

Tracing the Trajectory of Magical Realism in Bangladeshi Literature

By,

Tabassum Sayara Fariha

ID: 20103076

A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of the Bachelor of Arts in English

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that,

1. This thesis is my own original work, submitted while completing degree at Brac University,
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

Tabassum Sayara Fariha
(20103076)

Approval

The thesis titled “Tracing the Trajectory of Magical Realism in Bangladeshi Literature” submitted by Tabassum Sayara Fariha (ID: 20103076) of Spring 2024 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelors of Arts in English on May 2024.

Examining Committee:

Supervisor:
(Member)

Dr. Mahruba T. Mowtushi
Assistant Professor,
Department of English and Humanities
Brac University

External Examiner:
(Member)

Dr. Abu Sayeed Mohammad Noman
Assistant Professor
Department of English & Humanities,
Brac University

Departmental Head:
(Chair)

Professor Firdous Azim
Professor and Chairperson,
Department of English and Humanities
Brac University

Dedication

I am Dedicating this to the future Tabassum.

It has been far more difficult than I've imagined. There were many times when I felt that I can't do it. But I did.

It has been the biggest achievement for me so far. But I don't want to stop here. I don't know what the life might offer me. However, the path won't be smooth. It is for that time when I might feel like giving up, so that I can look back to my today's self, who fought over this battle and won.

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Abstract

Magical realism is a popular literary genre that suits both postcolonialism and postmodernism. Many countries, including Bangladesh, have contributed to this genre because of its postcolonial characteristics of making political commentaries with contemporary social relevance within a fantastical backdrop. However, academic research needs to adequately investigate Bangladeshi magical realism's contents, which blends the country's political history with local myths and fables. Therefore, this paper aims to thoroughly study Bangladeshi magical realist works to untangle the complex web built by the renowned writers of the country's region and compile those works. Employing an in-depth examination of Syed Waliullah's *Kado Nodi Kado* (Cry! River, Cry) Akhteruzzaman Elias' *Khowabnama* (Dream Epic), Nasrin Jahan's *Chondrolekhar Jadubistar* (Magical expansion of Chondrolekha) and Shahidul Zahir's *Kathure O Darkar* (Woodcutter and Raven), this research aims to reveal the sources of inspiration for their respective works and charts the development of magical realist literature in Bangladesh. Additionally, this study delves into the historical and sociocultural backdrop that has uniquely shaped the creation and evolution of magical realist literature in Bangladesh. It also underscores how the local political influence and local folklore shaped the classic methodologies to incorporate magical realism, following a significant trend in the country's literary landscape. In the end, this investigation hopes to advance knowledge about how Bangladeshi writers use magical realism as a lens through which to interact with myth, reality, and the paranormal while also highlighting the intricacies of their society, cultural identity, and expression.

Key Words: Magical Realism, World Literature, Bangladeshi Literature, Syed Waliullah, Akhteruzzaman Elias, Shahidul Zahir, Nasrin Jahan

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Introduction

Magical realism is a phenomenal literary genre that has captured readers' and critics' attention with its distinctive fusion of the supernatural in everyday life. While this style is rooted in Latin America, magical realism has spread its branches across countries and taken on different meanings in various cultural contexts, including Bangladesh. In literature, magical realism is fundamentally defined by merging the real with magical elements, making distinguishing supernatural events from everyday life difficult. It skilfully incorporates supernatural aspects into the foundations of daily life, in contrast to the fan fiction genre, where magical components are presented as rare occurrences. For instance, the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling is a work of fiction, but it does not belong to magical realism because it lacks the elements of 'real'. In magical realism, characters may possess extraordinary abilities, and objects may have mystical properties. However, these phenomena are widely accepted as unquestionable parts of the story without a clear explanation or rationale. On that fact, one can consider Saleem Sinai's telepathic powers or the fact that 1001 children were simultaneously born with different supernatural abilities in the *Midnight's Children* (1981). Besides, the latter incorporates themes such as post-colonialism, identity, and the turbulent history of India through magic, whereas the previous serves the purpose of entertainment.

Bangladeshi authors have also embraced magical realism and incorporated this style into their writings, similar to many other writers in other countries. In some ways, they have also adapted the style to suit local demands. However, magical realism is not a frequently discussed topic in the case of Bangladeshi literature. In the paper *Magic Realism: The Trajectory of a Concept*,

Carolina Ferrer has tried to assemble a bibliographic database of the usages of magical realism in different cultures based on literature and language. Her research included literary pieces such as novels and stories, research, theories, literary citations, thesis dissertations, and many more of the field from 1955 to 2007 worldwide. In her 'geographical literary pieces' section of *Magical Realism* citations, she mentioned Venezuela, Tibet, USA, Spain, South Africa, Nigeria, New Zealand, Mexico, Spanish America, Japan, Italy, India, Haiti, Guatemala, Germany, France, England, Cuba, Columbia, Chile, Canada, Brazil, Australia and Argentina. Her research is the primary evidence of a comprehensive database of the usages of magical realism, including discussions of Japan, India and Tibet among Asian countries. However, this research did not mention any occurrence of magical realism in Bangladesh and the Bengali language, which began in the 1960s and flourished in the 1990s. The gap occurred because of the need for proper research on magical realism in Bangladesh and the Bengali language. Later, around 2020, Sourit Bhattacharya researched South Asian magical realism, where Bangladeshi literature is briefly mentioned. Besides, Bangla Academy has also published research on Syed Waliullah's magical realism in around 2018. However, none of these papers includes a thorough study of the topic, compiling the geographical location of Bangladesh. Therefore, this thesis aims to explore the development of magical realism in Bangladesh, from its origin to current forms, and to clarify its cultural significance and lasting appeal in Bangladeshi literature through an analysis of crucial texts, literary movements, and sociopolitical circumstances so that any further research on the field does not leave out the mighty Bengali literature. It also attempts to clarify magical realism's cultural relevance and lasting attraction within Bangladeshi literature by examining essential texts, literary movements, and sociopolitical circumstances.

