)

Thus, to get rid of this stifling, impending situation, here I would like to come up with several frameworks growing out of the course IH 220: History of Critical Race and Ethnic Studies under the tutelage of Prof. Vang, which we can test for their efficacy by being simultaneously open to other instructive and heuristic models that can be conducive to our purpose. To begin with, the concept that readily comes to my mind is Derrida's concept of "Universitas," to problematize the state/university dichotomy in which the roles of both are nearly similar, albeit not identical (Harney and Moten, 26, 32-33).

Derrida suggests right away in his cutting-edge article "The University Without Condition" that the university is concerned with questions such as what constitutes truth, where our concepts of the true originate from, what power relations are perpetuated by various conceptions of reality, and more in addition to the pursuit of knowledge: "…the right to say publicly all that is required by research, knowledge, and thought concerning the *truth*…. The university *professes* the truth, and that is its profession. It declares and promises an unlimited commitment to the truth" (2002: 202).

As is clear from the quote, Derrida is here taking very seriously the conventional notion that doing academic research entails professing the truth and promising "an unlimited commitment to truth." However, such a commitment entails examining the very idea of truth that one is devoted to, rather than only pursuing the truth as it is understood in one's area. The idea of "humanity," which is at the core of the humanities, is similarly not presented as fact but rather as a topic to be investigated. Derrida is attempting to separate the concept of academic study from the idea of knowledge creation; he does not downplay this activity, but rather believes that the university's mission extends beyond the gathering of knowledge. And it is the humanities that can take the lead in this larger responsibility — and, in a sense, already have for a while. A significant portion of the work produced by humanities departments has similarities to an artistic creation in that it develops not only from the discovery of new knowledge but also from the emergence of unpredictable, unforeseen insights. Its affinity to art is also personified not in arrays of realities but in writing or other modes of signification which go beyond the transmission of the purely objective.

This pursuit of truth can be consolidated in academia by building a strong sense of community through what Michel Foucault calls the "care of the self" — the self that has been variously constituted. For Foucault, the discourses produced from the time immemorial saturate our contemporary discourses — their traces are everywhere to be found in the working out of power. To know ourselves, to care sufficiently for ourselves, undoing these power networks is indispensable. Thus, the question "What are we today?" pushes us into a domain that is, for Foucault, "historical reflection

on ourselves" (1988:145). There have been changes that pave the way to greater freedom in analyzing ourselves. Foucault recommends it be to our benefit that we need not relinquish ourselves to reflect seriously in the realm of ethics. Indeed, current discourse emboldens us to formulate ourselves and this, for Foucault, is an affirmative change. The practices needed to care for ourselves are numerous, exclusively for Foucault, since caring for ourselves necessitates caring for others. The main concept, among others, concerned in self-care is: "will to knowledge."

Of all concepts, the will to knowledge bears a special significance, especially for those working in academia. Care of the self is associated with decoding the social relations that culminate in the creation/fashioning of truth. Foucault marks, "the care of the self—or the attention one devotes to the care that others should take of themselves — appears then as an intensification of relations" (1986:53). Social relations are to be grasped only at the verge of a historical investigation of their constructions and foundations. Doing ethics then becomes a rather colossal effort. In adjunct to examining the playing out of this escalation of social relations, the person endeavoring to care for himself or herself must recall that the journey entails a scrutiny of truth. So, he maintains:

> The task of testing oneself, examining oneself, monitoring oneself in a series of clearly defined exercises, makes the question of truth — the truth concerning what one is, what one does, and what one is capable of doing — central to the formation of the ethical subject. (1986:68, italic mine)

It is obvious from the above discussion that taking care of oneself, by way of continuous self-examination and being well-fortified with necessary knowledge, is not at the expense of others; rather it is relational and social engaging others on the way, thus giving rise to a space that

can be connected to the intervention of the "hospitality" expanded and expounded considerably by Jacques Derrida in his trailblazing book *Of Hospitality*.

According to Derrida, a host's welcoming attitude toward the guest is not simply a duty imposed by social and political conventions, but the basis by which all humans, non-humans, or any form of entities relate to one another ethically. In Derrida's remarkable articulation:

> Let us say yes *to who or what turns up*, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any *identification*, whether or not it has to do with a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest, or an unexpected visitor, whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another county, a human, animal, or divine creature, a living or dead thing, male or female. (2000, 77, author's emphasis)

Hospitality, in other words, is the ethical cement that keeps communities or different peoples or entities intact and committed toward those who are different

without feeling compelled to do so by any law, social order, or external imposition. Moreover, Derrida emphasizes that the question of hospitality contains a paradox — an impossible paradox. It is paradoxical or absurd in that the conventions or rules of unconditional hospitality contradict those of conditional hospitality, as codified in treaties and domestic laws. Simultaneously, the conditional laws would no longer be laws of hospitality if they were not guided, motivated, and appropriated by the law of unrestricted hospitality. They both entail and dismiss each other, giving rise to a middle ground for a decision-making solely on the basis of ethics. In other words, they give rise to a site where the antinomy of hospitality — straddling between unconditional and conditional — turns into a volatile site of "strategy and decision," the judgement taken simply on the ground of ethical decision-making, not the law of hospitality. This is the position in which one leaps to a decision that grows out of a particular situation/location in time and place, as it demands.

Thus, as opposed to the current identity-difference dichotomy, Derrida comes up with an approach to cosmopolitan hospitality that takes up both self and other in their totality without giving priority to one over the other — the very ethics Derrida's approach rests on.

As far as the relation between self and other is concerned, we can also rely on Mary Louise Pratt's seminal term "contact zone." She used the term for the first time as part of a transcultural pedagogic practice designed to get learners thinking about their own subject positions in cross-cultural bargaining and conflict. Pratt later created the phrase to designate social settings where diverse cultures frequently interact, fight, and wrestle with one another in severely unequal systems of dominance and subordination, such as those that resulted from all types of lopsided and contentious relations or their aftereffects as they are manifested throughout the world today (1992: 4). Since then, many people now use the term in other social and cultural settings. Contact zones can be spaces for interactions between any groups that are geographically, linguistically, culturally, or educationally distinct. This shows that the term "contact zone" is greatly helpful and adaptable for describing the various complicated interactions that define sundry other areas, like academia, than the colonial and postcolonial ones and their encounters. Admittedly, the goal of recent studies like this one is to turn the contact zone into a place of interaction where the disparities in the relationships between persons, groups, institutions, and the like involved may be discussed, if not eliminated.

This discussion of "contact zone" inevitably but relevantly brings us to the concept of "Third Space" put forth by Homi Bhabha in his landmark 1994 book *The Location of Culture*. He offers his idea of "the third space of enunciations" as an alternative to the dualisms that frequently predominate discussions of intercultural encounter. He calls this an "interstitial place" where "signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew," being a location of conceptual battle

and contestation (55). According to Bhabha, social actors can (re)negotiate their identities and (re)position themselves in the third space, free from the structures and hierarchies of both their "home" culture and the "other" culture. This means that individuals may create hybrid identities that provide fresh opportunities for empowerment and transformation by preserving some aspects of their own culture while simultaneously incorporating others. When considered in the context of broader social activity, the third space enables the development of an authentically "*inter*national culture based not on the exoticisms of multiculturalism or the multiplicity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*" (56, author's emphasis).

To recapitulate, after problematizing the issues and their possible solutions so far, we need to get back to Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* dealing with the internalized racism in which the Black people all but unquestionably accepted their inferiority, as if, it were normal, as well as the institutional and structural ones prevalent during Trump regime and beyond, to gauge the necessity and efficacy of various critical approaches in resolving the said racial crises. That the aforementioned racisms — such as internalized one portrayed in Morrison's novel, and institutional or structural ones found during Trump regime — are still prevalent in various forms and appearances in our society is a reality, not an assumption or a speculation. Those being said, it will be a sort of anarchy if we impose any particular framework or approach as a readymade solution to our current crises. Rather, as done by Harney and Moten in their book *The Undercommons*, we can draw on many: such as, on Spivak to learn how to say "no," that is, to refuse the "call to order;" on Deleuze to absorb the strength and inspiration as to how to live in the world — in our own world, indeed (8, 10); and certainly, on Foucault and Derrida who have taught us how both the university and the state produce and reproduce the knowledge conducive to creating docile and subjugated citizens, thus serving the purpose of each other, and have eventually shown us how to take care of ourselves by taking care of others. Only by drawing on all these heuristic approaches and being open to others conducive to ours, can we create a milieu of what Derrida has called "hospitality," embracing all — humans and nonhumans — regardless of race, sex, gender, color, caste, and class, where we can, perhaps, envisage a world without a "color-line." And it is a shared responsibility for all of us — Blacks, whites, and others. As an optimistic person, my wish words always resonate with the very words of Du Bois with which I would like to conclude.

> They both [the black and the white] act as reciprocal cause and effect, and a change in neither alone will bring the desired effect. Both must change, or neither can improve to any great extent…. Only by a union of intelligence and sympathy across the color-line in this critical period of the Republic shall justice and right triumph, —

"That mind and soul according well,

May make one music as before,

But vaster." (141)

Otherwise, not only did "the problem of the color line" remain a core problem of the twentieth century, but it also remains at present, and most likely will remain, an intractable problem of the twenty-first century and beyond.

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Fairs and Females: A Socio-cultural Perspective of 19th and 20th Century Bengal

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Abstract*: Fair or Mela has been an integral part of Bengali culture since time immemorial. A fair is generally a conglomeration of people in a festive arrangement for buying and selling goods centering on religious or other special occasions at a specific time and a place. Fair was an integral part of colonial Bengal's socio-cultural and economic spheres as well. Numerous fairs used to be held in 19th and 20th century Bengal for various reasons which concerned seasonal harvesting, religious festivals, marketing, occasional cultural events, promoting entertainment including traditional games and sports, arts. In a broader aspect, fairs have played role in shaping colonial Bengal's society and in several ways helped to develop our rich culture over the decades. Another major yet less valued aspect of these fairs is the involvement of women in these which speak in volumes about the socio-economic participation of different classes of women in colonial Bengal. Women of lower social classes participated in these fairs mostly as sellers or entertainers whereas women of higher social classes were found as occasional visitors. Though, due to 'purdah' restrictions the numbers of native elite women visitors were often low, women of British or Anglo-Indian families often visited such fairs in their proximity. A number of British women have written about their splendid experiences at Bengali fairs in their memoirs. This vivid participation of women of all strata in different categories in Bengali fairs has not gained much focus in earlier studies. Not merely in the lens of feminism, the role of the womenfolk in those Bengali fairs to contribute in accelerating their families' economic standard, deserves historical recognition. This paper attempts to study the roles of such women, played in the fairs in both parts of Bengal in 19th and 20th centuries and its grave significance in revisiting gender roles in colonial Bengal's society.*

Keywords*: Bengal, Fair, Women, Role, Sellers, Dependents, Visitors*

Introduction

Bengal (West Bengal and Present day Bangladesh) has always been a land of festivals and fairs. It is said popularly in Bengal that, "Thirteen festivals in twelve months (Baro mashe tero parbon)." Most of the festivals are accompanied by fairs. In the 19th and 20th century Bengal melas or fairs were of huge significance because of their socio-cultural, economic and political importance. During the

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British colonial period the fairs got a new dimension due to the contact and confrontation with a new set of culture. For the foreign traders, it was also a place of meeting and exchanging views with the natives. The economic importance of the fair cannot be overstated. These fairs had always been a business hub. It was a place for exhibition and shopping of local and international products. The fair was also a place for social and political exchange. W.W. Hunter (1877) states some of the objectives of such local fairs, which include—to establish an attractive centre for the general encouragement of trade and exhibition of local produce, to improve the social relations between the different chiefs, to create friendly communication with the officials of the province. The people of the Bengal region have found entertainment and relaxation through the Bengali fairs and festivities, some of which have a history dating back more than thousands of years. Fairs and festivals are significant social events for the common mass. The celebration of fairs and festivals has become a fundamental aspect of Bengali culture, especially in the villages. As T. B. Pandian (1898:196) stated, "..nothing is so useful, and so needful to the villagers, as the tradition of the village fair that meets the needs of the village communities—both the rich and the poor". Since centuries, women had been a big part of these fairs. They played a very important role in making these fairs successful. Sometimes they worked directly as the sellers of local produce, sometimes worked as the producers. Sometimes these women entertained the people who visited the fair through dancing, singing, performing in the circus or working as prostitutes. Again the number of female visitors was not ignorable. But the contribution of women in the fairs has not been properly recognized or researched in historical or gender studies. So this paper wants to examine the role of women in the fairs that were held in the 19th and 20th century Bengal. The later parts of the paper, in this connection, are divided into several categories. The current first part gives an overview of the paper putting the rationale and central argument of the research; the second part of the paper deals with the methodology of the paper; the third part encompasses the definition and the types of fairs used to be held in Bengal; the fourth part explains the findings of the research—the roles women had played so far in the fairs; and the last part draws the conclusion highlighting the significant findings of the research work.

Research Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature as it demands for in-depth methodical and comprehensive analysis of relevant literary data. It not only caters secondary historical narratives, rather it has been a research work based on various ranges of primary sources with gender perspectives. This research attempts to interpret and correlate the evidence regarding the data about fairs and women of colonial Bengal. For primary data, British Bengal's census reports, gazettes, gazetteers, magazines, survey settlement reports, the memoirs of British officials and their women in Bengal, various annual reports, and contemporary weekly, monthly, or regular newspapers like Bangadarshan, Prabashi, Bangabani, Soma Prakash,

Sabuj Patra and similar ones have been studied. Most of the primary data has been collected from the rare section of the Central Library of the University of Dhaka. Apart from the primary sources, this paper also delves into all available secondary data like journal articles and available relevant books and reliable e-resources since secondary sources provide contexts and perspectives to interpret the primary sources which sometimes fail to provide a lot of information on their own from a wider angle. The best strength of the work is the use of contemporary narratives of 19th and 20th century as well as the most recent relevant narratives. This amalgamation provides the paper the authenticity which it aims for.

