The Arts Faculty Journal, Vol. 14 No. 19, July 2023- June 2024
DOI:

Historical Events and Cultural Identities on Commemorative Stamps of Bangladesh

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Abstract: *This study proffers the historical events, national identities, and cultural symbols of Bangladesh by analyzing the contents of selected commemorative stamps. Compared to other countries around the world, there is little research available on the relevant topic in Bangladesh. This study aims to identify the most common themes depicted on the commemorative stamps of Bangladesh, the types of messages the stamps convey, and the reasons why these stamps are relevant for research. This paper takes into account the theories of semiotics and iconography. The study used content analysis as a research method. Data have been collected from primary and secondary sources, including websites. The stamps convey historical events and national identities, including cultural symbols and iconic figures that create special meanings. In addition, the stamps address cultural values related to the history, literature, development, and diplomatic friendships of Bangladesh too.*

Keywords: *Historical Events, Commemorative Stamps, Cultural Symbols, National Identity, Semiotics*

Introduction

Stamps are used for various purposes and have been a crucial part of human history. These stamps can be classified as postage stamps, airmail stamps, certified mail stamps, coil stamps, customized stamps, express mail stamps, international stamps, military stamps, postal tax stamps, revenue stamps, and special stamps such as definitive or commemorative stamps. Commemorative stamps bear cultural significance and historical events. In a broad sense, commemorative stamps are based on goodwill, greetings, love, achievement, and sacrifice of a country. All kinds of stamps, including commemorative stamps, are containers of important events in the history of a country as well as a civilization. Commemorative or memorial stamps are human-made objects that can depict a nation's identity, cultural values, literary figures, and iconic images of a society. Commemorative printing objects carry special significance, containing a country's historical values, social-cultural meaning, and symbolic icons. "A commemorative stamp is often

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issued on a significant date such as an anniversary or centenary to honor or commemorate a place, event, person, or object" (Hossain, 2013, p. 74). Through various content and contexts, commemorative printing objects draw their reader's attention easily. "Commemorative stamps have a place in the cultural, economic, and geopolitical status of a nation; and what is printed on stamps often reflects a country's culture, regime, and values" (Galliford et al., 2024, p. 1). Galliford et al also point out that "Commemorative stamps have been represented globally as a recognition tool" (Galliford et al., 2024, p.4). Despite their importance, there is a lack of historical research in Bangladesh concerning these relevant fields. The objectives of the paper are to analyze the content of the selected commemorative stamps, to interpret the semiotics of those stamps , and to find out the significance of the stamps of Bangladesh.

Background: History of Stamps

Stamps are carriers of historical events with different content, trusted images, and aesthetic designs. While there are ongoing debates about the history of stamps, it is generally agreed that the first adhesive stamp referred to as "Penny Black was issued in the United Kingdom in 1840" and it depicted a young Queen Victoria (Hossain, 2013, p. 74). In Bangladesh the first postal stamps were issued during the liberation war in 1971 and the stamp series was designed by Biman Chand Mullick (Naher, 2021, October 15). The images in this series included the map of Bangladesh, the massacre at Dhaka University, the flag of independence, the election of 1970, the proclamation of an independent government, and a portrait of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman among others. Interestingly, the first stamps of Bangladesh were printed in England. In fact, the other "Bangladeshi stamps were not printed at home until June 1990 and were instead made by contract in Australia, Austria, Britain, India, and the former Soviet Union" (Qadir, 2003).

Commemorative stamps are notable for various reasons, as they reflect a country's positive image by showcasing its historical moments, cultural symbols, diplomatic affairs, national developments, and international highlights. Sometimes these stamps are even issued to celebrate the diplomatic relations of two countries. As these commemorative stamps are a combined presentation of information and aesthetics, people in many countries of the world collect stamps as a hobby and this trend is also found in Bangladesh. For example, Krishnan points out that the historical event of "1857 has been articulated by the state in India and Pakistan through a study of their commemorative postage stamps" (2023, p. 517). Some scholars like Haskins consider that commemorative stamps are important in forming a collective's memory. She notes that they "always speak on behalf of the entire nation," and these are the "collective memories that are bearers of cultural, aesthetic, and political heterogeneity" (Haskins, 2010, pp. 1-2). However, she also adds a note of caution that though these stamps promote the national identity, sometimes there is a conflict and confusion about the official history.