Additionally, this study seeks to examine the complex relationship between mythology, modern reality, and folklore in the magical realist tradition of Bangladesh by analysing the themes and styles of works by renowned authors such as Syed Waliullah, Akhteruzzaman Elias, Shahidul Zahir and Nasrin Jahan. These authors have incorporated magical realism into their writing styles and significantly contributed to its evolution. Their works are deeply rooted in the unique cultural context of Bangladesh, exploring the intricacies of Bangladeshi society by fusing mythology, folklore, and modern reality to produce stories that resonate with readers both locally and internationally. By tracing the occurrences, development, and relevance of magical realism, this thesis aims to investigate the trajectory of magical realism in Bangladeshi literary works.

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Historical Framework of Magical Realism

Before discussing the practice of the style in Bangladesh, understanding the history and influence of magical realism is crucial. The comprehension requires us to delve into three significant turnouts. The first phase is the onset of this genre, which began in the 1920s, holding the hands of some artists in Germany as a sentimental reaction to World War I and its consequences. During the widely recognised art movement period in the 1920s, artists experimented with different depictions of reality by placing genuine objects in a nonsensical arrangement or vice versa, termed the **New Objectivity** by Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub. Artists such as Giorgio de Chirico, Alberto Savinio, Frida Kahlo, and many others have chosen this unusual strategy to portray actual life as occurring in a magical environment. In the article *What Is Magical Realism in Art*, Rosie Lesso mentioned German artist Max Beckmann as the leader in the style. This style was later called "Magische Realismus" by a German photographer, Franz Roh, in his book *Nach Expressionismus* (1925) to explain these dreamlike themes and graphical illusions in the paintings (Zamora and Faris 15-31). According to Roh, magic realism incorporates the "spiritual thirst" of the former movement, "Expressionism", with the following need for "formal innovations". Hence, the byproduct of inter-mingling the old need with the new becomes 'magical realism' _ "an exaggerated preference for fantastic, extraterrestrial, remote objects" (Zamora and Faris 15); the juxtaposition of 'magic' with the 'everyday reality'. If 'super-realism' is incorporated with the supernatural, the origin of magic in 'magic realism' is rooted in the real. One of the biggest and easy-to-understand examples of this artistic style is a landscape named *Beach of Dangast with Flying Boat* (1929), portrayed by a German artist, Franz Radziwill. The following phase is called the 'boom', the outbreak of magic realism in literature

which took place in 1955 in Latin America because of its postcolonial counterpart, which "Alejo Carpentier has called **lo real maravilloso Americano** or "marvellous American reality"" (Zamora and Faris 408) because magical realism became the pivotal political mouthpiece of the politically oppressed societies like Latin America and the Caribbean imperial cultures. In simple terms, Latin Americans were subjected to repression by the ruling Englishmen of the colonies. Consequently, the writers from these colonies devised creative ways to resist the censorship and oppression of the colonisers. Likewise, "magic realism [...] became a socially symbolic contract [...] that carries a residuum of resistance toward the imperial center and to its totalising systems of generic classification" (Zamora and Faris 408) as per Stephen Selmon suggested in his *Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse*. Following this characteristic of **expressing political opinion under the cover of magic**, various writers such as Jorge Luis Borges (Argentina, 1899-1986), Alejo Carpentier (Cuba, 1904-1980), Juan Carlos Onetti (Uruguay 1909-1994), Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia 1927-2014), Carlos Fuentes (Mexico, 1928-2012) and many others have contributed to this stage of the genre. The latter phase covers the late 20th century to the 21st century.

By the 1960s, magical realism had become an eminent subject that had already absorbed European and American literature and took on a distinct form in the Bengali language with a blend of regional essence and landscape. The 'boom' of magical realism in the 1960s introduced Latin American literature to the Bengali language.

Early Encounters of Magical realism in Bangladeshi Literature: When & How

By 1960, Bengali writers were already influenced by European thinkers in addition to the works of Latin authors. While the genre is believed to have originated in Europe and further developed in Latin America, it was first introduced to Bengali cinema by the visionary Satyajit Ray in 1969 before making its mark in Bengali literature. Pritha Biswas, in her work *Magic Realism in Bengali Cinema: Satyajit Ray's Goopy Gayne Bagha Bayne in Perspective*, argues that Ray's iconic film sequels, namely *Goopy Gayne Bagha Bayne* (1969), *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (1980) and *Goopy Bagha Phire Elo* (1992), were pioneering in their successful implementation of magical realism in Bengal. By combining the regional landscape and folklore, Ray added a unique flavour to the genre's evolution. This cross-pollination of ideas and influences led to a unique blend of magical realism in Bangladesh, which cannot entirely be identified as the fundamental magic realism of Latin America. Besides, the Indian and Bengali traditions are rich with mythological elements and characters such as *obotar*¹ or *vardaan*² and already contained elements of magical creatures such as *voot-petni*³, *jinn*⁴, *bishkonnya*⁵. Therefore, the fundamental elements of magical realism can be traced to Bangladeshi folktales from the very beginning. Nevertheless, the cultural context cannot be entirely revealed in those folktales. Besides, no mythological characters from the ancient Indian-Bengali literature reappeared in modern novels. Although believing in the paranormal has always remained part of the Bengali culture, it has not been as prevalent in modern fiction. For example, the existence of *Jinn* is revered by the vast

¹ Reincarnation of a powerful deity according to Sanskrit Literature

² Boon granted by God or a magical being according to Hindu mythology.