Contemporary Fairs or Mela in 19th and 20th century Bengal

Before knowing the contribution of women in fairs, it is necessary to shed light on how many types of fairs were held in Bengal. Innumerable fairs in Bengal are a reflection of the region's rich cultural heritage. However, the significance of any fair is determined by the purpose of it. In colonial Bengal, though fairs were held for several socio-economic purpose, most of the fairs had a religious trait. During the British colonial period, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries, all religious groups, including Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and others, used to organize fairs on religious occasions. The Muslim community arranged fairs on occasions like Eid and Muharram. The Hindu community celebrated Janmastami, Dol Jatra, Durga Puja, Shiv Puja, Kali Puja, Ratha Jatra and many more numerous religious events with fairs. Like these two communities, the Buddhists, the Christians and other communities also arranged fairs during their religious festivals. Some fairs were also held centering religious shrines or Dargahs.

According to W. W. Hunter, in Champaran District numerous fairs on religious occasions were arranged, such as Kartik Snan at Bakolhar, Tataria, Basohi, Rajwatia, Kanbarpur, on the 31st October; Seorat, at Karantha, Mahmuda, Banwaria, and Kuria on the 1st April; Janam Astomi at Machargaonwan on 30th August, Dasahara at Nena Tar and Dhobani on the 26th September. In the month of October an annual fair was held at Bettia attended by 25000-30000 people. This fair continued for 15 days and commemorated the story of Rama, Lakhshman and Ravana. In this fair utensils made of iron and brass and clothes were sold mostly. A similar fair was also arranged at Sirsa and attended by 2000 people. A fair on similar religious purpose took place in April at Sitakund, continued for three days and was attended by 15000 people. The main objects of commerce were cloth and metal vessels. A similar gathering was also held at Adapur in the same month for the same religious purpose. In that fair besides clothes and utensils, cattle especially goats were also present as principal articles of trade. A fair at Araraj was held which was attended by 10000 people and lasted for eight days. In this fair cattle, horses and clothes were sold (Hunter, 1877).

Hinduism has an enriched practice of pilgrimage known as the Tirtha-yatra, which includes holy bathing in water sources as a ritualized symbol of purification. So

fairs on the bank of rivers centering religious gatherings like the Kumbh Mela, Gangasagar Mela and the Snan Jatra Mela in Bengal were held on a national scale. Kumbh Mela is the largest congregation of its kind (Paul, 2022). Gangasagar mela held on the island of Gangasagar, also known as Sagar Island, which is part of the Ganges delta and lies on the Bay of Bengal's continental shelf approximately 54 nautical miles south of Kolkata. After the Kumbh Mela, the Gangasagar fair hosts the second-largest gathering of this kind (Chakraborty, 2020). Fairs were also held on the bank of Damodar river, Gopalpur, Dignagar, Dainhat, Mohanpur, Keogram, Biragitala at Bardhaman district (Hunter, 1877). Fairs were also held in the places where there was enough water supply for the people and cattle (Pandian, 1898). A very popular fair in Bengal was Ras jatra mela. Ras jatra festival followed by a splendid fair that was attended by 25000 or 26000 people at Nadiya. Some minor fairs were also held like Pot Purnima fair (Hunter, 1875). In Rajshahi district three great religious-trading fairs were held annually. Among these, two were arranged at Premtoli to celebrate the anniversary of the visit of Chaitanya to Gaur and the other was at Manda in honor of God Ram. The 3rd one was organized at Bagha on the second day of Ramadan to celebrate this holy month. These fairs always worked as temporary trade centres (Hunter, 1875). Another fair is found to be arranged on the bank of Atrai River at Manda in Rajshahi district. This was held on the occasion of the Hindu festival Sri Nabami. In the Khetur village of Rajshahi a fair was held annually at a temple that was built in the honor of Chaitanya (Hunter,1876). It is found that in the 19th centuries at least 47 fairs were held annually in Dinajpur district. Among these most of the fairs were religious gatherings but the purposes were commercial (Strong, 1912). According to Bakarganj District Gazetteers, there were 21 fairs that took place in the district which were called after the name of the village these were held. The most important fairs were held at Kalisuri, Kalaskati and Lakhutia in October and November and were attended by around 5000 people. Some important fairs were also held at Jhalakati, Aliganj, Lata, Sarikal, Rajar Hat and Chandkhali and were flourished by 2500 people on an average (Jack, 1918). A very interesting fair that used to take place with celebration centering the Ulai Chandi festival in the month of Baisakh honoring the goddess Ulai Chandi, the Goddess of Cholera. This fair was visited by 10000 pilgrims and lasted for three days (Hunter, 1875).

In the Muslim Community, fairs had been a part of celebrating Eid festival in colonial Bengal. According to Muntasir Mamun (1989), in the 19th and 20th centuries in Old Dhaka fairs were an important part of the Eid celebration, especially for common people. Fairs were arranged at Chalk bazar and Ramna with great festivity. Another prominent fair was the Muharram Mela that was held on the day of Ashura.

During this period, some fairs were arranged in the honor of religiously or socially important persons. In Nadia Gopinath Mela used to take place in April/May in honour of Gopinath Thakur, an idol belonging to the Maharaja of Krishnagar. This

fair was attended by 25000 pilgrims and lasted for 7 days. In Krisnagar fairs during Mahadol or Baradol (swinging festival) used to be observed with great splendor. A very notable fair held at Nadiya district was Chaitanya Mela, in the honour of famous reformer of Bengal Chaitanya. In the month of January or February around five thousand Vaishnavs assembled there. A fair called the Uprodh Bhanjan took place yearly at Kulia of Nadiya district. This was held to celebrate the reunification of Gauranga Deva and his wife (Hunter, 1875). Lalan Mela, which is still held annually at Chheuria, has its origin in the 19th century. Spiritual philosopher Lalan Sai (1774-1890) has left such a way of life and philosophy through the songs he composed, which is still prevalent till now, in the blend of traditional rural life of this region. No specific information is available about the exact time and history of the beginning of the Lalan Mela in Cheunuria. However, from the findings of many researchers, it is assumed that Lalan Sai established his Akhrabari sometime before or after 1850 AD in Cheunuria village. Lalan used to perform 'Sadhuseva' or 'Sadhusanga' every year on Dol Purnima at the Akhrabari he established in Cheunuria. Later on this tradition took the form of Lalan Mela (Zakaria, 2021). A very popular fair in this region of the 20th century is known as the Dublar Char Mela. Haribhajan (1829–1923), a sannyasi, shaped the Dublar Char Mela in 1923. On the occasion of Rash-Purnima, this fair was held every year at Dublar Char, which is situated near Poshur river south of the Sundarban forest in the Bagerhat district. During this time, a large number of devotees visited this location and go for holy bath (Zakaria, 2021).

There were some fairs in which commercial and political purposes marged together, like exhibitions, sales or exchange of products. It is found that, in Lohardaga district, two large fairs were held annually in the month of February, one at Chutia and the other at Daltonganj. These were found in 1851 and 1873 respectively. The main object of the Chutia Fair was the establishment of a lucrative center for the encouragement of exhibition for trading of local products and the improvement of relationship between the different chiefs of Chutia as well as bringing them into friendly communications with the European officers of the Province. However, in later years this mela could not attain the objective as a meeting place for trade purposes. The Daltonganj fair also started to give an impetus to trade and commerce by bringing foreign traders, breaking up the monopoly of the local merchants. The number of people assembled in these fairs was estimated at 20000 to 25000 (Hunter, 1877).

According to the Statistical Accounts of Bengal, a fair with huge commercial importance was held at Munshiganj in the Bengali month of Kartik. This fair was usually attended by 50000 persons and generally continued for three weeks. At Nangalband a fair was held which was also of commercial importance. The fair started with a religious bathing ceremony and after that brisk trade was carried out for several days (Hunter, 1877). In Buddhist villages, particularly in the Chittagong region's Buddhist villages and viharas, fairs were organized for both religious and

commercial purposes. A similar kind of fair was organized in the Chittagong Hill Tracts by the local officers. The main purpose of it was to meet the independent chiefs and their people and to make friendly relations with the tribes of the district (Hunter, 1876).

A very important socio-political and cultural fair, Hindu Mela started in Kolkata in the late 1860s with the intention of igniting nationalist sentiment among Bengalis. The principal purpose of this fair was to awaken the young people with the glory of Hinduism. The yearly event, which included exhibitions, was successful in inspiring a wave of patriotism in Bangla literature and folklore, including poetry, music, and theater. However this fair lost its importance during the beginning of the 20th century (Zakaria, 2021).

Seasonal or agro-centric fairs like Baishakhi Mela, arranged on the first day of Bengali month of Baishakh, Chaitra Sangkranti Mela, held on the last day of Bengali month of Chaitra, have been a part of Bengali culture for a long time. Chaitra Mela was seen to be arranged in Nadiya district called Tulsibihar Mela. The gathering in the fair had approximately 10000 people and continued for 15 days. On the day of the full moon in Phalgun a fair was held annually at Kartabhajas in Nadiya district (Hunter, 1875). Poush Mela has been going on with pride and glory in Santiniketan since 1894. The Santiniketan ashram was envisioned by Debendranah Tagore as a sanctuary of spiritual solace. In the Santiniketan Trust Deed, he included provisions for an annual fair to promote interaction and intellectual exchange between pilgrims, sages, and mendicants from various religious communities. In 1892 the Trust decided to celebrate the day of Debendranath's conversion, the seventh of the Poush by giving alms to the needy and underprivileged after a special prayer. In its third year, the festival took on the appearance of a fair as the local residents set up small stalls selling handicrafts, trinkets, earthenware items, candies, and fried savories. They gathered around in the late afternoon and evening to see the wiry, athletic performances by the nearby santhal community demonstrating their abilities in archery and other sports, as well as to listen to local folk musicians. Later on, the spirit of Poush Mela was shaped in the early decades of the 20th century by Rabindranath Tagore's distinctive ashram school that was established in 1901. The Poush Mela placed a strong emphasis on achieving three goals; boosting the village economy by providing a venue for the trading of local goods; promoting folk art and performance, and creating a nonhierarchical setting for interaction between the urban bhadralok middle class and members of the village community (Ganguly, 2013).

Thus this land produced numerous fairs which played a significant role in the social, economic, religious, cultural and political lives of the people of Bengal since time immemorial. And these fairs were made successful by the participants of which women consisted a large section.

Role of Women in the Fairs of Bengal

4.1 Women as sellers in the fairs

Women of lower social classes in Bengal have been earning independently or as dependents since a long time. Fairs were not any exception. According to Soma Prakash newspaper (1863), in one fair during Raas festival 99% of participants were female and among them 99% were young women. Participation of women in other fairs were also very prominent. Among these participants, a large number of women were involved as sellers. Most of the time women accompanied their male partners or other family members to sell their products and worked as their partners assistants. The income thus generated did not directly belong to them but they were most definitely a part of making that. On rare occasions, few women came to these fairs as independent sellers of their products. Death of male breadwinners, abusive married life, to support elderly parents, to raise wedding money, bad harvest and many other reasons worked as push factors for these women who decided to earn their own money through such fairs. Due to the lack of male help, they faced a hard time to conduct their expected business, but the money thus made solely belonged to them. The 1931 census of Bengal defines women as working dependents if they only assisted other members of the family at work and the census defines women as independent earners only if they received money or some other direct returns from their work (Porter, 1933). In almost every record of the relevant period, women of poorer sections were shown as dependent earners as they used their spare time to assist their husbands in traditional occupations like cultivation, spinning, pottery, making products like baskets or jewelries or fishnets and such others. British official James Kerr (1865), supports this statement in book Domestic Life, Character, and Customs of the Natives of India as well. He states that native women in the middle and lower ranks of life were generally industrious and contributed their fair share to the support of the family. Among such sellers a large number of women were engaged in selling cloth, food and jwellery items in different fairs. Spinning of cotton thread was the most common employment of the women of all classes in rural areas. Both independently earning women and women whom society considered dependents of husbands were great spinners. They did it manually and also with the help of machines. Kerr believes that in most districts of Bengal, large numbers of women spin regularly, in intervals from their household works and earns about 4 ana a month. He adds, "In passing a village early in the morning, you may frequently see a light burning and hear sound of spinning long before day break." (1865:79) In 1901, there were 1974 female cotton spinners comparing to 100 male spinners (Gait, 1902). A lot of women were involved in tailoring clothes with these fabrics. In 1877, according to William Hunter, there were 231 female tailors in Dhaka (Hunter, 1877). Cotton fabrics thus made, were great component for regional fairs. Such stalls attracted vast audience and buyers. Sarees made of such fabrics were desired components

of Andarmahal*** pujas (Prabashi, 1334). Another very interesting fabric was Nakshi katha (Handcrafted blankets) which had huge demand among Bengalis for occasions like marriage or childbirth (Ghosh, 2020). Along with fabric stalls, stalls for copper utensils, clay toys were also very popular (Sahitya, 1326). These stalls were dominated by women of all sorts. Stalls of jewelry had great importance in such fairs. Women of all classes were fond of these jewelry items and specially women of lower-middle class or lower classes who could hardly afford gold or silver jewelries, were great consumers of these hand-made jewelries from the fairs. There were small cottage industries or individual initiatives by women who crafted these jewelries with woods, shells, copper materials, brass and other means (Jahan, 2018). Ready-made bracelets, earrings, necklaces, anklets, finger rings, nose rings, hair accessories, waist bands were popular jewelry items sold by women vendors in fairs. Jewelries, elaborately carved and painted, known as 'cacharoos' were also sold by jewelry vendors (Taylor, 1840). Solid rings from large white conch shells were also in demand (Hunter, 1879). According to the census of 1911, in the early 1900s, there were 1443 females engaged in making bangles, sacred threads, beads and necklaces (Malley, 1912). Apart from these, a lot of women from many other occupations used to gather around in such fairs. W.W Hunter gives a vivid account of such women in several volumes of his Statistical Account of Bengal. For example in Dhaka there were 38 basket-makers, 54 mat-makers, 3 thread sellers, 221 dealers in firewood, 6 ganja sellers, 21 pan sellers, 507 weavers, 4979 spinners, 65 cloth vendors, 14 ornament sellers, 54 garland sellers, 3 toy makers, gunny bag makers, 1 broom sellers, 28 costermongers and so on (Hunter 1877). This was the scenario of almost all districts of Bengal. For these female sellers, the fair was a great opportunity to showcase their products and earn. Many of these women were single and managed their stalls on their own. Among the women who came as associates of male sellers were mainly related to agricultural products or products which needed male help to gather. Narratives of poor women working in the fields with their husbands can be found from several contemporary literary works (Webb, 1866). These women were engaged in fairs as flour sellers, dealers in pottery, fish sellers, vegetable sellers, shoe makers, milk sellers, rice sellers, oil dealers, sellers of spices, sellers of molasses and so on. But there were exceptions too. According to L.S.S.O Malley, in Khulna when women were compelled to earn their own livelihood, they generally bought paddy, husked it in their houses and sold the rice. Many of them had shops or worked in shops (Malley, 1908). Apart from these regular times there were female sellers of season or festival oriented food products. During winters one of the core items of these fairs was pitha (rice cake) In almost every fair ubiquitous pitha caterers were present and these stalls were very famous. Lots of women alone or with their partners used to gather from different corners to put their pitha stalls in such fairs. Along with pitha another very common fair item which was solely dominated by females was sweetmeat.