Academic studies on commemorative stamps are very rare all over the world, including Bangladesh. In our country, some research has been published on currency and banknotes. Mannan et al. (2022), for instance, have focused on the printing of the Bangladeshi Taka, the official currency. They state that a lot of versions have come out since the beginning, but "every note reflects the image of Bangladesh" (Mannan et al., 2022, p. 32), and adds that "[m]an-made heritage, a symbol of struggle and success in the battle, is also another element that got importance in the notes" (p. 34). In this regard, two other scholarly works "Commemorative Currency Notes and Coins of Bangladesh" (Rahman & Quadir, n.d.) and "Commemorative Coins and Notes of Bangladesh Bank" (Ahmed, 2013) are worth mentioning here.

In contrast as Qadir notes there have not been notable "works on memorable or commemorative printing products found at all. […] these items have yet to attract international collectors or even serious local dealers" (2003). No doubt, these commemoratives are very attractive to stamp collectors who are passionate about stamps. Bangladesh has already been included in the "World Association for the Development of Philately (WADP) Numbering System (WNS) database, which provides free access to authentic postage stamps issued by Universal Postal Union (UPU) member countries and territories" (Hirwade & Nawlakhe, 2012, pp. 28-31), in which 37 stamps of Bangladesh are registered. In 1988, the Bangladesh Institute of Philatelic Studies (BIPS) was founded in Dhaka with the goal of promoting postage stamp collecting as a means of enhancing one's knowledge of human history, culture, and activity.

There has been one interesting study on medical science and stamps in "Postal Stamps and Cardiac Surgery" (Hossain, 2013) which is a celebration of 30 years of cardiac surgery in Bangladesh. The study mentions that in many different countries of the world, such as China, India, New Zealand, South Africa, Yemen, Bhutan, France, Russia, Brazil, and Zambia, commemorative stamps were also printed and issued in relevant fields. As commemorative stamps are strong communication tools that focus on historical, cultural, and linguistic interpretations, there are different kinds of commemorative stamps and historical envelopes issued on different occasions in the country. For instance, "on the occasion of the Bangladesh National Assembly Election, 1991, on February 27, the Bangladesh Post Department released a special envelope" (Rahman & Hasan, 2024, p. 31).

However, there has not been any significant scholarly investigation of commemorative stamps in Bangladesh even though a few publications have been made on stamps in general and commemorative coins and currency. The aim of this paper is to explore the contents of commemorative stamps to address this research gap. The study intends to examine the specific historical and cultural aspects of selected stamps and analyze how the historical events, symbolic identity and cultural aspects of the country are the reflected on these stamps.

Theoretical Framework

Commemorative stamps are the combined forms of signs, symbols, texts, and aesthetic designs that create a unique message about a memorable event of a country or state. From the theoretical perspective, the theory of semiotics defined by Ferdinand de Saussure, is widely used for explaining the concept of symbols and images as he "helped to promote semiotics, the general science of signs and systems of signs, and structuralism, an important trend in contemporary anthropology and literary criticism as well as in linguistics" (Culler, 1986, p. 16). Saussure's contribution "makes him a seminal figure in modern intellectual history, philosophy, and the social sciences" (Culler, 1986, p. 17). Likewise, "iconography applies to the descriptive and classificatory study of images with the aim of understanding the direct or indirect meaning of the subject matter represented" (Cassidy, 1996, p.323). In addition, the concept of aesthetic texts that are "concerned with non-semiotic aspects of art such as the psychology of artistic creation, the relations between artistic forms and natural forms, the physical psychological definition of aesthetic enjoyment, the analysis of the relations between art and society, etc." (Eco, 1979, p.13). All commemorative stamps, selected in the paper, give information through various attractive images, signs, and symbols. The stamps proffers special social meanings through their texts. In this regard, Allen notes that "the texts convey social and ideological meanings through the choice of signs and symbols"(2003, p.17). Semiotics thus is very much important to elicit the latent and manifest meanings together. In fact, these selected commemorative stamps are containers of multimodal texts relevant to Bangladesh's national identity, cultural heritage, and historical events. Therefore, analysing these stamps through the theoretical lens of semiotics will provide a profound understanding of the cultural, religious, and historical contexts in which an artwork was created.