³ Ghost

⁴ Creature made of fire according to Islamic mythology.

⁵ The poison damsel, types of assassins kings use to kill enemies.

majority of Muslims in Bangladesh; it has never been well-developed as a literary figure in our literature. Likewise, the concept of *Bhut-Petni-Shankachunni* holds significant value in Bengali culture and folklore; nevertheless, it was never mentioned in modern writings by the leading writers. Hence, contemporary Bangladeshi novelists, attempting to capture the country's enriched cultural diversity, could not fully incorporate these elements into the new literary tradition. However, there are undoubtedly few exemptions. The stories of Syed Waliullah (1922-1971), Akhteruzzaman Elias (1943-1997), and Syed Shamsul Haque (1935-2016) have demonstrated the use of magic realism before the concept's establishment. For example, the commencement pitch of Syed Haque's novel *Rakto-golap* (1963) mentions an untimely rain. The downpour causes the collapse of the mosque's roof, thirteen deaths in a boat capsize, and numerous paraphernalia to be washed away by the flood. Even though the rainfall was unexpected, people blamed magician Nazim Pasha for calling upon the rain. Even though the novel's 'magic' is not distinct, collective delusion is essential in establishing supernatural facts. Besides, Fajlul Haque Saikat, in his article published by *Daily Jugantor*, said that Syed Haque was more inspired by local folktales and Mymensingh hymns. So, his attempts to use magical realism did not appear as Latin American or European magical realism. Despite the Bengali folklore themes in this book. Despite the Bengali folklore themes in this book, Márquezian's style of incorporating magical realism by vastly using local (Columbian) mythologies and his focus on detailing are visible in Syed Haque's narrative. For instance, people from the magic show said that the magician had created ten thousand roses. However, he produced only seven hundred eighty-six flowers. Here, Syed Haque focuses on the details just like Gracia Márquez. However, no evidence was found that he was on Haque's reading list, which could mean he did or did not read Garcia Marquez. Nevertheless, his contemporary Syed Waliullah

published *Kado Nodi Kado* (Cry! River, Cry) a few years later in 1966, where the demonstration of magical realism is like Syed Haque's but in higher quantity.

Another prominent author, Shahed Ali (1925-2001), authored and published *Jibrailer Dana* (Gabriel's Wing) in 1949 before Haque's story was published in 1963. In the story, the young protagonist, Nabi, witnesses a stunning individual with wings like a peacock soaring across the sky. His mother refers to the character as Jibrail (angel Gabriel). Also, Nabi desires to use a kite to drag God's throne. This story produced new patterns and indications of magical stories for Bangladeshi readership by inter-mingling Islamic and Hindu deities with Indian folktales, myths, and fables. Later, Akhteruzzaman Elias and Nasrin Jahan incorporated local folktales native to North Bengal and Mymensingh Haor region, taking the utilization of the style to the next level.

However, the practice took another route when Shahidul Zahir started using this technique as a symbolic representation to bring out and criticize the contemporary capitalist society. Besides, in an interview conducted by Ahmad Mustafa Kamal, Zahir stated that he intentionally incorporated the concept of magical realism into his books, citing Gabriel García Márquez as his inspiration. (Uddin 02) Nevertheless, Zahir never left his region in search of themes and plots. In one of his interviews conducted by R.K. Roni, Zahir acknowledged that,

"...my stories come from the traditions of Bengali literature and can come from different people. It could be Syed Waliullah" [Dhaka Tribune]

Likewise, the majority of Zahir's characters are society's marginalised people. His works never represent traditional patriarchal values. Instead, he skillfully intertwines human social consciousness in his stories and effectively aligns himself with the principles of Marxist

philosophy. Hence, he does not tend to create significant characters, giving them memorable names or character traits.

The upcoming chapters will thoroughly analyse the development of magical realism by employing an in-depth examination of Syed Waliullah's *Kado Nodi Kado* (Cry! River, Cry), Akhteruzzaman Elias' *Khowabnama* (Dream Epic), Shahidul Zahir's *Kathure O Darkar* (Woodcutter and Raven), and Nasrin Jahan's *Chondrolekhar Jadubistar* (Magical expansion of Chondrolekha). By examining these texts, this research will try to reveal the sources of inspiration for the writer's works and provide a mapping for the development of magical realist literature in Bangladesh. Additionally, the chapters will look through particular historical and sociocultural backdrops that have uniquely shaped the creation and evolution of magical realist literature. Moreover, the chapters will underscore the importance of local folklore, myths, and religion in shaping the style of magical realism in the country's literary landscape.

Research Question

How has magical realism developed in Bangladeshi Literature? What cultural, historical, and sociopolitical influences have shaped its use from its inception to contemporary works?

Rationale for Research

The research question, which aims to understand the historical development and contextual elements influencing the use of magical realism in Bangladeshi literature, is a testament to the unique contributions of Bangladeshi writers to the genre and style. This study endeavours to clarify the cultural, historical, and socio-political elements that have shaped the evolution of magical realism, tracing its trajectory from its inception to modern

works. It deepens our understanding of how magical realism is used in storytelling to interact with cultural identity and societal reality. By examining these relationships, the study aims to advance a conversation on how Bangladeshi literature, culture, and society interact.