*** The section of house of a Zamindar residence where the women of the family stayed and no male had access to it.

Several types of sweets using milk, sugar and molasses. These sweets were of various colours and shapes and were mainly displayed in fairs celebrated for New Year (Mohanta, 2021). These stalls were very vibrantly decorated with festoons of flowers and mango leaves (Johnson, 1843). These seasonal or festival based fairs were attended by a huge number of sellers both male and female from different parts of Bengal. Thus the fairs also induced another important aspect of colonial Bengal, the internal migration. Women often with their families conducted such migration processes to attain fairs of adjacent or remote distances. In adverse socio-economic situations, single women also migrated for economic purposes which include participation in fairs too. Many factors worked behind such movements-the popularity of the fair, the socio-religious acceptance of the event on which the fair was based, the demand of specific products in that area and so on. The census report of 1921 defines patterns of internal migration in colonial Bengal (Thompson, 1923)-

Casual migration happened due to short moves which are continually taking place between adjacent villages. According to the census, in this type of migration, females predominated. The 2nd one was temporary migration which occurred due to journeys undertaken on business or pilgrimage. Another pattern of internal migration was periodic migration which often took place in connection with harvest. The other two patterns are semi-permanent or permanent migration. As the fairs were held for a time being and not permanently, it rarely had anything to do with the last two formats of migration, the first three were often induced by local or distant fairs. A large number of women, dependently or independently migrated casually, temporarily or periodically to participate in these fairs. But the occasion of fairs in a particular district were sometimes attended by the semi-permanent or permanent female migrants of that area. The women who migrated semi-permanently or permanently, often took the opportunity to work as laborers in mills, factories or tea plantations or in construction works. Many women were employed in these sectors for a long time but these jobs were not always certain. In the colonial society of Bengal, from time to time women were pushed out of their jobs by men when they needed a women's job (Sangari and Vaid, 1989). Apart from that, extremely unpleasant housing conditions of the mills; lack of social respect; extreme work pressure and competition often compelled women to leave such work sectors. So, many women who intended to earn independently, chose the option of small business. For such women, main targets were always such fairs taking place in their closest proximity. Because they could attain it per their will and it had less competitive vibe as a lot of fairs used to take place simultaneously. And as these fairs were mostly seasonal, these were easy gateway for women to earn more money in a short working span. They could also accommodate their children with them sometimes. Many female stalls which were led by women had their children or elderly women present in it for assisting (Goddens, 1966). Sometimes these women simply moonlighted and joined these fairs as sellers for a secondary or seasonal income while keeping the mill or factory work as their permanent

source of income. Because wage labour for women in industrial sectors in 19th and 20th century Bengal was too exploitative and restrictive to be considered as a source of liberty (Sen, 2004). Women often had to work two shifts to make as much money as a male worker and these seasonal fairs could relieve their financial burden for time being (Jahan, 2018).

Table: Distribution of female sellers in Bengal throughout the decades.

Year	Production and trade for local markets
1881	43.2
1901	33.3
1911	28.2
1921	21.0
1931	11.8

*Source: "Working Women in Colonial Bengal", N. Banerjee, Recasting Women, K Sangari and S Vaid (ed.), New Delhi, 1989, p.279

These local markets often include fairs as shopkeepers from regular markets used to put stalls of their products in the regional fairs to gain a bigger customer range.

Apart from these conventional earners, one class women was present in fairs who have been categorized by the census reports as "unproductive occupation" holders. They were female beggars. In various districts, the presence of local female beggars were very common. In the 1870s there were 3322 female beggars in Dhaka (Hunter, 1877). 1920s there were 120,000 females engaged in begging. In 1931, 940 females retained in this group for every 1000 males (Porter, 1933). According to Banglapedia, in Bengali customs, beggars had been widely patronised as they are often regarded as saints in disguise (Haq, 2021). Fairs were of no exceptions. Female beggars also gained sympathy from the visitors. So these females used fairs as a medium of earning too. Another unconventional earners were the female cleaners who used to keep fair premises clean. The arrangers of the fairs often appointed local females as cleaners. Different low caste women like Buna, Bagdi, Dom, Hari, methors, muchis worked as day labourers and were employed in streets and house sweeping (Malley, 1912).

4.2 Women as Entertainers in the fairs:

Though the main function of fairs of colonial Bengal was to promote trade through open air marketing on any occasion, these were very significant or sometimes the only source of amusement for local people. Visitors who visited such fairs not only intended to buy commodities but also looked for recreation. Most of these

fairs were annual affairs and for the particular areas where these used to be held, these meant a break from year long exhaustion from work and hardship. A lot of people from poorer sections mainly attended these fairs looking for nearly free measures of amusement. Considering the clientele, the arrangers of the fairs were often smart enough to understand the importance of adding several mediums of exhibitions, acrobatism, food and beverage system and so on. Thus there were a lot of people present in such fairs who earned as entertainers by selling their art and creativity to gather visitors. Women formed a noticeable part of this entertainment section too. The demand for females in this sector was created by the fact that male stallers mainly preferred agricultural or instrumental products which were daily life essentials. Moreover feminine enchantment had special demand in such arrangements. In entertaining segments, women who earned alone without the male partner were often seen participating in these fairs as acrobats in circuses, painters, musicians, actresses participating in plays or jatras. There were entertainment sectors like puppet shows or snake charming where women participated along with their husbands or family members and were earning jointly.

Among the independently earning females, an important class of participants was formed by the prostitutes. To quote Kirsi Vani Korhonen, "Besides the sale of foodstuffs, fabrics, spirits, hides, cattle and trinkets, the fairs were renowned as places for intimate relations.." (2022:158) It was similar situation for Bengal of that period. In the social scenario of the 19th century prostitution did not stigmatize the fairs rather enhanced the significance. Alone in Kolkata the numbers of prostitutes rose from 12419 to 30000 from 1853 to 1867 though the overall population declined over that period (Sangari and Vaid, 1989). Prostitutes could be found in every bazar (market place) in considerable numbers in Dhaka city as well (Allen, 1912). Among these, Muslim prostitutes were less in number and also tended to hide their religious identity (Banerjee, 1998). A contemporary newspaper Sahitya (1326) describes the importance of prostitutes in public fairs while narrating about Snanjatrar Mela of Nagpur in one of their editions. According to the write-up, the prostitutes who were termed as "barbilashi" were the main centre of attraction in the fair and their presence brought immense profit for the zamindars who arranged the fairs. They held such importance that the arrangers kept a place reserved for them in the fairs. The article also informs that these prostitutes had separate stalls for them and they also migrated from other areas to attain the fair. Particularly 300 prostitutes traveled from different places to attain the fair to get customers (Sahitya, 1326). In Baronee Mela of Dhaka there were also quarters for prostitutes (Calcutta Gazette, 1870). Another contemporary newspaper Prabashi (1334) also reported that zamindars in Rangpur used to bring prostitutes in fairs to increase consumers. The performances of these prostitutes were the centre of attraction for all classes of people. Several British narratives depicted the performances of these prostitutes as "nautches". British women authors who were present in Bengal in 19th century, mostly considered these dancing performers as fascinating, most of them attended a nautch and wrote the experience in their narratives (Sen, 2008).

A lot of women also came in group or alone in these fairs to sing. They were mainly from vaishnav sect and traveled in groups.These vaishavis used to sing in groups with their male partners. Several local musical instruments like digu, khanjani, nupur (anklet), gapijantra and so on. These musical gatherings had huge audiences and use of alcohol was common (Sahitya, 1326). The independent lifestyle of the vaishnavi women who decorated themselves with colourful flowers and jewelries were specialized in particular types of kirtan songs called "Dhap" (Sangari and Veid, 1989). The prostitutes often played dual roles as singers. They formed their songs namely "Besya sangit" where they ridiculed their clientele and themselves too (SangarI and Vaid, 1989). Accounts of female singers could be found in different volumes of the Statistical Account of Bengal by W.W. Hunter. Hunter (1877) gave accounts of female painters too. Particularly in Dhaka there were 32 painters during his record. Not much details about female painters in fairs could be found because of the scarcity of sources.

Apart from singing, women were also involved in acrobatics and acting. The evolution of the traditional circus could be traced from 18th century religious fairs which got more structured exhibitions of physical skills in the late 19th century particularly during the Hindu Mela days (1870-80). Women were part of such circuses from a very early period. The pioneer of the "Great National Circus" Nabogopal Mitra trained his young daughter Kushum to ride on the horses for performing in circus (Chatterjee, 2015). The "Great National Circus" had its stall in different fairs including the Snanjatrar mela in Nagpur (Sahitya, 1326). The "Great Indian Circus" was formed during this time too and it had an European female performer in it, Miss Maude (Chatterjee, 2015). Though it performed in elite households, it could not be known whether this circus performed in fairs. Female participants were also seen as the jatras which had been another form of traditional entertainment since 16th century Bengal (Khatun, 2021). These were folk theatrical performances. Lower ranked working women like methrani (sweeper) used to dance in these which became "stock pieces for providing comic relief in jatras." (Sangari and Vaid, 1989:140) Mention of Vidya Sundar jatra was also found in the contemporary newspaper Bangadarshan (1346).

Puppet show or Putul Nach was also was another form of entertainment which had been traced back to the end of 14th century in Bengal. During the fair seasons, small farmers or workless labour traveled far from home to perform in fairs and festivals. Few women also participated in the fairs, mostly as voice givers. Renowned daily The Daily Star (2017) narrated that using string puppets, puppeteers depicted stories of rural people, their lifestyles, religious beliefs, rural cultures and much more. Contemporary British narratives also mention about the puppet shows of Bengal fairs. Jon and Rummen Godden in their memoir Two Under the Indian Sun: An Evocative Memoir of Childhood in Bengal reminisces about the puppet show in Bengal and women involvement in it. - "It was always a hereditary business: a grandmother might run a troupe, her great-great-grandson being the boy who beat the drum, but they all

ranked as actors." (1966:87) James Kerr (1865) also portrayed his experience of such puppet shows which he called "kaputlee nautch". He also gives vivid description of snake charmers and how they performed their acts with venomous snakes. Snake charmers were constantly seen in fairs and festivals and they had another important role which was selling various herbal medicines (Pillai, 1891). A whole fair namely Jhapan Mela was dedicated to the snake Goddess Mansha and used to held in Bengal since 1495 and had great acceptance in colonial times too (Lorea, 2018). This fair consisted of men and women from Bede tribe and they had one leader who was called Ojha. Even some Santal women could become ojha too (Lorea, 2018). This had a demand among the visitors, both as entertainment and medical concerns.

4.3 Women as Visitors in the fairs

These fairs of Bengal often gathered huge crowds from localities and also from distant areas. British official F. O. Bell in his survey settlement report regarding Dinajpur district, stated, "During fairs, a touring officer may be confident that he will not find any prominent villager in his own house." (1941:54) Among these visitors large numbers of women were present. Just like the selling or entertainment section, women of lower social classes were predominant as visitors of these fairs as well. A lot of women, majority from lower classes, visited these fairs as buyers, audiences of the entertainment programs or just as overall fair visitors. One such fair was the annual fair of Moshan Chandipujar mela. This fair was attended by about 14000 people from Kolkata, Chandigarh, Srikrishnanagar, Barasat and majority of the visitors were females. Another such fair was a 15 days long fair on the bank of Jamuna river on the occasion of Maghi Purnima. This was attended by 15000-20000 people among which majority were women. Snan Jatra Mela of Jagannathpur village and Sharmaraj Pujar Mela of Doluipur village in 24 Pargana districts were similar two religious fairs which were attended by more females than males (Mitra, 1961). During such fairs which were celebrated basing on any religious occasion or deity, had more women present in it. Young maidens used to attain such festivities with offerings of fruits and flowers (Ashraf, 1959). Apart from the religious essence, a lot of women attended these fairs simply for enjoyment and to purchase stuffs like new clothes, brass jewelries, glass or copper utensils and other household products. For these women such fairs served as a great source of desired commodities at reasonable prices. Another very famous fair for women participation was Rath Jatrar Mela (Mitra, 1961). Manik Bandopadhyay (1936) in his famous novel Padma Nadir Majhi, narrates the story of a poor fishermen community living on the banks of Padma river in a fictitious village named Ketupur in today's Bangladesh. There he depicts the scenario of Sonakhalir Mela on the bank of Padma which took place on the occasion of Rath, and the profound impact it had on the lives of these poor people. The author states that the fair brought immense happiness for the women and children of these families. Women bought sarees and bangles made of glass and other feminine products which were brought from cities. People used to save the whole year to spend on