Research Methodology

In the areas of history and qualitative research, content analysis demands more attention than other existing methods. In fact, "content analysis includes text analysis, the systematic study of written text or transcribed speech, as well as techniques that focus on nontextual message content, including pictorial images, graphical elements, moving images, nonverbal behaviors, music, and sounds" (Neuendorf & Kumar, 2016, p.1). These commemorative products represent Bangladesh as a nation through their pictorial images and graphical elements of content. During data collection, the purposive sampling method was applied, as there were many scattered and redundant images found in the relevant areas. Apart from this method, digital library systems has also been partly used. In this regard, Kothery states that "library research methods include both analysis of historical records (recording of notes, content analysis, tape and film listening) and analysis of documents" (Kothery, 2004, p.7). He also emphasizes the concept of a digital library where commemorative stamps found have been used for analysis. In the research, commemorative stamps were selected from the digital library.

Research questions

The following research questions have been set for this research:

What types of events are reflected on the commemorative stamps of Bangladesh?

Who were focused on the commemorative stamps most?

Basically, these stamps are not ordinary printing products; rather, they carry the special meaning of a communication message of a country since they are issued and regulated by a government authority, usually the postal administration. These questions will help to examine and identify the historical and cultural legacy of the country by focusing on the events, the figures and the cultural messages presented in the stamps. Through these stamps, it is possible to understand how national identity is being built with the advanced technological development and historical concepts.

Data

In data collection, some crucial points have been considered. A large sample was not taken, keeping in mind the issue of feasibility in the study. Apart from this, many relevant stamps printed in different years but having similar images were also not selected for analysis. As those commemorative images had no variations, they have intentionally been excluded from this study. In addition, different annual days, which are generally celebrated every year, have been intentionally excluded for using the same figure more times. A total of 20 stamps were analyzed. For feasibility concerns, these commemorative stamps have been purposefully selected. The stamps were selected on the basis of historical events, symbolic figures, iconic figures (known as international figures) or literary figures. These contain a national positive image and message through their multiple presentations. In this case, two figures have been counted as one figure, as every figure has an obverse and reverse side. In addition, series stamps, such as those related to Princess Diana, have been counted as one figure in the research.

Discussion

Cultural significance of commemorative stamps

Commemorative stamps are specially printed objects printed by the authentic authority. These stamps are used for various purposes in a state. In addition, these are bought by national and international stamp lovers as their hobby. Through these stamps, culture, language, signs, symbols, and aesthetics that have a long-lasting influence on the minds of the people are conveyed. These stamps may create a good image for a country. These are basically soft-powered cultural messages about a country. These are the evidence of human history and civilization.

Indeed, human history is the result of human experiences broadly explained by Ferdinand de Saussure. “Saussure’s reflections on the sign and on sign systems

pave the way for a general study of the ways in which human experience is organized"(Culler, 1986, p. 19). Some decades ago, these stamps contained little information, but nowadays the scenario is getting changed with new technology. As a result, nowadays, designers are more concerned with using commemorative stamps' year of issue, margin, type of printing, and use of a state language as well as English language as second language. Even in these commemorative stamps, "numerous newly invented digital security features and many traditional features can now be implemented with digital technology using conventional equipment and material" (Sayed, 2021, p. 497). Commemorative stamps are carriers of an event, object, theme, person, institution, etc. These stamps get a complete shape with some special printing issues such as a unique design, watermark technique, copyright protection, aesthetic typography, etc.