Methodology & Theoretical Framework

This research is a comprehensive analytical study that employs a qualitative methodology to thoroughly explore the trajectory of magical realism in Bangladeshi literature. The paper's design involves a comprehensive analysis of primary texts supplemented by various secondary sources to provide a deep contextual understanding and a robust theoretical framework.

Firstly, the selection process began by focusing on Bangladeshi magical realist writers, who were widely discussed in the news articles and book review sections of *The Daily Star*, *The Hindu*, *Dhaka Tribune*, and *Daily Jugantor*. These writers, including Syed Waliullah, Akhteruzzaman Elias, Shahidul Zahir, and Nasrin Jahan, have evidently contributed to this genre. Besides, *Kali O Kolom*, a Bengali monthly magazine dealing with literature, art and culture, significantly contributed to this selection process. Then, selected texts of these writers were carefully chosen, including *Kado Nodi Kado* (Cry, River Cry) of Syed Waliullah, *Khowabnama* (Dream Epic) of Akhteruzzaman Elias, *Kathure O Darkaak* (Woodcutter and Raven) of Shahidul Zahir, and *Chondrolekhar Jadubistar* (The Magical Expansion of Chondrolekha) by Nasrin Jahan. These selections were based on the evidence of magical realism charted by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris in their book *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*.

Wendy B. Faris suggested five primary features of magical realism to investigate the nature of the work. These features are as follows:

"First, the text should contain an "irreducible element" of magic;

Second, the descriptions in magical realism detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world;

Third, the reader may experience some unsettling doubts in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events;

Fourth, the narrative merges different realms; and,

Finally, magic realism disturbs received ideas about time, space, and identity.

'Irreducible element' is a crucial concept in magical realism. It refers to something that cannot be explained according to the laws of the universe as they have been formulated in empirically based discourse, that is, according to "logic, familiar knowledge, or received belief" (Faris 3)". (Quoted in *Magic Realism in Bengali Cinema: Satyajit Ray's Goopy Gayne Bagha Bayne in Perspective* 291).

Secondly, primary data were collected through the 'close-reading method', a meticulous process of in-depth textual analysis. This technique focused on the plots, themes, narrative techniques, and stylistic elements of the primary texts that reflected any evidence of the abovementioned characteristics of magical realism. Moreover, the writer's inspiration to adopt the style has been considered based on the writer's reading lists, other writings, and the employed styles of their contemporary writers.

Thirdly, various secondary sources have been included, such as books, research papers, and scholarly articles about Bangladeshi literature, Asian literature, magical realism, the respected authors' writing style, and relevant sociocultural circumstances reflected in the plots. These materials helped contextualise the original texts and promote a greater understanding of the research topic by offering theoretical frameworks, historical context, and critical perspectives.

Finally, the primary and secondary data analysis results have been examined to clarify magical realism's development and course in Bangladeshi literature. The theoretical frameworks, such as Wendy B. Faris's five primary features of magical realism, have been applied to analyse the selected texts. The theoretical frameworks and critical viewpoints have been synthesised to offer insights into the cultural, historical, and socio-political factors influencing the use of magical realism in the chosen works.

In the end, despite all the efforts, this thesis has limitations. For instance, the translated texts have lost some of their essence. However, various compensation techniques have been incorporated to minimise the translation loss. Besides, the researcher's interpretation may carry the potential for bias because of the subjective nature of the textual analysis. Nevertheless, this study has strived to include as much factual evidence as possible to reduce potential bias and to maintain a balanced perspective.

Chapter 01

Syed Waliullah & Akhteruzzaman Elias: The Pioneers of Bangladeshi Magical Realism

Sourit Bhattacharya, in his *Magic and Realism in South Asia*, claimed that Bangladesh possesses a fertile land to practice magical realism, mainly because of its postcolonial (post-1947) and post-liberation (post-1971) era. He also says, "Much of Bangladesh's magical realist writings began in the 1960s and flourished [...] in the 1980s and 1990s, especially in the aftermath of the Liberation War" (212). Magical realism takes on a postmodern nature with its unique ability to blur the thin line between the real and the unreal. However, its general characteristics impose resistance against the imperial centre and its totalising regime. Therefore, Stephen Slemon, in his *Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse*, claims this genre as a "socially symbolic contract" (Hoffman 408) because often, the realist mode is not adequate for writers writing under various repressions, primarily for political reasons. Therefore, the fantastic narrative structure always carries the "undercurrent of realism" (Hoffman 410). In magical realism, readers often encounter two kinds of narrative. The first one magnificently portrays the supernatural elements, and the second one neatly depicts the constant truth of social struggle. As a result, this simultaneous flow of marvellous elements becomes the mirror of socio-political truth, which makes magical realism fall under the postcolonial genre. Hence, the blend becomes more feasible if a particular geographical land has enough material for supernatural ingredients and social struggle. Bengal has remained under the imperial and feudal system for over two hundred years, from the *Battle of Plassey* (1757) to the liberation war of 1971. Besides, the political environment of Bangladesh did not settle down even after the liberation war. As a result, the Constitutionally democratic