this event (Bandyapadhay, 1936). Though it was a fictional depiction, in reality too, for the women of poorer families, such fairs were a very significant part of their lives and sometimes the only means for amusement and recreation. On some occasions these fairs held so much importance for such families that women who were married off in different districts, used to come back to their maternal areas to celebrate the fairs. Such one fair took place in Katagar village, Faridpur district (Chowdhury, 2021). L.S.S.O Malley in his district gazetteer of Faridpur region stated, "In rural Bengal, shops are practically non-existent." (Malley, 1925:80) So apart from weekly rural markets, these fairs were of immense importance. Among the aboriginal women, these fairs were of great interest too. According to Binoy Ghosh (1950), the biggest fair in the southern part of Bankura district was Shoni mela of Motgoda region where Santal women visited in large numbers. They roamed around and danced from 10am or 11am in the morning till 10pm at night. Apart from these women, a lot of women involved in prostitutions were also visitors and buyers in such fairs. These women used to dress in bright coloured sarees of different patterns like Bombai, Baluchari, Dhakai, Nilambari etc and glittered jewelleries like brass anklets, nose rings, bangles (Sahitya, 1326). They used to roam around in search of customers and also to buy stuff from the stalls. Case was very different for women of other social classes for these fairs. Participation of affluent women was null as sellers and was very rare as visitors. On rare occasions, women from upper class families visited such events which had religious value but that movement was very restricted. James Kerr (1865) opines that these women were occasionally seen while passing in palankeens. Descriptions of these women taking bath on Ganges with high security during holy occasions can be found in the contemporary narratives of the British officials (Belnos, 1832). But sources are very scarce regarding their presence in such fairs. Some reasons behind the seclusion of upper class women from these fairs were- The strict purdah system followed by the elite class women did not allow them to travel much. According to Beveridge, the only time a native lady had a chance of seeing the world was when she went on a pilgrimage (Beveridge, 1876). It was almost the same for all women of the andarmahal. Muslim women had even more restrictions. Not only women, young girl children also faced movement restrictions. "As a daughter, the only associates of a girl were her girl playmates and her brother from among boys." (Ashraf, 1959:169) Apart from the restrictions regarding movement, the socio-cultural appeal of the fairs was not competent with the idea of "Ideal Bhadramahila". The presence of people from various classes, loud and vibrant natures of the jatrapalas or folk elements of the fairs were often not endorsed by the male members of the elite families and they attempted to keep their women away from such arrangements. Another reason behind the less involvement of upper class women were the similar arrangements of amusement in the andarmahal. Inside the zamindar houses, parties, plays, dance or musical arrangements, puja rituals were frequent events. During these events, a lot of female clothes, cosmetics or jewelry vendors had access to the andarmahals (Prabashi, 1334). But this also

had a crucial influence in the fairs. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya states, "The Bengali bhadramahila set the trends in fashion for several decades beginning in the late nineteenth century, not only for small-town womenfolk but also for the advanced urban middle classes in many parts of India." (Bhattacharya, 2014:58) These vendors who sold such famine stuff in the upper class houses, used to stock those products for their stalls in upcoming fairs. This gave them the idea of trending products which could get a market among the general women. Beside these native women, there were a lot of British or Anglo-Indian women present in Bengal during this period. These women did not follow any purdah seclusion but they were very new in this land and were often confined to their own dinner parties or Ballroom dances. But British or Anglo-Indian women outside the city areas had different lives. Because, except in big cities, there were no theaters, no concert halls and English books or journals were difficult to get and were very expensive. These women sometimes accompanied their husbands, children and maids to visit the outdoors (Macmillan, 1988). One such British woman in 19th century was Henrietta Clive who used to take her daughters to observe such local festivals and fairs and theatres (Hickman, 2019). The presence of British pupil in local fairs was also evident through the writings of British officials who used to stay in Bengal. For British women the main attraction center was the plethora of Indian fabrics which were used for the making of their dresses for parties or dinners. Two British female novelists Jon and Rummer Godden (1966) in their memoir Two Under the Indian Sun recalled their childhood memories from their stay in Narayanganj in the 1900s, sharing their views of Diwali, New Year, Muharram festivals and the fairs and celebrations associated with these. An important detail of 'Memshahibs' (British women) attending and bargaining in such local stalls has been portrayed by Harriet G. Brittan. According to him, when these British ladies visited such places, sellers from different stalls used to gather around them and these women had to rush to one shop to avoid the crowd and buy something. He also depicts a fictional conversation between a stall owner and the British lady who bought a "piece of longcloth" for 10 rupees after bargaining with the staller who was asking 30 rupees for the same (Brittan, 188). So though, the presence of European or specifically British women were rare in local fairs, it was not as obscure as the upper class native women. These visitors, in total, played a very important socio-economic role in these fairs.

Conclusion

The multi-faceted roles of females have been playing in the fairs of Bengal during the 19th and 20th century have put a new realization in front to acknowledge the contributions of women in the economic affluence of the families, upgrading the social lives of the people of different strata, maintaining the healthy and harmonious environment in parallel with men and very significantly entertaining the community getting out of the shackle of traditional protectionism. Despite being one of the key stakeholders in the fairs as sellers of the products, their active and pivotal roles in

the production of the local items, their visit turning the fair venue attractive, their purchasing the products—both local and foreign, their entertaining role through acrobatic performances at circuses as well as amusing presentations jatrapalas and less uttered role in prostitution, the womenfolk had always been underrated. These roles of women in the fairs of 19th and 20th century Bengal ultimately helped the society to embrace the changes it required for turning it into a better tolerant and vibrant one. Men had never been the only change makers. The active and passive roles of women in accelerating the economy, bringing positive changes to the society and thus establishing the circumference a modern society can dream for, have been perceived in the context of fair only from a precise spectrum. All other aspects are required to be addressed for the sake of the authentic history every reader looks for. This research leaves the window for the future endeavors of such kind.

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Rohingya Crisis from a Geopolitical Lens: Power Struggle over Regional Hegemony shadowing the Humanitarian needs

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Abstract: *Rakhine state in Myanmar is strategically located at the center of a power struggle between emerging Asian nations. Consequently, the strategic position has become the crucial factor that fans the fire behind the current Rohingya issue. As a minority group in Myanmar, the Rohingya have struggled for citizenship for decades. To escape the state-orchestrated persecution, a large number of Rohingya took shelter in neighboring Bangladesh. Under the cloak of geopolitical issues, the Rohingya Crisis has lingered for five years with no clear path to resolution. While India attempts to pursue its "Act East Policy," China seeks to incorporate Myanmar into its "One Belt, One Road" initiative. A further aggravating factor is a threat posed by US military forces in Southeast Asia to China's interests. However, as a neighboring nation of Myanmar, Bangladesh became entangled in the conflict between the Regional Competitors. The study argues that the geopolitical interest of bordering countries and the economic interest of the military regime have exacerbated the situation and are one of the primary reasons why the crisis has not been resolved. The purpose of this study is to analyze how and why the geopolitical consequences of the Rohingya crisis outrun the humanitarian demands of this crisis. Through content analysis of previous scholarly publications, the conclusions of the research have centered on how the fight for regional hegemony makes the Rohingya crisis more vulnerable.*

Keywords: *Geopolitics, Regional Hegemony, Rohingya crisis, Look East Policy, One Belt One Road, Humanitarian needs.*

Introduction

For fear of their lives, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic minority in Myanmar's Rakhine State, have fled the country, contributing to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis (Albert & Maizland, 2020). Rakhine State, which has been home to a disproportionate number of Rohingya people since the beginning of recorded history (Zarni & Cowley, 2014), is recognized for its wealth of natural resources but suffers from a perilous political situation (Khan, 2018). Myanmar's Rakhine State is located on the coast of the Indian Ocean. The geographical position of this state has become crucial in the current Rohingya

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issue. This strategic position makes it the center of the geopolitical competition of the great powers (Hossain, 2022). Kissinger contends that geopolitics is synonymous with global equilibrium and the maintenance of national interests within the context of the international distribution of power (Gray & Sloan, 2014).

Rakhine, being a predominantly Buddhist province in Myanmar, the Muslim Rohingya have always remained a minority group in this area. This religious minority population of Myanmar is considered the most oppressed minority worldwide (Robinson & Rahman, 2012). Rakhine state had a population of 3.2 million before the current Rohingya exodus, which began in August of 2017. Less than two million of them were members of the Rakhine ethnic group, whereas 1.1 million were Rohingyas. The remaining population consisted of Burman or members of other minority groups, including the Mro, Chin, Daignet, Kaman, and Hindu (UoM, 2015). Muslims of the Rohingya ethnic group have lived in largely Buddhist Myanmar for decades despite being refused from citizenship since 1982 (Haque, 2017).

The conflict involving the Rohingya in Myanmar is commonly understood to be a religious dispute; however, this is only partially accurate. Analyst Siegfried O. Wolf opined that the crisis was primarily caused by political and economic factors (Shams, 2015). Rakhine people, who are predominantly Buddhist in religion, make up the large bulk of the population in this region. The Rakhine people as a whole have the impression that the central government, which is dominated by ethnic Burmese, is prejudiced against their culture, taking advantage of them economically, and marginalizing them politically (Wolf, 2015). The Rohingya population is seen by the Rakhine people as an additional competition for resources and as a threat to their own identity. This notion is the principal cause of conflict in the state, and it has led to recurrent armed battles between the rival sides (Shams, 2015). Maung Zarni, an academic and activist, has claimed that the Burmese military is using China and India's geopolitical rivalry to justify its genocide against the Rohingya (Ozturk et al., 2020). He explained that the Burmese military had made it a priority to ensure that both India and China can benefit from the multibillion-dollar developments being carried out along the Arakan Region's coastline.

Regional and International emerging powers are getting involved with different geopolitical motives. The United States' focus adds a new dimension. Their involvement in the matter has prompted a deeper Chinese engagement (Ismail, 2018). China and India, two major nations in Asia, are struggling for Regional Hegemony. The reluctance of major nations to address the Rohingya crisis and their attempts to placate Myanmar are the primary roadblocks on the path to a resolution of the situation (Rahman & Akon, 2019). Both China and India have made large financial commitments in ongoing infrastructure development projects in Myanmar, especially those that are located in Rakhine State (Kimura & Kudo, 2011; Brewster, 2017 & Taidong, 2019). On the other hand, various nations that

border Myanmar have decided to maintain their silence on the matter of the Rohingya problem because they do not have any particular interests in Rakhine.

The arrival in Bangladesh of a considerable number of Rohingya refugees has ratcheted up the level of tension and added a new facet to the situation that has been unfolding over the past few years. However, rather than actively contributing to finding a solution to the Rohingya refugee crisis, other countries in the region, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Laos, and international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN), Organization of Islamic States (OIC), European Union (EU), and Human Rights Watch (HRW), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), frequently monitor the situation and voice their opinions on the Rohingya crisis. However, the paper will address how the geopolitical feature of the Rohingya crisis creates regional tension undermining the humanitarian response. In addition to this, it will place an emphasis on the measures they take in regard to the benefits they derive from the geopolitical context.

Brief context of the Rohingya Crisis

For decades, the Rohingya have faced systematic forms of discrimination, persecution, and statelessness (Haar et al., 2019). Additionally, they have been subjected to waves of violence between 1978 and 2017 that have led to their forcible displacement into Bangladesh (Baird, 2020). To understand the conflict, we have to look back on the circumstances of the colonial period. During the Second World War, the Buddhist community of Rakhine Province (previously known as Arakan State) favored the Japanese side, whereas the Muslim Rohingya fought for the British like the people of Bengal frontiers did (Chattoraj, 2017). This historical animosity persists year after year to the present day. In light of this, the government of Myanmar is striving to establish the Rohingya people as foreigners and immigrants from Bangladesh (Sahoo, 2017).

Beginning a cycle of forced displacement: 1975

In 1975, the military regime led an operation named 'Tatmadaw' to find illegal infiltrators in Myanmar. Roughly 3,500 Rohingya people were coerced into leaving Rakhine and moving to Bangladesh. Once more, in 1978, the government began a large-scale investigation codenamed "Nagamine" ("Dragon King") in an effort to identify the outsiders. The result of this procedure had tremendous repercussions. As a consequence, the region is currently dealing with one of the most complicated humanitarian crises in its history. In 1978, a substantial number of people were forcibly displaced throughout the country, and more than 200,000 Rohingya escaped to Bangladesh, where they are still living as refugees. The year 1978 marked the beginning of the Rohingya crisis (Mattern, 1978). In following years, the United Nations played the role of mediator in negotiations between Bangladesh and Myanmar, which ultimately led to the formation of a bilateral agreement. The government of Myanmar had made the decision to allow 187,250 Rohingya refugees to return to their homes (Warr & Wong, 1997).

Pushing back the Rohingyas as a result of their freedom movement: 1992

The second significant influx of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh took place between April 1991 and May 1992, when the Myanmar government first started taking actions against the Rohingya freedom movement. More than 250,000 Rohingya people have been moved by the government of Myanmar towards the border with Bangladesh during that time period (Rahman, 2010; Robinson & Rahman, 2012; Bepler, 2018). On the other hand, with the assistance of the UNHCR, a reparation program was initiated, and more than 200,000 Rohingya were deported back to Myanmar (Farzana, 2017). The entire procedure of the settlement took roughly three to four years to complete (Abrar, 1995).

Inter-Communal Conflict: 2012

On the 10th of June, 2012, more than 500 Rohingya community members made their way across the Naf River into Southeast Bangladesh in order to seek refuge from large-scale military strife. This conflict had initially been identified as an ethnic conflict between the minority Rohingyas and the Buddhist majority. In the beginning, it was thought that this conflict was an ethnic struggle between the Buddhist majority in Myanmar and the Rohingya minority (Huda, 2013). As a result of the alleged rape and murder of a Rakhine woman in late May 2012 by three Rohingya men, ethnic tensions between the Rohingya and the Rakhine erupted into communal violence (The Guardian, 2012). As a result of at least 50 deaths, 30,000 people being driven from their homes, and the ongoing indifference shown by the government in Myanmar, the Rohingya people were compelled to seek refuge in Bangladesh.

Rohingya Clearance Operations in Response of Militant Attacks: 2016

The attacks carried out by Rohingya militants on Myanmar's border police in Rakhine state on October 9 result in retaliation against the Rohingya population, which in turn results in a new surge of refugees crossing the border (BBC, 2016). According to state media, the government has denied reports of human rights abuses in Rakhine and had claimed that the military is carrying out "Clearance Operations" targeting suspected "violent attackers" who killed nine border guards on October 9th (Wright, 2016). In October of 2016, the Tatmadaw began a severe crackdown on the Rohingya, which included the abduction of men and boys for the purpose of forced labor, the raping and sexual exploitation of girls and young women, and the disappearance of children (United States Department of State, 2016).