Commemorative stamps as representations of culture, history, and arts

Commemorative stamps have historical value and symbolic meaning of cultural components. Security printing is always the outcome of a synthesis of cutting-edge technology, natural beauty, aesthetics, and the arts. In this regard, these commemorative coins and notes are essentially a nation's treasure trove and a container of its natural beauty. In fact, from the Bangladesh perspective, in honour of numerous historical events and personalities, a huge number of commemorative stamps were issued. Throughout the history of the language movement, the Silver Jubilee of Independence, and the 150th anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore's birth stamps have been issued. These form the cultural identities of Bangladesh.

Besides, commemorative stamps also include literary works, artistic phenomena, cultural figures, and national identity. These stamps are designed with the images of the National Emblem, Royal Bengal Tiger, Hilsha Fish, Golden Fabric Jute, different multipurpose bridges, Bangladesh Bank (with its monogram), National Martyrs' Memorial, seven Bir Sreshthos, Shaheed Minar, International Mother Language Day, and literary figures. In addition, they contain the images of national poet of Bangladesh, Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, A. K. Fazlul Haq, Jasim Uddin, Qazi Motahar Hossin, Fazlur Rahman Khan, Begum Rokeya and more.

In addition to the human images, commemorative stamps also bear the pictures of animals, historical incidents and big constructions that are relevant. This study shows that there is a similar concept in other European countries in this regard, especially in the use of images of historical figures, geographical states, and cultural outlooks. Notable events in containing the security products include the map of Bangladesh, the Silver Jubilee of Independence, the 40th anniversary of Victory Day (1971–2011), etc. Sports history is also recorded here as the stamp for 'ICC Cricket World Cup 2019' (the value was Taka ten with the image of the Royal Bengal Tiger used as a metaphor). Besides, the commemorative stamps

of Bangladesh highlight various themes, including historical achievements and significant events in the world. Besides, some commemorative stamps were issued on diplomatic relations, such as 'the 40th Anniversary of diplomatic relationship between Bangladesh and China' (October 17, 2015). In addition to these concepts, commemorative stamps also bear natural scenarios Due to the variety and attractiveness, many people personally collect these special stamps.

Commemorative stamps on international figures

Fazlur Rahman Khan, commonly known as F. R. Khan, a Bangladeshi engineer, earned significant recognition for his remarkable contributions to structural engineering all over the world. "One of the outstanding structural engineers responsible for the new structural systems was Dr. Fazlur Rahman Khan" (Mufti & Bakht, 2011, p. 238). He has contributed to the design of tall buildings, or skyscrapers, all over the world which "are considered icons of cities, symbols of corporate power, and a mark of national pride" (Mufti & Bakht, 2011, p. 238). He "worked with others, such as the John Hancock Center and the Sears Tower in Chicago, which are also marvels of engineering that have paved the way for ever-increasing heights of structural systems" (Mufti & Bakht, 2011, p.238). In addition to the design of the Sears Tower, since renamed Willis Tower, the tallest building in the world from 1973 until 1998 the 100-story John Hancock Center; the Haj Terminal of the King Abdulaziz International Airport (1976–81) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and King Abdulaziz University (1977–78), also in Jeddah, are bearers of his contributions. As F.R. Khan's dignity spread all over the world, his achievement was also issued on the commemorative stamps of Bangladesh with the image of his tall building. Figure 1 presents an example of the way the famous architect and his iconic building, Sears Tower have been visually rendered.