Bangladesh was under martial law from 1975 to 1979 and again in 1982 (Bose). Additionally, the famine and other social and economic struggles caused by political turmoil and natural calamities have enriched the land with elements of realism. Moreover, the vivid landscape and repeated religious syncretism have produced mythological beliefs and folktales about supernaturals. With these myths and folktales, rural people's faith fueled superstitious beliefs and practices. Altogether, these elements provided abundant magical elements in this landscape. Hence, Bhattacharya made a reasonable claim because the Bangladeshi landscape already contained magical elements, and the liberation from Pakistani rule in 1971 made the land fertile to sow the seed of magical realism. Consequently, as mentioned in the introduction, many contemporary writers of that time have taken advantage of these elements to experiment with their works. However, some of those works became successful, and some could not. Among those writers' works, Syed Waliullah's *Kado Nodi Kado* and Akhteruzzaman Elias' *Khowabnama* have been able to use this style most successfully. Therefore, Bhattacharya proclaimed Syed Waliullah (1922-1971) and Akhteruzzaman Elias (1943-1997) as the predecessors in using the magical realism style in their works.

However, these two prominent Bangladeshi writers are only occasionally mentioned in discussions of magical realism. Nevertheless, their contributions ignited the magical realism genre in the Bangladeshi region. Therefore, analysing their works to trace unique ways of utilising magical realism in Bangladeshi literature is crucial. Therefore, the upcoming chapter of this thesis will delve into Syed Waliullah's *Kado Nodi Kado* and Akhteruzzaman Elias' *Khowabnama* to understand their distinct contributions as the pioneers of Bangladeshi magic realism.

Waliullah: Magical Realism in *Kado Nodi Kado*

Waliullah is an excellent Bangladeshi modernist writer renowned for his experimentation with narrative structures and the usage of realism. Besides, eminent critics, including Syed Abul Maksud (1946-2021) and Abdul Mannan Syed (1943-2010), had claimed that Waliullah had initiated and actively practised modern literary techniques in Bangladeshi literature. Among those techniques, "existentialism, stream of consciousness and the elements of the absurd" (Uddin 01) are often discussed. Besides experimenting with existentialism and stream of consciousness, he attempted to incorporate the surrealist style in his novel *Chander Amabashya* in 1964. Hence, as an experimentalist writer, his next step was moving towards magical realism. Accordingly, Bangladeshi academician Muhasin Uddin published his work *Magic Realism in Kando Nodi Kando* in the *Bangla Academy Journal*, where he strongly argued about the presence of "the postmodern treatment of reality [...] called Magic Realism" (01). In Uddin's justification for this claim, he mentions Waliullah's reading list, which included distinguished writers like Aime Cesaire and Pablo Neruda. Because of Waliullah's reading list, Uddin assumed that there is a strong probability of Waliullah reading "renowned writers of Latin America such as Carpentier, Borges and Marquez as, in those days, they were no less discussed than the former two" (02). Besides, Shahidul Zahir, in an interview with *Ajker Kagoj*, stated that Waliullah had practised magical realism, a postmodern technique, most successfully practised by the Latin American literary doyens like Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Jorge Luis Borges (quoted in *Magic Realism in Kando Nodi Kando* 02).

The novel *Kado Nodi Kado* is a fascinating blend of European modernist non-linear narrative structure and a distinctly Bangladeshi subject matter, the existentialist crisis of a riverine

community. Likewise, it presents a unique case of a pure Bangladeshi novel written in the European narrative style. The author employs the non-linear narrative arrangement to unfold the storyline through the flashbacks of the narrator, Tobarok Bhuiyan. In the fifteenth chapter of the novel, Waliullah incorporates magical realism by personifying the river, Bankal. The novel's narrator, Tabarak Bhuiyan, is a man in his forties. Through him, Waliullah sets the stage for the novel, where Tobarok engages with people at a gathering through his unique storytelling ability. The people of the gathering are commuting by a steamer when the novel starts, and the novel ends when they reach their destination. Within this short period, Tobarok tells the stories of the people of Kumurdanga and their struggles because of the river drying.

Several techniques are used in the novel to make the story a magical realist one. Besides the 'real' behind the 'magic' cover, Waliullah's writing style played a significant role in making the magical realist story. For example, "skillful time shifting" (Das 06) technique has played a crucial role. Waliullah used inconsistent tense and different narrators to provide a constant mysterious backdrop to the story. To illustrate, the story's primary narrator is Tobarok Bhuiyan, who recalls his memories to tell the story. Within his flashbacks, the story unfolds, which provides a paradoxical impression. Put more, the novel begins in the present tense. However, Tobarok's flashbacks are described in the past tense. Later, the narrator shifts from Tobarok to the people of Kumurdanga, and the characters from Tobarok Bhuiyan's memories take the lead in moving the story forward. Likewise, the novel provides a feeling of story within a story. According to Stephen Selmon, a magical realist story "does not only reflect in an outward direction toward postcolonial social relations. It also sustains an inward reflection into the work's thematic content, initiating a fascinating interplay between language and thematic network" (Hoffman 411). In this case, Waliullah plays with the language and thematic structure to firstly offer the

"outward reflection" of the society through Tobarok Bhuiyan's mouthpiece, where the society is in a stable position. Then, he provides the "inward reflection" of the turmoiled society through the stories of the people of Kumurdanga. Therefore, even though the 'magic' comes much later as a theme, Waliullah already sets the 'magical realism' in motion by portraying society as a transformational whole (pointing to Tobarok's present timeline at the beginning of the story). Additionally, Waliullah introduces the sound of the Bankal river's weeping in the fifteenth chapter of the story, which is the lead magical realist element. Moreover, the writer introduced subjectively real but scientifically unexplainable incidents in the novel. For instance, Muhammad Mustafa experiences paralysis in his limbs while crossing the river as he senses the presence of a ferocious aquatic animal; Amena Khatun talks with a fairy under the banyan tree and they exchange gossip; Mustafa notices Khodeza's face emerging from the water when he went to the pond to wash his face and finally, Sakina hears the weeping sound of the river.