The recent Extreme Influx: 2017

A terrorist organization in Rakhine known as the "Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army" (ARSA) was responsible for the deaths of a large number of law enforcement officials after the 25th of August, 2017. They attacked about 30 checkpoints, and as a result, the government of Myanmar raised the presence of West Asian Muslim

extremist organizations in the Rakhine area (Goodman & Mahmood, 2019). Extreme repercussions followed, and as a result, the government of Myanmar initiated a military crackdown against Rohingya villages. To escape certain death, nearly 500,000 Rohingya people have fled to Bangladesh (Chattoraj, 2018). Bepler (2018) contended that the number passed the threshold of one million during the middle of 2017.

Theoretical Relevance

In the context of international politics, the term "Regional Hegemony" refers to the political, economic, or military domination, control, or influence of one independently powerful state, also sometimes referred to as the "Regional Hegemon," over other countries in direct proximity. John Mearsheimer, a famous international relations expert, devotes different facets of the pursuit of regional hegemony in his book, "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics." According to his theory, which is referred to as Offensive Realism, the anarchic nature of the international system, the drive to survive, and the ambiguity about the intentions of other states all ultimately lead to states pursuing Regional Hegemony.

Gramsci defines hegemony as "predominance by consent," which is the condition that occurs when a fundamental class exercises a political, intellectual, and moral role of leadership within a hegemonic system that is cemented by a unified worldview or "organic ideology" (Valeriano, 1982). According to hegemonic stability theory, it is more likely for the international system to be stable when there is a single state that is the leading world power, also known as a hegemon (Joshua, 2005). Gramsci believed that a group could neither maintain its dominant position in modern society by only looking out for its own limited economic interests, nor could it maintain its position alone by the use of force and coercion. Instead, it needs to demonstrate intellectual and moral leadership, while also forging alliances and reaching agreements with a wide range of other groups. For not having a single Hegemon and for the presence of emerging powers like China and India, the stability and humanitarian issues like the Rohingya crisis have a questionable doubt for finding a solution. In order to prevent the rise of hegemonic power, a balance of power gradually emerges in interpersonal, intergroup, and international relations as a result of the need for individuals to demonstrate their esteem (Morgenthau, 1948). China and India both are in a Tug of War centering Myanmar for proving their power in the Region.

According to Offensive Realism, a theory of international relations, governments are naturally inclined to competition and conflict due to their self-interest, desire to maximize power, and fear of other states. Aside from that, it argues that states have a responsibility to act in this way since it is essential to their continued participation in the international system (Johnson et al., 2016). Offensive Realism contends that the desire for security and, more importantly, the need to survive motivates nations to aggressively enhance their power. States do not cooperate with one

another, with the exception of short-term alliances; rather, they are continuously working to weaken their rivals' authority while bolstering their own. The goal of Offensive Realism is to attain safety through dominance and hegemony; hence it actively pursues power and influence (Valeriano, 2009). For the purpose of the power dominance competition, China and India observe Myanmar as a weapon for increasing their dominance and power in the Region and for attaining Regional Hegemony and to maximize their power in the Region, respectively, India is following their 'Act East Policy' and China has been forwarding following their 'One Belt One Road' initiative. Other than focusing on the Humanitarian need of providing assistance for the solution of the Rohingya issue, the infrastructural projects of India and China have received more importance to these competing countries in order to combat towards increasing their power in the region by utilizing the geopolitical location of Myanmar.

Methodology

Several studies addressed such issues as the Rohingya people's persecution and ethnic cleansing in the past, the crisis's effects on Bangladesh, the threat of terrorism in neighboring areas and the effect of health and the environment for the Rohingya crisis. However, this study aims to establish the correlation between the strategic significance of Rakhine and the ongoing Rohingya issue from a different point of view. The Research objective is to find out how the strategic value of Myanmar's Rakhine State sustains the Rohingya refugee crisis. This paper will also focus on how the strategic importance of Myanmar's Rakhine state to its neighbors contributes to the development of regional competition. It will be analyzed in terms of how their hegemonic struggle diverts attention away from the Rohingya crisis. The writers will begin their defense of their position by outlining how the countries of the region managed to put the Rohingya crisis on the back burner in order to focus on their strategic interests.

To identify the answer to these questions, researchers went through scholarly writings collected from different websites, mainly Google scholar, Hein Online, World cat etc. Besides, they reviewed secondary literature (e.g., books, book chapters, journal articles, newspapers, etc.) published on Myanmar's Rohingya issue and geopolitical features. The construction of this article makes utilization of the qualitative method as well as secondary data, which includes sources like newspapers and other Journal articles. The researchers conducted the method of Qualitative Content analysis. Due to the nature of this research, a conceptual discussion on geopolitics was required. This study's primary purpose is to investigate the factors that led to the geopolitical aspects of the Rohingya issue taking precedence over the humanitarian aspects of the situation.

Using a content-analysis-based approach, this paper combed through a mountain of literature spanning decades to better comprehend the evolving nature of the

situation. In order to have a better understanding of the impetus that led to the beginning of the crisis, the pertinent literature from the 1970s was reviewed and evaluated. There is a significant lack of academic material produced by authors from Myanmar, which could have been informative in comprehending the predicament from the viewpoint of the local population. As the paper suggests that the crisis has a geopolitical attachment, a literature review focusing on the International Relations aspect of the crisis was conducted. After 2016, the year of the most recent inflow of Rohingya refugees, a significant amount of material was reviewed since academics from around the world had come to the conclusion that the refugee situation required a sustainable solution.

Geopolitical features of Rohingya Crisis

Scholvin (2016), referring to Nicholas Spykman (1942), quoted that *"Ministers come and go, even dictators die, but the mountain ranges stand unperturbed"* (p. 05). Here, Scholvin indicates the importance of the geographical features of world politics. Sempa (2002) argues that practitioners of international politics frequently use the term 'geopolitics' to study specific policy issues and problems. It is the interactions among states in a specific geographical setting.

Myanmar is a country in Southeast Asia that is bordered by Bangladesh, Thailand, China, India, Laos, the Andaman Sea, and the Bay of Bengal (Ahamed et al., 2020). The country serves as a land and marine bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia. Because of its strategic positioning, this area attracts political and economic attention from many of Asia's most powerful nations. It is clear from the following map that the Rakhine state of Myanmar is a crucial node.

Figure 1: Geographical location of Rakhine State, Myanmar (Nayak, 2017)

The Rakhine province is located in a strategic part of Myanmar and is important from a Chinese and Indian geopolitical perspective (Khan, 2018). Before it gained its independence in 1949, China utilized Burma Road as a means of transporting its military supplies. After it attained its independence, Myanmar had a substantial influence on China's foreign policy, which included access to the Indian Ocean, energy security, border stability, and economic cooperation between the two countries (Yoshikawa, 2022). On the other hand, the governments of India made efforts to increase their influence in Myanmar in order to safeguard their respective national interests (Gupta, 2008).

China is striving to achieve regional dominance in order to protect its interests throughout the South Asian region. Because of this power competition with India in the region, China's goal is to infiltrate the Indian sphere of influence via Myanmar through economic engagement and the new connectivity endeavor called BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) (Mohan & Abraham, 2020). India constructed a seaport that established another road connection between Rakhine state and the northeastern portion of India because it does not want China to have a monopoly on the benefits that flow from Myanmar (Chakma, 2019). Because of its advantageous location between South Asia and Southeast Asia, Myanmar serves as an excellent bridge between the two halves of the continent. As a consequence of this, both countries consider Rakhine to be the "geopolitical headquarters" in order to realize a wide range of political goals and put economic policies into effect in the near future (Khan, 2018).

Regional Hegemony

In the current geopolitical landscape, according to Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, "Whoever dominates the Indian Ocean, dominates Asia". The title of hegemony will be bestowed upon a nation when it dominates its region on its own and is the sole major power. When there is more than one great power in a territory, there cannot be hegemony in that region. A state is considered to be a potential hegemon, if it possesses the capability of dominating a region by supplanting its neighboring great powers (Teixeira, 2021). It's no secret that China and India compete for dominance in Asia and beyond. Both recognize South and Southeast Asia as important political centers (Taufiq, 2021). The defense of national interests, especially geopolitical and geo-economic security, is a shared priority for China and India in Myanmar.

As the Myanmar army's (the Tatmadaw) crackdown drove more than 600,000 Rohingya refugees into neighboring Bangladesh, the administration of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi was widely criticized by countries in both the West and the Islamic world. In contrast, China and India provided unwavering support for her regime, which was backed by the military (Taufiq, 2021). Myanmar has long received aid from China and India. Since September of 1988, when the military of Myanmar took control of the government, both of the Asian powers

have been working toward increasing their influence in the newly reorganized Myanmar in order to safeguard their respective national interests. This includes making substantial investments in Myanmar, particularly in the state of Rakhine (Taufiq, 2019).

Scholars are in agreement that even after the brutal ethnic cleansing of Rohingyas by the Tatmadaw, the primary reason for China and India's unwavering support for Myanmar is the vast infrastructure projects that both countries are constructing in the Rakhine region (Taufiq, 2021). In terms of trade or political competition in the region, China's path to regional hegemony places a maximum effort on preventing Myanmar or other South-East Asian countries from moving closer to the dominance of the United States or the West. This is because China wants to establish itself as the dominant power in the region (Womack, 2003).

China has the capacity to utilize its veto power because it is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. This means that China can decide whether or not the subject will be brought before the International Criminal Court. Throughout the entirety of the crisis, it has been hesitant to publicly criticize the government that was in power in Myanmar (Alam, 2021). China will never be able to establish itself as the Regional Hegemon in Asia as long as there is another major regional power.

Involved countries and their stances on Rohingya Crisis

The Rohingya crisis has deep-rooted geopolitical features that influence the crisis multi-dimensional. Complicated power politics of two big Asian powers- China and India play a vital role in the regional context. While India is following its 'Act East Policy,' China moves forward with its 'Belt and Road Initiative.' The first two parts will cover the reactions of Myanmar's bordering two Asian 'Big Powers,' India and China, separately since they are the main stakeholders in this region. The chapter will then bring the inquisitiveness of other regional countries, e.g., Bangladesh, Laos, Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia, under an umbrella term and illustrate in detail. However, the authors will start the arguments with the position of India regarding this crisis.

India's stance regarding Rohingya Crisis

As a neighboring country, it was expected that India would come forward to diffuse this state-orchestrated human catastrophe. Unfortunately, the Home Affairs Ministry of the country already declared Rohingya settled in India as 'illegal' immigrants and ordered their deportation from their land. The ministry also instructed concerned states to identify illegal Rohingya and repatriate them to Myanmar. They also declared the displaced Rohingya a threat to their national security (Sahoo, 2017). The national and international community criticized India's stance regarding the recent Rohingya crisis.

India needs the cooperation of Myanmar to combat rebellions in its north-eastern borders (Idris, 2017). These Border States use Myanmar as a base of their insurgency.

Also, India has both economic and strategic interests in Myanmar. Yhome (2018) discusses India's Rohingya policy developed by considering various factors such as diplomacy, domestic politics, security issues and geopolitical factors. He identifies three phases of India's response to the Rohingya crisis.

a. Violent conflict in Rakhine state, 2012:

In this phase, India took the pro-Myanmar position and considered the crisis as an 'internal affair' of Myanmar. India had its economic interest, energy interest (cross border pipelines), connectivity interest (With the assistance of Myanmar, connect its landlocked north-eastern states to the Bay of Bengal). Again, India had the pressure of regional power politics, especially to win over China. Moreover, a security concern influenced India's Myanmar policy in this early phase. It wanted to prevent cross-border ethnic insurgency in its north-eastern borders. Therefore, security cooperation was also a factor for India to decide its Rohingya policy.

b. Indian government announcement to deport Rohingya in 2017:

According to the Indian government, approximately 10,500 Rohingya were living in India in 2015, whereas the number increased to 40,000 in 2017. Two new factors are crucial here; growing security concerns and the need for a delicate balance between Bangladesh and Myanmar. While discussing India's approach regarding Rohingya, Yhome (2018) raises three essential points behind in this phase;

- ☐ Return of the displaced Rohingya to Rakhine from Bangladesh and 'elsewhere.' Possibly by using the word 'elsewhere,' they tried to emphasize on the Rohingya population living in India.

- ☐ Finding a long term solution for the Rohingya crisis through socio-economic developments in Rakhine.

- ☐ Drawing the attention of the international community to handle the crisis with restraint.

c. Memorandum of understanding between Myanmar and India: Active role with an unimpeded approach:

Ignoring the leading human rights issues, they kept the focus on the infrastructural development of Rakhine and signed a memorandum of understanding with Myanmar in 2017. Storey (2017) discusses that India took the initiative to modernize Myanmar's navy through joint patrols. In this regard, India made a deal of $38 million in lightweight torpedo arms. However, India has its regional ambition, such as the *'Act East Policy'* through which it aims to balance Chinese influence in Southeast Asia and make connectivity in this area as well. India mainly aims to counter China's Indian Ocean plans . India is keen to develop its intimacy with Myanmar for the above-discussed concerns. To summarize, we can draw a diagram like the following to portray the geopolitical interest of India is in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: Geopolitical interest of India in Rakhine State, Myanmar

Chinese Geopolitical interest in Rakhine state

The Chinese government has a previous inclination to Myanmar and there is no exception in the current situation (Cookson, 2017). From the beginning of the crisis, China has been a vocal supporter of Myanmar for regional interest. Chinese dominance in Myanmar has a yearlong background. From the military junta regime, 1962, China maintained a close relationship with Myanmar. After that, while most of the world's countries put an embargo on Myanmar, China was the only strategic partner beside them. Moreover, China profoundly influenced the foreign policy of independent Myanmar (Chattoraj, 2018).

The more substantial part of the Chinese economy, especially gas and oil supply, export markets in Europe and the northern hemisphere depends on ocean shipments. The *'Strait of Malacca'* and the *'Strait of Lombok'* are two main passages for the ocean shipments of Chinese products. The countries around these two waterways strongly bond with the USA, which creates a fundamental challenge for the Chinese economy. Moreover, China's most prominent rival nowadays, the USA, controls these waterways by the 7th fleet of the US navy. Therefore it has become a geographical trap for the Chinese government, which it is trying to escape (Cookson, 2017).