Figure 1: Image of F.R. Khan and Sears Tower on Bangladeshi stamp (Source: Mufti & Bakht, 2011)

Human history is full of many achievements. Any achievement in world history is recorded, recognizing those individuals who were directly involved in the events. As a Bangladeshi engineer, F. R. Khan gained his highest dignity for his outstanding contribution to building structural works. In recognition of his marvelous works in world history and engineering, his portrait was printed on commemorative stamps of Bangladesh, mentioning his birth and death dates (1929-1982). The stamp used the colour of a brick building that he had designed, as well as his portrait. The image of the building, the Willis Tower, referred to as the Sears Tower, is of a 110-story building in the United States, which was designed by Bruce Graham and Engineer F.R.Khan. In addition, Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank, awarded the Nobel Prize, were issued on Bangladeshi commemorative stamps. This was the first time a Bangladeshi citizen was awarded the Nobel Prize. The symbol of the Nobel Peace Award, the image of Dr. Muhammad Yunus, and the picture of Grameen Bank were placed on the stamps. This stamp, like other Bangladeshi commemorative stamps, bears the name of Bangladesh and has the value of Taka 10.

Literary Figures on Commemorative Stamps in Bangladesh

Literary figures have always had a powerful attraction to the higher authority in different countries all over the world. Bangladeshi people also have love, respect, and a strong appeal to collect the memorial stamps relevant to such literary figures as Kazi Nazrul Islam, Jasim Uddin, and Begum Rokeya. Therefore, the higher authority honour these literary figures by issuing commemorative stamps. As an indispensable part of Bangla literature, the national poet of Bangladesh, Kazi Nazrul Islam (25 May 1899-29 August 1976), was portrayed not only on the Bangladeshi commemorative stamps but also recognized on the stamps of the East Pakistan period as a poet and musician (see Figure 2). To celebrate the 69th anniversary of this great poet, Pakistan had issued two commemorative stamps in 1968. They are very interesting for the use of three languages -Bangla, Urdu, and English, quoting his poem. Nazrul had contributed to the multilingual world through his writings thus the stamps have Bangla and Urdu texts. The celebration of Kazi Nazrul Islam's birth centenary is also observed in the period of Independent Bangladesh.

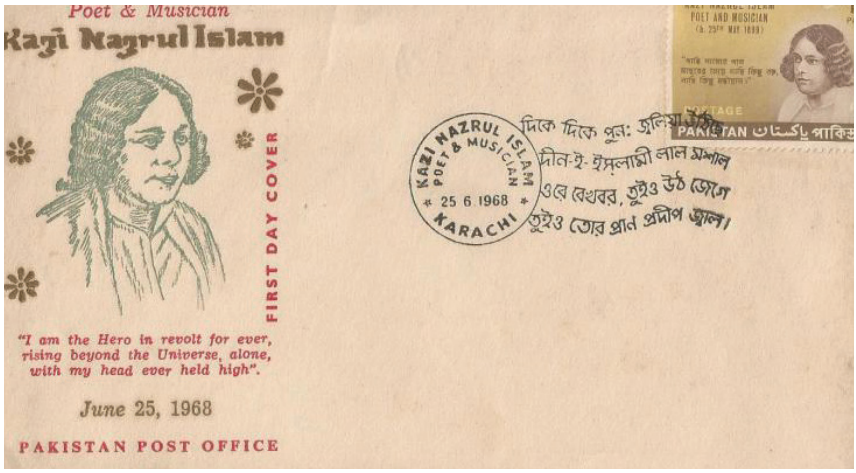




Figure 2: Stamps on Kazi Nazrul Islam issued by Pakistan in 1968
(Source: *Stamp Digest*)



Figure 3: Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam on stamps issued by India and Bangladesh (Source: Stampdigest)

Nazrul has become an iconic literary figure in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. Considering his acceptance to all Bangla-speaking readers around the world, these three countries have issued stamps featuring his portrait and his most popular poem, which continues to be recited by Bangla speakers during various movements in Bangladesh. (see figure 3)



Figure 4: Commemorative coin on Kazi Nazrul Islam poem "Bidrohi" (Source: Falconcoins gallery)

To celebrate the 90th anniversary of the poem “Bidrohi” which is translated in English as “The Rebel”, the Government of Bangladesh issued a commemorative coin featured in Figure 4. These stamps and coin serve as carriers of cultural values and historical memory of Bangla literature and culture. In addition to Kazi Nazrul, another poet of Bangladesh, Jasim Uddin, has also been presented on a commemorative stamp with his portrait and some parts of his poem. This stamp was focused on the historical poem of Jasim Uddin and his portrait with a value of 40 paisa (see Figure 5).