Moreover, the memoir of Kumurdanga's Hakeem Muhammad Mustafa, a crucial theme of the book, becomes the subject of Tabarak's stories at the novel's beginning. As the steamer's spiral motion gradually breaks the river's current, the story's spirit unfolds like branches of a large banyan tree in the village of Muktagachi. It resonates with the suffering of existence and the sigh of the destiny of the Kumurdanga's people because of the drying river. The public life of Kumurdanga was disturbed because of the socio-political disparity. As the sand level rises in the river, the steamer route will change, causing the steamer wharf to close. However, the livelihood of the people of Kumurdanga is deeply associated with this steamer wharf. Because of this, the people of Kumurdanga will suffer deeply as they might lose their livelihood (fishing, boatmanship, way of commute and many more). Therefore, the Bankal River cries because of the

upcoming suffering of the people of Kumurdanga. Additionally, the suspicious atmosphere on the death of Khodeza, the subconscious mind of Muhammad Mustafa, the attack of the Hindu zamindar's *lathiyal*⁶ forces on the opening of the steamer wharf, the shutting of the wharf, the thought process of advocate Kafiluddin portrays the day-to-day life of almost all the rural communities of riverine Bangladesh, including fishermen, boatmen, fish traders, merchants, and even farmers, whose livelihood somehow depends on the river. Likewise, Waliullah's novel metaphorically describes the long process of struggle for the livelihood of a riverine community and its aftermath.

Finally, the third section starts when Sakina Khatun hears the mournful cries of the river Bankal. The story's flow changes from the beginning of the incident of Sakina Khatun when she hears a woman's cry, which, at first, the other characters in the story do not hear. At first, the villagers disbelieve Sakina, but later, hearing the weeping sound becomes a collective experience. Gradually, due to an unknown fear, the poor people of the village start offering their valuable possessions to the river Bankal. At one point, the narrator reveals the mystery of this weeping sound through Ayesha. Even though Ayesha's claim is a mere assumption based on superstition, it becomes a collective belief because every villager starts to hear the whine individually. Through the collective experience, the author establishes that this is actually the cry of the almost dead river, Bankal. The author's decision to personify the river and establish it as a significant character is not arbitrary. It underscores the river's importance in the narrative, as it is not just a physical entity but a living, breathing part of the community. Besides, the distorted use of tense, narrator, and narrative voice creates a gap between society's stable present and the

⁶ Considered as a social class characteristic of the rural society of Bengal during the pre-British and British period. In those days a *lathiyal* made his living by performing various manipulation techniques with a specially made bamboo stick (popularly known as *lathi*) in his hand.

struggling past. Here, the personified river serves as the central element of magic, which connects the destabilised narrative and makes the narrative a whole mouthpiece of society.

To sum up, Syed Waliullah highlights the suffering of the people of the settlement built around a dying river. He connects two entities, the river and the people, by demonstrating magical realism in *Kado Nodi Kado*. Besides, he successfully treats magical realism as a postcolonial device that reflects the identity crisis of the riverine community. As charted by Stephen Slemon in his *Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse*, Waliullah brings out the struggle of rural river-based communities of Bangladesh. Hence, by juxtaposing the villager's suffering and the personified river, Waliullah shows his mastery of magical realism. Moreover, the crisis of individual and rural Bangladeshi social life is the story's seed, presented through an artistic complexity in this novel. The history of Kumurdanga's people mirrors the loss of material life of the riverine people of Bangladesh. The rising sand level in the *Bakal* River unveils faith, reformation, conflict, and the transition from despair to the expectation of life for men and women of various professions. Firstly, Waliullah plays with people's faith by manifesting Sakina Khatun's hearing of weeping. The sound of weeping was a subjective experience of Sakina alone at first and heard and believed by all the villagers. As a result, Rahmat Sheikh sacrifices his calf to satisfy the river. Secondly, the author exhibits that village politics were sparked by the opening and closing of the steamer wharf, revealing both conflict among villagers and the reformation of the village society. Lastly, the villagers' sustenance is depicted through a long journey of memories. Likewise, the novel beautifully captures the essence of Kumurdanga's village society and its people, offering a glimpse into the rich social history of East Bengal. Waliullah successfully used various modern literary techniques such as existentialism, realism, non-linear narrative structure, and magical realism as a postcolonial device to depict this social history, which has already been discussed in

the previous section. This unique narrative structure, employing flashbacks and magical realism, brings the struggle of river-based communities into light. Moreover, the novel dissects individuals, family, society, and individualism and integrates social consciousness through a modern perspective. Notably, magical realism bridges river and riverside social life, enriching the understanding of social themes.