Additionally, it will create an alternative route to avoid the hotly contested South China Sea. Another fact that attracts Myanmar to invest in this project is that the

KyaukPyu port will also be the starting point of an oil-gas pipeline from Myanmar to China (Idris, 2017). Moreover, the strategic location of *KyaukPyu* allows the Chinese navy to access the Indian Ocean through the Bay of Bengal (Storey, 2017). Similarly, Chattoraj (2018) argues that the Chinese navy targets coastal nations such as Myanmar and Bangladesh to get access to their ports.

However, Storey (2017) views that China is playing the role of a broker in the peace process. They will try to keep the Rohingya Crisis alive to discourage foreign investors in Myanmar. Thus, it will reduce the western influence in Myanmar, and China will dominate this region fully. China implied its veto power in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) against passing a resolution condemning the attacks on Rohingya (Ahmed, 2018).

We discussed earlier, the shipments of Chinese products primarily relies on the sea dominated by the US allied countries. Cookson (2017) refers to this trapped situation as *'like having a knife at your throat all the time.'* Referring to his arguments, we can recapitulate the Chinese agenda in three significant steps;

a) To confront the US 7th fleet, China is aiming at building a strong 'Blue Water Navy.'

b) Expanding its sovereignty and control in the South China Sea.

c) In search of an alternative route, targets a large-scale project named *'one belt and one road'* initiative.

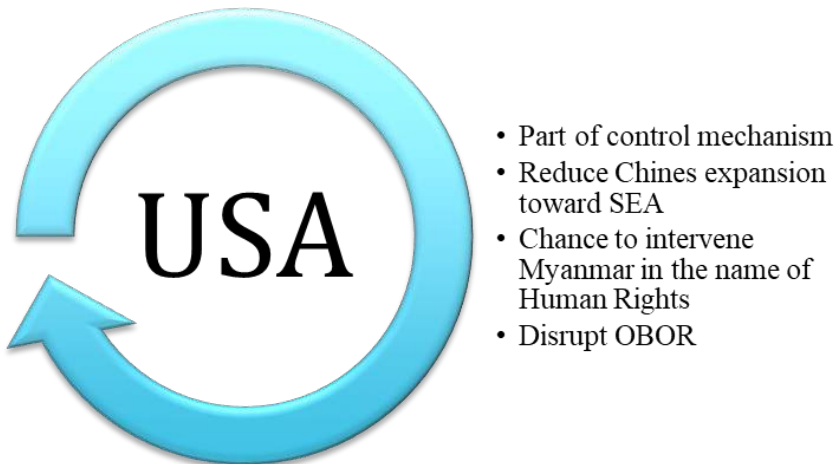The factors behind the strong Chinese involvement in Rakhine are shown in **Figure 3.**

Figure 3: Geopolitical interest of China in Rakhine, Myanmar.

The final step, China's One Belt and One Road initiative, aims to improve economic interconnectedness (Sakib, 2019). This project highly depends on the bilateral relationship between Myanmar and China (Cookson, 2017). That is why China always keeps concerns regarding the issues of Myanmar.

USA and its strategic position on Rohingya Crisis

Historically, the relationship between Myanmar and the USA was inauspicious and gloomy. The USA and its allies put sanctions on Myanmar in 1997 (Bepler, 2018 & Yhome, 2018). Later, the isolation period relaxed in 2012, but the country is still under severe scrutiny of the west (Bepler, 2018). Mahadevan (2013) claims that the USA changed its rivalry view to Myanmar after the official visit of Hillary Clinton in 2011. Policymakers consider this move as one of the greatest optimistic approaches of the USA towards Myanmar after 1955. One year later, the President of the USA (then Barack Obama) also paid a visit to Myanmar and announced to work together for a better tomorrow.

However, Sharma (2017) contends that the United States of America would like to maintain the ongoing communal hostilities in Rakhine in order to sabotage the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative being undertaken by China. The OBOR project will be delayed further the longer Rakhine State continues to be unstable as a result of the Rohingya conflict. The Myanmar army was accused of being responsible for serious abuses of human rights in Rakhine by the House of Representatives of the United States of America. They accused the Myanmar government of engaging in "ethnic cleansing" by persecuting the Rohingya minority group (Ahmed, 2018). To conclude, the concerns of the USA are as follows shown in **Figure 4.**

- Part of control mechanism
- Reduce Chines expansion toward SEA
- Chance to intervene Myanmar in the name of Human Rights
- Disrupt OBOR

Figure 4: Geopolitical interest of the USA in Rakhine, Myanmar.

Responses from other regional and international stakeholders

For instance, it seems like the Southeast Asian countries, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, found no personal benefit in the Rakhine state. Therefore they did not feel like interfering in this matter. However, these Asian countries took a self-centered approach and considered the matter as Myanmar's internal issue. For that reason, they hold a solid and resistant position against Rohingya refugees. They have either held the boats of asylum-seeking Rohingya in their coastal areas for long or turned them away at gunpoint immediately (Sahoo, 2017). Indonesia and Malaysia attempted to raise the matter in a muted voice, despite the fact that some of them condemned Myanmar's horrific treatment of the Rohingya.

After the 2017 crisis to the present, Malaysia gave shelter to almost one hundred thousand Rohingya but denied the status of refugee (Al Jazeera, 2020). Again, Indonesia provided aid for the refugees sheltered in Bangladesh (The Straits Times, 2017). Several international and regional bodies like the United Nations (UN), Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) continuously request Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia to provide shelter to the Rohingya who escaped from Myanmar by boat and reached to their seashores (Khairi, 2016). Although many Western countries (e.g., the UK, France, etc.) condemned Myanmar's brutal actions towards the Rohingya community, none of them took any practical initiative to solve this problem. Abdin (2017) claimed Russia is sheltering Myanmar regarding the Rohingya crisis and stands against international sanctions. With the support of Russia, Aung San SuuKyi also warned the critics about using Russian veto powers if needed (Fumagalli, 2017).

Hegemony vs. Humanity: What is the Priority?

From the above discussions, it is clear that Myanmar's neighboring countries and world big powers have vested geopolitical interests of their own in the Rakhine State. In this part, researchers will elucidate how these countries respond to the recent Rohingya crisis. The discussions will be starting with India's role, then China, and 'other countries' as the writers segmented before.

Despite being one of the closest allies for so long, India did not concentrate on Bangladesh's wellbeing. Moreover, it was reluctant to solve the Rohingya refugee crisis and tried to develop inwardness with Myanmar. While dealing with the crisis, Indian foreign policymakers go for a soft approach instead of a visible stand. Their major purpose is to assure their profit while minimizing disorder in this area. The Indian government has not signed the 1951 Refugee Convention. Despite this, India has a great reputation for hosting refugees during various time periods. Previously, refugees from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Tibet, and Afghanistan were sheltered there. Regarding the Rohingya issue once more, India absorbed thousands of refugees following the 2012 deadly violence. The foreign minister at the time, Salman Khurshid, visited Myanmar and offered a $1 million economic aid plan (Sahoo, 2017).

India and China have long records of rivalry and the Rohingya issue added one more layer to that. It is evident that both countries were involved in the Rohingya crisis for their particular interests. Besides, it is not possible to deny that these two Asian superpowers are here to check and balance each other in regional politics. Significantly, China and India are trying to establish a stronghold in Myanmar, at least for two common reasons- geopolitics and economy.

The Chinese involvement in Myanmar drives India to choose its position in the Rohingya crisis. In the 1980s, India vehemently opposed the military's suppression of the Burmese democratic movement. This stance pushed the then Myanmar government a staunch ally of China. India does not want to repeat this to maintain its geopolitics (Sahoo, 2017). Also, India wants to have access to East Asia. It aims to create a regional hegemony in Asia and, more specifically, in Southeast Asia. To fulfill this desire, India considers Myanmar as the gateway. Therefore India is strongly backing the Myanmar government.

China is aware of the USA's agenda of preventing its expansion toward Southeast Asia. The policymakers of China are concerned about the USA's involvement in protecting human rights and, therefore, try to establish hegemony on Myanmar. Significantly, China is concentrating on economic development of its own. Control over the land of Myanmar will allow China to establish gas and pipelines. Besides, China finds Rakhine a strategically important location that opens the door to the Indian Ocean (Idris, 2017 & Sharma, 2017). If India is trying to balance Chinese influence in Myanmar by investing in different projects, China is also trying to restrict the USA in South East Asia. The growing influence of China in Myanmar poses the greatest threat to the hegemonic position of the United States in Asia. The Chinese vision of integrating Asia, Europe, and Africa through initiatives known as One Belt One Road poses a challenge to the United States' position as the world's preeminent superpower. This initiative will reduce the distance and increase the opportunity of spreading Chinese products in large cities (Sakib, 2019). China has developed initiatives such as OBOR, AIIB, and the Silk Road fund in order to compete with the Bretton Woods institutions that are dominated by the United States (Sharma, 2017).
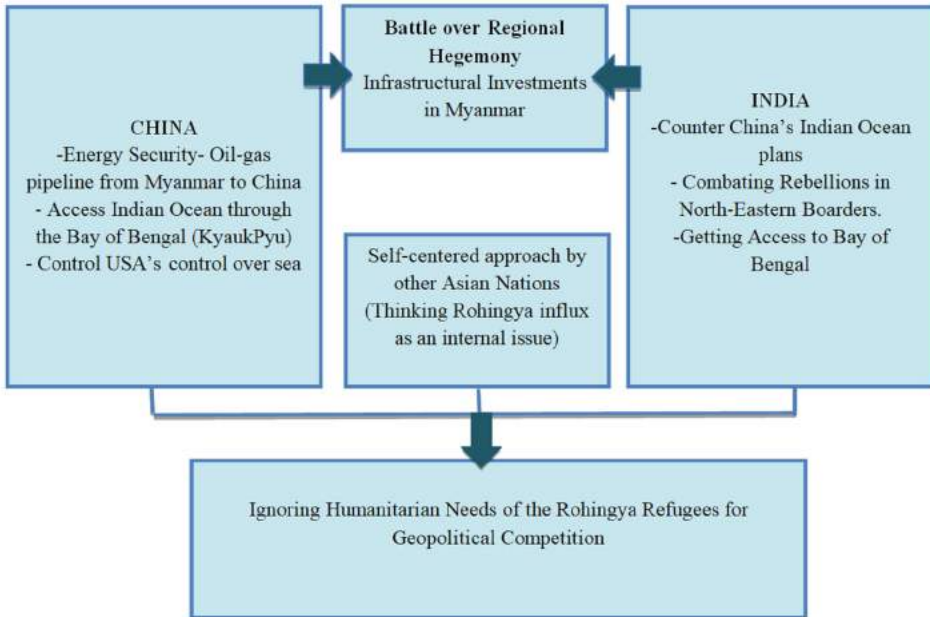
Figure 5: Geopolitical interests of three global actors-USA, China and India.

Among the significant power politics, Bangladesh has become the scapegoat of this crisis (Adawy, 2013). Again, Khan (2017) views Bangladesh as a geopolitical chessboard. From the beginning of the crisis, the Bangladesh government has been consistent at one point; the Rohingya community belongs to Myanmar. It is their responsibility to return their citizens in a peaceful way (Robinson & Rahman, 2012). Again, Bangladesh did not sign in the refugee convention of 1951 and the country is not obliged to shelter Rohingya refugees. Still, Bangladesh is assuring the shelter and safety of the Rohingya people. Why Bangladesh is hosting these large numbers of refugees might arise while other neighboring countries (e.g., India, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, etc.) sealed their borders (Sahoo, 2017). The answer relies on humanitarian ground and the issue of morality. During its liberation war in 1971, Bangladeshi people were refugees in India (Abrar, 1995). This previous experience generates sympathy among the people of Bangladesh and the authorities consider Rohingya cases from an empathetic perspective.

Conclusion

Rohingya crisis is a vital threat to regional stability. Bangladesh is standing in between a hard and rock situation regarding this crisis. The recent massive influx of Rohingya in Bangladesh creates serious tensions and struggles. The territories along the borders of Bangladesh, Myanmar, and India are the epicenter of terrorist and insurgent activity. Besides, they use the place as a training field (Rahman, 2010). Again, we know Rohingya are idly spending their days in camps. This useless time attracts them to engage in transnational crime and smuggling (Chattoraj, 2018). In

addition, newer opportunities for illegal drugs, arms and human trafficking for sex trades may be enhanced. The drug 'Yaba' comes from Myanmar and Rohingya is used as a carrier (Banerjee, 2019). Meanwhile, the percentages of addicted youth are frequently rising in Bangladesh (Sakib, 2019).

Myanmar, especially the Rakhine State, is a door to South East Asia for both India and China. Again, it gives them alternative blue water access through the Bay of Bengal. Moreover, natural resources make Myanmar an essential field of competition between big powers. Again, the USA could have played a significant role in solving this crisis. Unfortunately, they also consider their rivalry with China and control over South East Asia as their prime concern. While China focuses on Myanmar to save its OBOR project, the USA targets to disrupt it. Therefore, the USA will not pressurize Myanmar in this issue to prevent Chinese hegemony in Myanmar. Hence, the USA focuses on the North Korean crisis instead of solving the Rohingya issue. Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia agreed to assist refugees temporarily, but none took any practical initiative to resolve the crisis permanently. Even they are not enthusiastic about dealing with the matter, considering it as the responsibility of Myanmar.

Some writers blame the religion (e.g., Islam) of Rohingya for the causation of this crisis. Sharma (2017) explains the influence of 'Islamophobia' in the Rohingya crisis from the dimension of Huntington's theory of 'Clash of Civilization.' In his opinion, Huntington says, in the post-cold war era, wars would take place, not between countries but civilizations. Islamophobia has always remained a common factor that fanned the fire of the Rohingya refugee crisis. India is unwilling to shelter them for the sake of their national security and possible militant insurgencies.

On the other hand, the Arakanese Buddhist community was also afraid of losing their religious and political power in Rakhine due to the growing number of this Muslim minority group. However, the main issue is not a religion and it never was. We should instead focus on the geopolitical features of Myanmar because, ultimately, they are going to decide the fate of the Rohingya. Hence, there is no reason to consider 'Islamophobia' as an essential catalyst behind the Rohingya crisis.