Figure 5: Stamp of poet Jasim Uddin (Source: Colnect.com)

Jasim Uddin is “oft-quoted as Palli Kabi (Country Poet) because of his exquisite presentation of the rural Bengal” (Ahmed, 2013, p.133). His writings, especially seminal poems such as *Kabar* (Grave), have influenced Bangladeshi literature. Ahmed notes that “his poetry reflects a handful of Islamic themes and issues that are hardly discussed” (Ahmed, 2013, p. 133). Therefore, to honour him, the Bangladeshi government issued a stamp with his portrait and some parts of his poem.



Figure 6: Bengali writer Begum Rokeya (Source: Heritage Hub, Bangladesh)

Although commemorative stamps have rarely featured female writers, a few enceptional women have been included as part of innovation in printing. In this regard, the novelty of using a female writer's figure has been found on the commemorative stamp of Bangladesh. In world history, there are very few commemorative stamps that contain the figure of women. Among those very few figures, Begum Rokeya was one of them who was placed on the commemorative stamps of Bangladesh. The image of Begum Rokeya, who worked with relentless effort to promote education for Muslim girls is very unusual.

Begum Rokeya was a noteworthy woman who played very important social and education roles to actively design and carry out social reforms in order to uplift the status of Muslim women (Hossain, 2011) through her literary works. She was a writer of Bangla literature and is considered one of the most influential writers, who showed her deep love for Muslim women and wanted to raise her voice for education for all Muslim women. She raised her voice to emphasize Muslim women's education. Although Rokeya has been used on commemorative stamps, she has not been printed on currency notes.

Recently Abul Kashem Fazlul Haq said that Begum Rokeya was also an influential writer during the publication of *Shikha,* the official journal of Muslim Shahitya-Somaj published from 1926 to 1931, but she did not get much attention from

the then literary society for being a female writer, especially from the editorial board of *Shikha*. Otherwise, she could be an editor of the publication. (Haq, 2026). Begum Rokeya, the legendary Bengali writer-activist whose leadership had transformed the lives of thousands of people in this region (Jahan, 2018, December 9).

Historical Events on Commemorative Notes and Coins in Bangladesh

Commemorative notes and coins record various historical events, including the language movement, the Liberation War, International Mother Language Day, and the Silver Jubilee of Independence. At the same time, there are commemorative notes marking forty years of independence, 60 years of the language movement, and other events. Over the years, there have been noticeable changes in the concept of commemorative stamps as well as new challenges to the issue of counterfeiting. Historical events on commemorative stamps in Bangladesh also include historical figures like 'Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Haque,' 'Mowlana Bhashani,' and 'International Mother Language Day'. Bangladesh's history and its people's lives are full of glorious dates, events, and pictures. From this study, it is mentionable that through issuing these security printing, history comes back again and again in the name of the celebration on different days, such as the Victory Day of Bangladesh, shown in Figure 7. The coins facilitate a transformation of historical and cultural values among the generations of the country. Therefore, these are not merely a picture of general printing at all.