Elias' Fusion of Realism and Magical Realism: *Khowabnama*

The previous subsection discusses the first successful attempt at Bengali magical realist writing. However, "No discussion of magical realism in Bangladesh is complete [...] without mentioning Akhteruzzaman Elias's majestic *Khowabnama*" (214). *Khowabnama (Dream Epic)* is the second and last novel by Bangladeshi fiction writer Akhteruzzaman Elias (1943-1997), first published in February 1996. Many critics, including Bhattacharya, argue that this book has distinguished itself as an epic of the Bengal region because of its plot, context, theme and narrative structure. The novel mainly captures the period before and after the partition of Bengal in 1947. One of the essential strategies to demonstrate magical realism in a story is **the successful use of myths and legends**. Gabriel Garcia Marquez has previously practised this strategy in his *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). Akhteruzzaman Elias's novel *Khowabnama* takes this path by effectively utilising rural myths and folktales of North Bengal to depict various historical and political events. As a result, these myths have served a profound purpose in the story. Not to bring out the superstitious attitudes of the society, but Elias has demonstrated his mastery of magical realism by skilfully blending this aesthetic, imaginative counterpart of history with the current struggle of the Bengali nation to narrate the events successfully. Moreover, he depicts the rural environment, their lifestyle, religious reform, and faith in the worldly and humanistic thinking of

the contemporary Muslim middle class. Thus, his primary purpose behind the interaction of myth and history in the novel's content was to highlight the various crises of human existence, class division and class struggle, making the novel believable. Therefore, Bangladeshi fiction writer and critic Shawkat Ali writes about *Khowabnama* in his essay titled *Khowabnama-r Myth: Trinomule Jabar Ek Path* (The Myth of Khowabnama: A Path to The *Grassroots*) that,

“After reading the entire book carefully, readers will feel that this work is different. Soil, people, lake, river, forest, birth, death, love, greed, hatred, and conflict are mixed with human and natural issues, context, atmosphere, past and present in such a way that the whole matter is much more directly understood than one can analyse it with intelligence” (Ali).⁷

The storyline unfolds in a small and remote township of Bogura district in the North Bengal region. A community is centred around a Beel⁸ called Katlahar, and villages such as Girirdanga, Nijgiri Danga, and Golabari Hat have developed their lives around the Katlahar *Beel*. The North Bengal region is rich in its socio-cultural heritage because the people here have undergone the rule of many dynasties from the third century onwards, including the Morya, the Gupta, the Pala, the Sena, and the Muslim rule. Consequently, this region's local and indigenous people have grafted various folktales, myths, legends, and superstitions into their cultural traditions, which is mentioned in Habibur Rahman's work, *Folklore of North Bengal, Socio-cultural Identity Analysis*. Besides, the regional landscape suffers from drought during the summer season, cutting off the livelihood of local farmers. Hence, the superstitious belief in the Hudum Deo⁹ song emerged. In addition, the people of this region believe that the prayer

⁷ All translations are the author's own, unless otherwise specified.

⁸ A beel is a billabong or a lake-like wetland with static water instead of moving water in rivers and canals.

⁹ *Hudum Deo* denotes the God of Rain.

songs of Sonaray and Gokkhornath will save them from natural calamities or snake bites. Moreover, various rumours and folktales about the pir and fakir emerged in this region after 1204, when Bakhtiyar Khilji arrived in Bengal. Among those, the *Legend of Ghashi Dewan* is famous in North Bengal. In the past, there was a deadly water circle in the middle of Cholon Beel in Natore. If someone accidentally fell into this circle, it was impossible to return alive. One day, Ghashi Dewan was walking nearby and found a dead cow which fell into the trap. He ate the raw meat from the cow and then decided to live on a boat in the middle of that water-circle. Likewise, he saved many people and fishermen from dying in this deadly area. His shrine can still be found in that location. More local folktales of pir-fakir¹⁰ were adapted after the 'Fakir Sannyasi Resistance'¹¹ in the villages of North Bengal. Elias had researched this region for years to incorporate these folktales of fakirs, the jotdari¹² social system, the 'Tebhaga¹³ movement' (1946-47), the partition of Bengal (1911, 1947) and Muslim League politics, Hindu-Muslim communal relationships and crisis and their effects on North Bengal, maintaining those as the central theme of this novel. Besides, people's helplessness, lust, anger, religious and ethnic hatred, and even cruelty of the ordinary villagers are all added to the story from the perspective of reality to enhance the themes. One successful implementation of myth can be seen at the novel's beginning, where Elias depicts Munshi's ghost as an imaginative hero through Tamij's father.

"Sticking his feet in the mud, standing straight, where Tamij's father was waving his black hands to chase away the dark grey clouds and straining his jugular vein as high as

¹⁰ Muslim mendicant monk who is regarded as a holy man.

¹¹ See "Fakir-Sannyasi Resistance - Banglapedia."

¹² A settlement where landowners lease their lands to others.

¹³ See Islam, "Tebhaga Movement - Banglapedia."

he could, that place needs to be observed a little better. A long time ago, when Tamij's father was not born, even Tamij's father's father, his grandfather Baghar Majhi weren't born. Tamij's grandfather's father, was still waiting to come into this world. In one fine afternoon of that time, Majnu Shah and his team were horse-riding beside River Korotowa on a pilgrimage to the Mahasthan fort. One of his gang members, Munshi Boytullah Shah, fell from his horse after being shot dead by the sepoy of the British. The gunshot wound could never heal. After dying, his ash-covered dead body got up with the shackle on the neck and climbed on the top of the Pakur¹⁴ tree near the north side of Katlahar swamp. Since then, he has been spread all over the swamp like sunshine during the day and rules the lake during the night from the top of that Pakur tree. Tamij's father waves his hands to move the clouds in the sky, hoping to catch a glimpse of him" (*Khowabnama*, Elias 01).¹⁵ [Self-Translation]

Likewise, the novel's upcoming chapter provides various historical events through folk beliefs, discussed in Subrata Kumar Das' *Akhtaruzzaman Elias Intermingles Dreams, Myths and Realities*. Das claims Elias' accomplishment in utilising of this myth of the dead Munshi ruling the lake at the novel's beginning, which is a work of magical realism. Elias's use of myth through the story of this disembodied Munshi reveals the history of several ages and a particular political event. Das contends, "when the story says that Hundreds of years before Boytullah Shah fought with British soldiers on his way to Mahasthan, the intermingle of history with the myth is created" (03). In the history of Bengal, this political event is called the 'Fakir Sannyasi Resistance'. This rebellion initially took place in the late eighteenth century and is considered by historians to be the precursor of India's independence movement against foreign rule. At that

¹⁴ Golden rumph's fig tree.