World superpowers could soon stop this crisis by taking immediate measures. Nevertheless, they find their benefits in keeping the crisis alive. Despite having the chance to pressure Myanmar to solve the Rohingya crisis, both India and China are busy with their geographical tug of war. Although China promised to help Bangladesh regarding the Rohingya crisis, it seems more inclined to the wellbeing of Myanmar. On the other side, India and Bangladesh share a long and fruitful history of friendship. Despite that, it looks like India will not hesitate to disown the interest of Bangladesh in the Rohingya issue (Khan, 2017 & Ahmed, 2018). Both China and India find the Rohingya crisis as an opportunity to hold their hegemonic power in Asia. Linter (2017) argues that the Rohingya Crisis may establish China's strong position in the

Asian region. The Chinese government also maintains a diplomatic relation with Bangladesh and promises to help them regarding this crisis. Still, China is primarily concerned about the wellbeing of Myanmar instead of Bangladesh (Cookson, 2017). Even then, China is the leading business partner of Bangladesh (Sakib, 2019).

To sum up, we could say that, except for the stakeholders taking an empathetic stronghold, it is impossible to solve the Rohingya crisis. It would remain a burning issue unless the geopolitical competition over Rakhine was resolved. Being made the scapegoat in this crisis would have negative repercussions for Bangladesh in the long run. It's possible that the Rohingya community's problems will never be resolved as long as we continue to view them through the narrow lens of Islamophobia rather than the broader lens of geopolitics. In the not too distant future, the Rohingya population may end up becoming known as "Asia's new Palestinians."

* On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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The emergence of Nata Sankirtana: A Ritualistic Dance Performance

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Abstract: *Nata Sankirtana is a sacred Manipuri ritualistic dance performance, deeply intertwined with spirituality and traditional rituals. While it may initially appear as a musical dance form driven by the performer's skills, it holds a profound philosophy, requiring a holistic meditation of the body, mind, and soul. This research paper focuses on the transformation of Nata Sankirtana from local rituals to stage performances, with a particular emphasis on its elegance, unique movements, mudras, and dance styles when viewed from the perspective of Bangladesh. This exploratory research employs qualitative data from secondary sources to provide insights into the various aspects of Nata Sankirtana, including ritual accessories, costumes, musical instruments, songs, functionaries, performance space, and structure. Nata Sankirtana's ancient and ritualistic nature has significantly influenced Manipuri dance and choreography. It is a form of performing arts that serves as a gateway to spiritual enlightenment and a deeper connection with the divine, accessible only to sincere devotees who approach it with a genuine desire to explore its spiritual depths.*

Keywords: *Nata Sankirtana, Dance performance, Manipuri, Ritual, Choreography.*

Introduction

The term "Nata" comes from the Sanskrit word that means "to act" (Ghosh, M, 1951) or "to dance" (Ghosh, M, 1934). A "Nata" is a performer who embodies the emotions and sentiments of people through dance, conveying the Rasa and Bhava while fulfilling the four Abhinayas of Angika, Aharya, Vachika, and Sattvika. The Abhinaya Darpana and the Natya Shastra emphasizes the role of the "Nata" as a performer who conveys emotions through the four Abhinayas in theatrical productions. "Nata Pala" refers to a congregation of many Natas or actors. Therefore, "Nata Sankirtana" is a performance-based art form by many actors that stands out due to its inherent theatrical dynamics.

Although Nata Sankirtana may appear to be a superficial musical dance form dominated by the performer's skills, it has its own philosophy. Through Nata Sankirtana, the performer engages in a holistic meditation that involves the body, mind, and soul. In addition to the performance itself, the devotee is also enlightened and can attain

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salvation. The transcendent love of the Radha and Krishna union enables both the performers and participants. Nata Sankirtana has become a prominent means of achieving spiritual goals among the various performing art forms.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are -

a) To explore the Nata Sankirtana a ritualistic performance of Manipur.
b) To discover the various movements, mudras, and talas used in Nata Sankirtana.
c) To explore the different musical instruments used in Nata Sankirtana.
d) To recommend the Nata Sankirtana as a dance performance so that it will enhance the dance sector in Bangladesh.

Methodology

The study is exploratory in nature and used qualitative data for executed the research. The researcher has used secondary data for this study.

The rationale of the study

Nata Sankirtana is a very ancient and ritualistic dance performance that has a huge impact on Manipuri dance. Indian researchers and dancer Dr. Sruti Bandopadhay have executed research where she mentioned Nata Sankirtana as a ritualistic dance performance (Bandopadhay, S, 2010). And in my research, I will try to explore the Nata sankirtana from the perspective of Bangladesh and will try to present that it is an elegant dance performance that has many innovative body movements, mudras and dance style, music, etc. The proper implementation of the Nata Sankirtana will be an enriched Manipuri dance platform.

Findings

History

Nata Sankirtana is a cultural and spiritual practice that has evolved over time in Manipur. It was influenced by the Vaishnavite tradition of devotional singing known as 'Bangadesh Kirtan' The origins of this tradition in Manipur are not entirely clear, but it is believed to have begun with the construction of a Vishnu temple during the reign of King Kiyamba in the late 15th century (Bandopadhay, S , 2010)This led people to present Sankirtana as a form of reverence to Vishnu. Subsequently, King Charairongba and many of his subjects adopted Bhagavat Dikshya and began worshipping Lord Krishna through Hari Sankirtana in 1697 AD.Drupad Hari Sankirtana, also called Ariba Sankirtana or Bangadesh Pala, was founded by Maharaj Garibaniwaz in 1709 and was used in funeral ceremonies such as Asti and Shraddha. It gained prominence in Manipur from 1763 to 1798 AD, during the reign of Maharaj Bhagyachandra, along with Gourchandrika and Goura

Bhavi. Nortom Thakur Mahasoi, considered to be the incarnation of Maharaj Bhagyachandra, further popularized this tradition during his reign (Jhaveri and Devi, 1993). He built the temple of Sri Govindajee and introduced Lord Krishna's Rasa Kirtan, which became a popular form of worship. Dhrumel Hari Sankirtana was the original name given to Drupad Hari Sankirtana, but it was later renamed Nata Sankirtana to reflect the idea of prayer through Sankirtana.As a result, Drupad Sankirtana in Manipur was divided into two types: Ariba Sankirtana or Bangadesh Pala, and Nata Sankirtana or Anouba Pala. The latter became the most popular form of Nata Sankirtana, performed in groups with musical accompaniment, and is still practiced widely in Manipur today. The tradition of Nata Sankirtana has deep cultural and spiritual significance in Manipuri society and continues to be an essential part of their heritage (Singh, M T, 2018).

Nata Sankirtana in Bangladesh

From the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, due to various political and social phenomena flows and war, the victims left their countries. The residents of the Northeast of Manipur, India took shelter in various areas of India and Bangladesh.   A huge number of Manipuri people migrated to the area of nearest Assam, Tripura, and Bangladesh. During the Burma – Manipur war (1819-1825), the king of Manipur, Chaurajit Singh, and two of his brothers Marjit Singh and Gambhir Singh took shelter in Sylhet. After the war, many of them returned to their own country but some Manipuri people became permanent residents in their new places. Manipuri people who came to Bangladesh, settle down in Bramhanbaria, Mymensingh, Dhaka, and the larger part of Sylhet (Banglapedia, 2021. Retrieved from *https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Manipuri,_The)* . At present the Manipuri community lives in the Sylhet division. The Manipuri people in Sylhet possess a wealth of indigenous repertories in dance, songs, and music. They also perform Nata Sankirtana in various ceremonies and rituals associated with birth and death

Classificaitons of Nata Sankirtana

Nata Sankirtana can be classified into different forms that depict Bhakti rasa based on the purpose, seasons, and context of the rituals (Waikhom, R , 2004) . The various forms of Nata Sankirtana include:

- Nata Maha Sankirtana (performed during Sradha and marriage ceremony)
- Kirtan Khongshangba (elongated Kirtan)
- Dhrumel (drum chorus)
- Bashok Sheishak (song of Clapper girls)
- Naam pala (chorus and chants)
- Katha Kirtan (story processions)
- Nagar Kirtan (ritual procession)
- Ashti sanchay (fifth day after cremation)
- Porok Sheishak (ritual songs for the dead)
- Basanta Holi style in Rathyatra
- Jaidev Dasavatar kirtan (waking up Lord Jagannath)
- Khubak eshei (mainly women chorus)
- Shayon performance

The Nata Maha Sankirtana is an integral part of various festivals, such as Holi, Rathyatra, and the legends of Krishna Radha. It has also become an inseparable element of various rites-de-passage, including Annaprashana, Karna vedha, Upnayan, Lu hongba, Shradha, and Firoi. The Kirtan Khongshangba is a type of sankirtana that is usually performed in memory of deceased ancestors and can include Dhrumel performances. Dhrumel is a type of sankirtana that involves a group of drummers with distinct rhythm patterns, and different scholars and gurus introduce various forms of Sankirtana Dhrumel, such as Maha Dhrumel, Devi Dhrumel, and Goura Dhrumel. Strict rules enforced during the performance of Dhrumel. However, the most significant Nata Sankirtana performance occurs during the Shradha Ceremony, a religious ritual that follows the death of a Hindu person. Both male and female singers, known as Nupa Pala and Nupi Pala, respectively, perform in most rites-de-passage (Waikhom, R, 2004) except for shraddha, asthi, and phiroy. Men, women, and children all participate in Khubak eshei, which involves clapping hands to the tune of Abhinaya Cholom. During festivals like Holi, groups of both professional and amateur performers present the Basanta Holi Shishak. Additionally, in honor of Lord Krishna and Radha, performers that include men, women, and children perform the Jhulon and Jalakeli leelas for several days. The Shayan sheishak of Mera month (November) is similar to the Katha Kirtan and Nagar Kirtan (Waikhom, R, 2004).

Dress or Costume

The Nata Sankirtana performers follow a specific dress code, including the compulsory Ashta Vesh dress which consists of eight elements (Waikhom , R, 2004) The Trikatcha Pheijom or Dhoti is an important element of the dress, with pleats falling loosely from the front and back twisted elegantly and tucked in. The performers also wear Kunja to hide their toes, and a Khwangchet around their

waist. At the beginning of the performance, the performers put a cloth of Lengyan on the left shoulder, and at the end of the performance, the host offers Innafi to all performers. Kokyet, a turban, is also an essential part of the Nata Sankirtana dress, with different groups having specific styles (Bandopadhay, S, 2010). Sandal paste marks, lungoon, and uric are also worn by the performers, while make-up is avoided as the performance is more related to ritualistic bhakti-oriented performances. The dress code finalized during the period of King Churchand, with contributions from the royal court. The performers dress up in the performance area, as there is no green room to change their attire (Waikhom, R ,2004).

Performers

The Nata Sankirtana is predominantly performed by the pala artists, who can come from any age group and do not require any specific lineage or hereditary profession. To become a pala performer, one needs to have a good singing voice, pleasing physical features, and a strong dedication to chanting Harinam and following the basic tenets of Vaishnava religion (Waikhom, R, 2004). In the Nata Sankirtana tradition, a disciple has the privilege of acquiring essential skills and knowledge from a highly respected guru. By doing so, they gain the opportunity to become a follower and actively participate in the Sankirtana group. It is of utmost importance for the performer to uphold discipline, exhibit good behavior, and demonstrate utmost respect and devotion to their guru, thereby upholding the sacred Guru-Shishya parampara (teacher-disciple relationship) (Jhaveri and Devi, 1993). This reverence ensures the preservation and continuation of this esteemed tradition.

In the Nata Sankirtana group, the roles of Esheihanba, Duhar, and Pung Yeibas are of utmost importance (Bandopadhay, S, 2010). The Duhar performer serves as the leader of cholom and should possess distinctive physical features and a deep understanding of cholom abhinaya. The Khonbangba, or the voice assistant to the lead singer, must have exceptional singing abilities. The lead singer holds the pivotal position within the pala, guiding and overseeing the entire Nata Sankirtana performance. Their occupation is deeply intertwined with spirituality, and when they step into the Nata Sankirtana mandap, they symbolically transcend their individuality and immerse themselves in the world of Sri Chaitanya and his divine

realm (Waikhom, R, 2004). In the Nata Sankirtana tradition, Moibung Khongba holds a significant position as they perform a vital role (Bandopadhay, S, 2010). Their responsibility is to blow the moibung, a conch shell, at the commencement and culmination of the performance. Additionally, they may use the conch shell at specific intervals between Sankirtana songs, marking the conclusion and commencement of different episodes. The melodious sound produced by the conch shell is an integral element of Nata Sankirtana music, adding depth and resonance to the performance. It is worth noting that both the Mandap Mapu and Moibung Khongba are seated performers, contributing to the captivating ambiance during the ceremony (Waikhom, R ,2004) .

Musical Instruments

Accompanying the songs in Nata Sankirtana are the Pung, also known as the Mridanga, and the Kartal, a pair of cymbals (Waikhom, R, 2004). The shape, size, and sound of these instruments are tailor-made for the specific theme and function of Nata Sankirtana.

Pung Or Mridanga

The Pung, in particular, is capable of producing an astonishing range of sounds that must be heard to be fully appreciated. It is likely that no other percussion instrument can communicate such a diverse range of sounds as effectively as the Pung. It was during the era of King Bhagyachandra that the Nata Sankirtana Pung took on its current form (Waikhom, R, 2004). This double-faced drum consists of a maru face made from cow skin and a manou face made from calfskin, both coated with black loading. The parchment is secured with leather straps and fastened with a cotton belt passing through brass rings. Originally, the Ariba Pala's Ariba Pung had a longer structure, but it was adapted for Nata Sankirtana, resulting in a lighter, softer, and shorter version. Additionally, it is now covered with a white cotton cloth, which adds to its aesthetic appeal and cultural significance. The Manipuri Vaishnavas hold the Pung drum in high esteem, considering it as a manifestation of Sri Krishna himself, with the drum's color symbolizing Shyam Varna, Lord Krishna's color (Waikhom, R, 2004). Each part of the drum represents Lord Krishna, Radhika, Gopis, and other characters in the Krishna cycle. The Pung is considered a sacred object, and holy verses are recited before playing or teaching it. The sound of the Pung is associated with Sri Krishna, Radhika, Sri Chaitanya, Nityanand, and Sri Advaita, with each syllable of the drum having a unique interpretation. During the Nata Sankirtana, the Pung evokes the rasa of Sri Chaitanya, Nityanand, and Radha-Krishna.