Figure 7: Commemorative issue: 20th Anniversary of Independence (Source: *Numista*)

The commemorative issues mentioned above remind the world about Bangladesh's glorious history. The first one highlights the historical achievements. In addition, there was a stamp series depicting the portraits of the most valiant heroes (seven in number) of the country who lost their lives in the war of 1971 and containing the picture of the National Martyrs' Memorial located at Savar, Dhaka. These are basically non-circulating types of coins issued in 1991. Apart from these events, the commemorative stamps of Bangladesh not only feature a person's image, but they also reflect historical events and represent the enduring legacy of historical institutions in the country. For example, there was also a stamp

titled '25th Anniversary of the Bank of Bangladesh' (with the national emblem and picture of the bank (1971-1996) and the Silver Jubilee of Bangladesh Bank (1971-1996). In addition, delivering educational and social development messages was a common trend in Bangladesh through these security products. These examples include 'International Women's Year' (50 Taka) and 'United Nations Literacy Decade' issued in 1990 which has a picture of a mother and a child reading a book. The commemorative issues are not ordinary pictures or images; instead, they symbolize the concept of working together, which allows the country to achieve proper development and lead the entire nation. It is common for all security stamps to include the name "Bangladesh." Currently, there is a tendency to include the date and purpose.

Recognition of Peacekeepers in the UN on Commemorative Stamps

Commemorative stamps of Bangladesh have been published on different positive and inspirational issues. They also recognize the contribution of the Bangladesh Army to the UN peacekeeping operation. As a result, in 1989 the Government recognized the contribution of the Bangladesh army, for their role in the United Nations' peacekeeping operation, by publishing a historical stamp titled "One Year of Bangladesh Army in UN Peacekeeping Operation." (see Figure 8). This is not a general stamp; rather, it is a recognition from the state.



Figure 8: 1989 1st Anniversary of Bangladesh Army in United Nations Peace Keeping Operations 2v Stamp (Source: Phila Art).

In this regard, Krishnasamy points out:

> United Nations peacekeeping is a major avenue through which 'small' states participate in and contribute to the maintenance of global peace and security. Bangladesh is no exception to this. Although a variety of domestic issues such as weak political structures and economic pressures continue to pose critical challenges to Bangladesh, they have not deterred the nation from fulfilling its global responsibilities (2003, p.24).

Thus, the commemorative stamp has become historical messengers of various activities in Bangladesh. Indeed, the Bangladeshi army continuously contributes to the peace and safety of human life, sacrificing their valuable lives and dreams. Through this commemorative stamp, Bangladesh recognized their contribution to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operation.

Diplomatic Friendships

Bangladeshi stamps serve as meaningful conduits for cross-cultural dialogue and education (Armstrong & Choudhury, 2012). Commemorative stamps are also a great sign of celebration of two countries' diplomatic friendships. These stamps feature cultural symbols from both countries, including their national flags and flowers. These types of stamps hold strategic and diplomatic value (Kumar, 2025). As from its birth, Bangladesh has taken a stance of friendship in foreign policy with its motto of "friendship to all and malice towards none", this has helped to improve ties with all countries (Juhraa & Tanzimb, 2022.). Bangladesh has proved it through its various activities of maintaining a good friendship, with China, Japan, Singapore, and many Muslim countries.

To celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations with Japan, the Government of Bangladesh printed a special stamp, presented in Figure 9. The national identity of both nations was showcased through their respective national flowers with white water lily for Bangladesh and "Sakura" or cherry blossom for Japan. In Japan, the cherry blossom is widely recognized as the national flower, indicating a symbol of Japanese culture that represents spring and renewal. In this way the flower also reinforces the renewal of the friendship between two countries. No doubt, Japan has been a long-lasting friend of Bangladesh from its inception. In addition, there are some security printing industries in Bangladesh, such as Japan-Bangladesh Security Printing & Papers Ltd. (JBSPPL).