Meitei Pung

Kartal

The cymbal, commonly known as the Kartal, holds a significant place among the percussion instruments. It is played by hand and comprises two saucer-shaped brass disks, featuring a central depression and a hole through which a handle is attached, either made of colored fabric or interlaced threads. In Manipuri music, two types of cymbals are utilized: the Bangadesh pala's cymbal and the Nata pala's Kartal (Waikhom, R, 2004). During the reign of King Bhagyachandra, the Kartal underwent a redesign, resulting in a smaller and heavier version. The Kartal, crafted from brass and adorned with a golden hue, symbolically represents the radiant complexion of Radha. Its melodious sound is believed to mirror the sweet voice of Radha. Notably, the cymbal's handle is intricately fashioned to resemble the cascading and exquisite tresses of Radha, meticulously crafted using knotted threads of cotton. The Anouba Nata pala Kartal has longer handles, around 8 inches long, made of Kabrang or silk threads and is more suitable for the graceful cholom performance compared to the Ariba pala, whose handles are shorter (Waikhom, R , 2004).
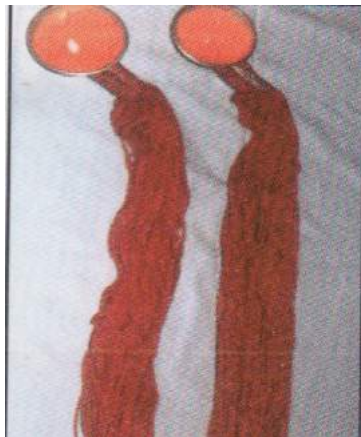
Moibung

The conch shell is a wind instrument blown by mouth and has been used since ancient times. In Nata Sankirtana, the conch shell is blown at the beginning and end of the performance, signifying its auspiciousness (Jhaveri and Devi, 2010)

Conch Shell

The moibung
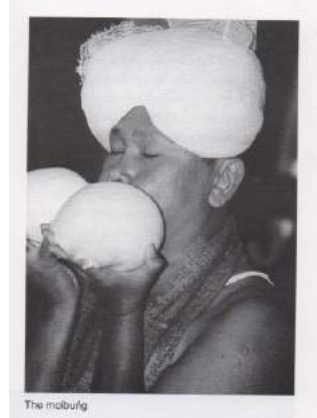
Performance Space

To perform any kind of ritual or ceremony, a suitable space is required. In the case of the Nata Sankirtana, a mandap is usually used, which can either be a permanent structure attached to a temple or a temporary one built in the courtyard. The spatial arrangement and direction of the mandap are designed to evoke the atmosphere of Brindavan bhava, Nabadweep, and Lai Haraoba. The mandap has its own codes, styles, and architectural features and is often constructed as an extension of the temple. The central area of the mandap, known as Mandali (Waikhom, R, 2004), is where the Nata Sankirtana is performed.

Dance elements of Nata Sankirtana

Cholom

The Nata Sankirtana pala's role is to perform rhythmic dance movements accompanied by drumming and cymbals, all of which follow specific time measures and rhythm. These movements and gestures, collectively referred to as 'Cholom' in Manipur, are an essential component of Nata Sankirtana. Both cymbal and drum players participate in Cholom. Cholom is a Sanskrit term (Waikhom, R, 2004) meaning a sequence of composed movements, and it is commonly considered a dance performance for men. During Cholom, the movements should be limited to the realm of bhakti or devotion. Therefore, any gestures or expressions of the eyes and body should convey bhakti and humility.

Pung Cholom

The Pung cholom dance is performed by two drummers who accompany their own drum beats (Waikhom, R, 2004). The performers of Pung cholom have more freedom, and their movements appear acrobatic with a range of spiral movements, sometimes even off the ground, demanding a keen sense of balance and rhythm. The Cholom dance is a unique creation of the Manipuri people, primarily a male dance form, with techniques that differ from the tandava dances of the Rasalila style (Bandopadhay, S, 2010, p. 140). However, the lasya part of Cholom is similar to that of the Rasalila. The Cholom tandava has become a popular item in recent times and primarily focuses on technique, with fewer abhinayas or facial expressions. To make it more appealing to the audience, acrobatic movements are often included. Achieving perfection in technique requires a lot of practice and dedication.

The main posture of the Cholom dance involves three bend (Bandopadhay , S, 2010 p. 140) :

- One from the head to the waist,
- The second from the waist to the knees, and
- The third from the knees to the heels.

 This posture is directly influenced by Krishna's posture, which has three bends and is popularly called the tribhangi (tri or three and bhangi is posture). While dancing, the feet may go up to the knees but not allowed to go straight up or above the waist. Stretch movements on both sides also not allowed (Bandopadhay , S, 2010).

Pung Colom
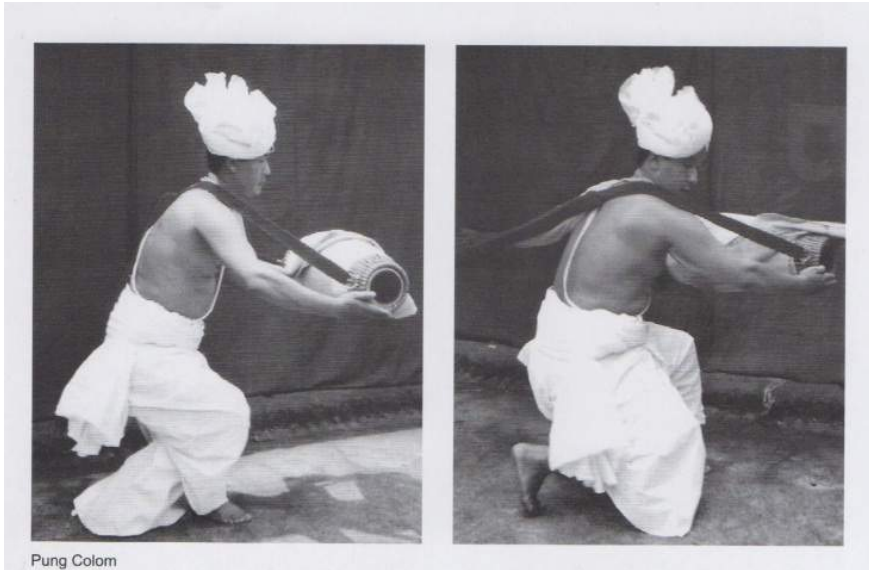
Kartal Cholom

Another form of cholom dance is the Kartal cholom, where the performers use kartal instruments in their hands while following a similar style of movement as in other cholom dances (Bandopadhay , S , 2010). The movements in Kartal cholom are less vigorous and more stylized. At the beginning of the dance, the waist, back, and knees kept in a straight line while the hands hold the Kartal. The performers not only dance but also sing and play the Kartal at the same time. The performance requires concentration on the incarnations of Krishna, such as Govinda, Gopinatha, and Madanmohana, achieved through meditation (Bandhopadhay, S, 2010, p.141). The bowing posture also used in Kartal cholom.

The hand positions and different postures of Kartal Cholom

1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 The hand positions while playing the kartala & 6, 7, 8, & 9 The Different Postures of Kartala Colom
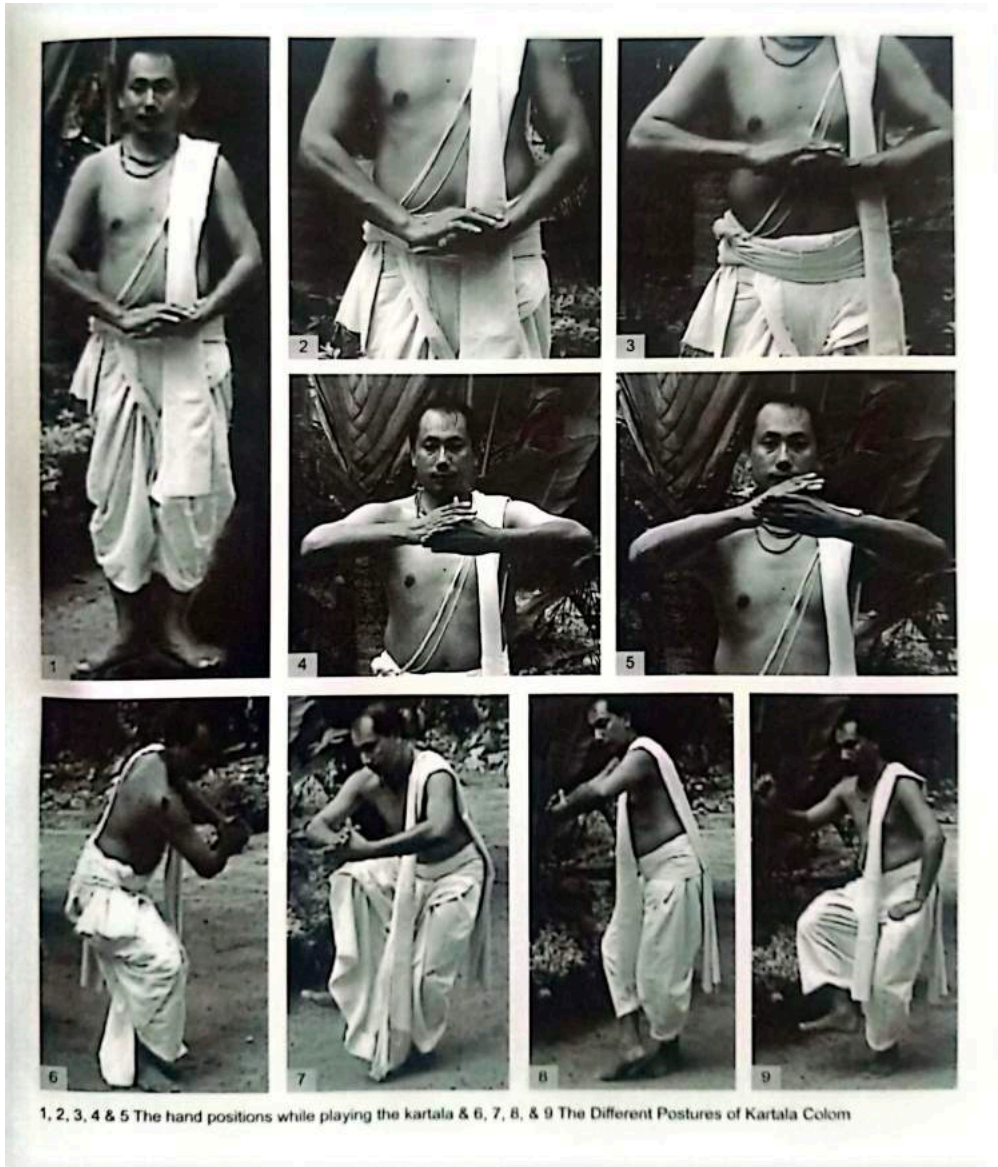
Songs of Nata Sankirtana

The Nata songs revolve around themes of love, devotion, and prayer to the Lord, and they beautifully express the corresponding rasas. These soul-stirring songs create a state of bliss in the minds of listeners, evoking profound emotions that lead ardent devotees to shed tears of love and surrender to the Lord completely. The caliber of a performer or singer can be evaluated through their rendition of the Rajmel episode (Waikhom, R, 2004). The earliest texts of these songs can be traced back to Das Avatar of Geet Govinda, and continuous efforts have been made to refine and enrich the kirtan songs. Nata pala songs have now become an integral part of various life events, and their singing style and techniques have been deeply influenced by the traditional Pena singing forms. However, it's important to note that the Nata pala eshei has its roots in the ancient singing forms and techniques of Manipur, drawing inspiration from its own unique traditions rather than relying solely on external sources. Guru Rasananda has made significant contributions to this tradition by creating a new raga based on the notes "Aa," "Ta," "Aa," "Ri," "Ta," "Na," "Ta," and "Na (Waikhom, R, 2004).Many scholars have not only written lyrics but have also composed melodies and techniques for these songs. While some scholars may have borrowed names of popular ragas like malar and sindhu raga from external sources, the style, techniques, and rhythm employed in Nata songs are entirely distinct. During the reign of King Chandrakirti, notable Brahmins made noteworthy contributions to Nata songs and popularized Manoharsai within the state, further enriching this vibrant musical tradition.

Implication

Although it is a ritualistic performance in the Manipuri community, the dancer can also perform it on stage in front of the audience. As its body movements, mudras, song, and musical instruments are very enriched in nature. Dancers and choreographers can implement it very conveniently during their performances.
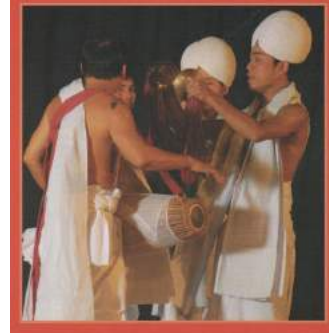
Conclusion

Manipur, a state in Northeast India, is renowned for its rich cultural heritage that includes a variety of ancient ritual music and dance forms. Among them, Nata Sankirtana, performed by Manipuri artists, is a significant ritualistic dance that reflects the inner thoughts, desires, longings, and worldview of the people. It involves a combination of musical instruments, performers, performance space, costume, audience, and community participation that collectively create a total ritualistic dance experience. Nata Sankirtana has influenced many dance gurus in India and Bangladesh, who have used Cholom movements in their dance compositions. Various dance festivals feature the precise dance performances of Pung Cholom, Kartal Cholom, and Dhol Cholom. In Bangladesh, Nata Sankirtana performers from Sylhet regularly perform on stage as a dance performance. Today, Nata Sankirtana not only represents devotional singing but also devotional dancing. For modern audiences, the dance aspect has become more crucial than the ritualistic element. As a result, performers have honed their skills and developed the intricacies of the dance to cater to the stage performance. Pung Cholom, with its high jumps, twisting torsos, intricate rhythms played on the Pung, and integrated movements of the feet, neck, and hands, has become the most popular element of the Nata Sankirtana dance. These stunning features of the dance have added an extra dimension to the elegance of Manipuri dance and other dance performances as well.

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