Figure 9: Celebrating 50 years of Bangladesh-Japan Relations (Source: *Numista*)



Figure 10: Commemorative stamp issued focusing the diplomatic relation between Bangladesh-Singapore (Soure: PhilaArt)

Commemorative stamps are valuable objects of love and greetings that are also noticed in Bangladesh-Singapore diplomatic relations. The flower is considered a symbol of love and greeting, so the stamps issued on the relation between Bangladesh and Singapore were designed with the national flower of Singapore, the Vanda Miss Joaquim, a hybrid orchid with vibrant colors and resilient, year-round blooming qualities, and the water lily, the national flower of Bangladesh (see Figure 10). The images of the Merlion, the national symbol of Singapore, and the National Memorial of Bangladesh are also placed on the stamp of the Golden Jubilee of establishing Bangladesh-Singapore diplomatic relations in 2022.



Figure 11: Princess Diana Commemoration unmounted mint strip of 3 issued in Bangladesh in 1998 (Source: Avion)

Stamps Commemorating International Historical Events

Bangladesh also issued a few commemorative stamps on world historical events such as the French Revolution and the death of Princess Diana. The tragic accident of the British princess was a global shock and scholars note that "When Princess Diana, her companion Dodi Fayed, and their driver were killed in an automobile accident in Paris on August 30, 1997, the worldwide reaction was immediate and emotional"(Stone & Pennebaker, 2002, p.174). Bangladesh, like other countries, responded to the public mourning and printed commemorative stamps on Princess Diana (See Figure 11). Many people regard Princess Diana as their iconic figure or role model. Therefore, till now, Princess Diana is relevant in the case of commemorative stamp analysis, whether it is in Bangladesh or England. Another world event that had an impact on philatelic world was the bicentennial celebration of the French Revolution in 1989. Not just France but many nations issued special stamps to mark the occasion. Bangladesh, too, printed postage stamps and miniature sheets to commemorate the event.

Overall Content of Commemorative Stamps of Bangladesh

All contents of the commemorative stamps of Bangladesh are a storehouse of aesthetics, relating to the state' identity and the country's natural beauty. These commemorative stamps in a broad sense bear aesthetic design, national emotion, positive impressions, symbols of peace, the cultural identity of a state, and historical events. In the commemorative stamps of other countries, they used multiple dimensions compared to Bangladesh's maps. Today, relevant printing utilizes new technologies. The contents and images of stamps carry the message of the development of the country—some contain information about history, some are used in cultural aspects, and some are relevant to the natural beauty of the country.

These goals are reflected in the images of the stamps in the following way. Firstly, historical stamps feature national memorials such as Shaheed Minar, Independence Tower, the Memorial for Martyred Intellectuals, Curzon Hall, Mahasthangarh, and Ahsan Manzil. Then a second theme of national identity emerges from stamps that are designed to highlight the natural beauty with the images of birds, jute, the national flower, the Royal Bengal tiger (the national animal of Bangladesh), Cox's Bazar sea beach, and Sundarbans (a UNESCO World Heritage Site). Thirdly architecturally aesthetic buildings such as Lalbagh Fort, the Supreme Court, Panam Nagar in Sonargaon, Shat Gombuj Mosque, and the National Assembly can be found in the imagery of commemorative security printings to showcase the national identity and cultural symbols of Bangladesh. Finally, a fourth group of stamps bear literary figures and their creative works to highlight the literary culture of the nation.

Conclusion

The study sums up that the selected commemorative stamps contain national identity, cultural signs, and historical messages with unique publishing features. Therefore, commemorative stamps receive significant attention from stamp collectors all over the world. This study elicits the hidden and manifest meanings of selected stamps by analyzing their contents in detail. It is time to rethink the issue of more diverse content in designing commemorative stamps. The study focused on the fundamental aspects of commemorative stamps of Bangladesh. Undoubtedly, the selected products have significant meaning to the people of Bangladesh, as they are publicly trustworthy and have acceptance from a historical view, development concept, cultural symbolism, and symbolic identity of Bangladesh. The hidden meanings of the pictures, symbols, and texts of the commemorative stamps are messengers of the struggles of the general people of Bangladesh. These are not only presentations of simple pictures of iconic Bangladesh but also carry out the meaning of the class struggle of the society and historical achievement of the country.

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