¹⁵ All translations are the author's own, unless otherwise specified.

time, a collective of Hindu saints, holy Muslim men, and pious fakirs travelled from North India to different parts of Bengal to visit holy places. On the way, these saints used to accept religious donations from the tribal chiefs and landlords as it was the custom of the time. During times of prosperity, tribal chiefs and zamindars ¹⁶were also generous and loyal to these traditional religious practices. However, the tax rate increased considerably when the British East India Company gained civil power after the Battle of Plassey. In this situation, the local landlords often could not financially support the fakirs and saints. In addition, the loss of crops because of the famine (1943) caused the death of about one crore people, one-third of the total population of Bengal at that time. This problem was aggravated mainly because of the loss of arable land. In this situation, the zamindars stopped giving grants to the fakirs per the company's instructions. The Fakirs got angry because of this command and started an anti-British movement by initiating protests in different places in Bengal. Fakir Majnu Shah led this resistance movement in North Bengal. The British East Indian Company killed 150 Fakirs as a precedent to stop the rebellion. One of the local (North Bengal) myths prevalent around this event was of the dead Munshi, a member of Fakir Majnu Shah's troops. Munshi Boytullah Shah was shot dead beside river *Korotowa* by a sepoy of the East India Company while marching towards *Mahasthangarh* with several troops of Majnu Shah.

The context of the novel is developed on the people who grew their lives on the second side of the Katlahar swamp. It is the superstitious belief of the fishermen community that the dead Munshi rules the swamp at night from a throne in the Pakur tree in the north of the swamp. Along with the political changes, the tree was cut down, brickyards were established, the

¹⁶ Land lords who used to lease their lands and collect land revenue of a district for the government during British Company rule in India.

forests were cleared, and more people built their settlements which represents the post-colonial counterpart of magical realism in the novel. After the ownership of the swamp passed to landlord Shorafot Mondol, most of the people of the fishermen's community became farmers. After that, when the oil mills were established, most villagers moved south to the banks of the *Yamuna* River and were forced to give up their profession twice- from fishermen to farmer and from farmer to day labourer within five generations. Hence, Elias did not randomly pick the novel's plot; instead, it serves a profound purpose: to show the struggle for the livelihood of the regional people during the British rule. Likewise, the use of magical realism emerges in Elias' novel. Through these supernatural beliefs, Akhteruzzaman Elias describes various events and sub-events of history and politics, Hindu-Muslim riots, history of movements, rural life and religious sectarianism, ignorance and superstition and humanitarian disasters. In this case, the myth of Munshi serves as a crucial vehicle to take the readers to specific historical events. Hence, this is an example of the successful use of magical realism. Moreover, Elias' narrative style in *Khowabnama* is reminiscent of García Márquez's classic novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Perhaps there are no contextual similarities between Elias' and Marquez's novels. However, the way Elias portrays the five generations of Tamij reminds the description of José Arcadio Buendía and his predecessors in Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Elias made adequate preparations before he started writing this book. This information is mentioned in the book *Akhteruzzaaman Eliaser Diary* (Diary of Akhtaruzzaman Elias), published by Shahduzzaman. In the prologue, Shahduzzaman mentions that Elias visited Ghoraghat, Nakaihat, Govindganj, and many other villages in North Bengal while preparing to write *Khowabnama*. Later, the region became the setting of the novel (05). Elias started his preparation to write this novel in 1986. At that time, he went from place to place in North Bengal

and collected information about the local lives. Three reasons can be considered for Elias to select North Bengal as his setting and incorporate the political histories of North Bengal. First, Elias was born in Gotia, Gaibandha district, North Bengal. He completed his matriculation from *Bogra Zilla School*, spending his early life in that region. Therefore, he was affectionate towards his native land. Second, Elias' diary proved him to be an active political commentator. Besides, Azfar Hussain, in his article titled *Tribute to Akhtaruzzaman Elias: Our Major Fiction-Writer* has written that "Elias was also a Marxist intellectual, for whom theory, activism, and creative writing—poetics and politics and praxis- went hand in hand, variously enabling and enhancing one another" (Hussain). Hence, it was only natural that a place full of writing material would appeal to him as the subject of his novel. Third, Akhtaruzzaman Elias' contemporary Indian writer was Salman Rushdie. When Rushdie published his *Midnight's Children* in 1981, Elias was writing his Liberation War (1971) based novel *Chilekothar Sepai* (1987). It is worth mentioning that setting political context as a central theme is Elias' favourite literary genre because both his novels *Chilekothar Sepai* and *Khowabnama* fetch real history. Besides, his contemporary writers were experimenting with the genre of magical realism, which proved to be an excellent tool for commenting on political issues. These reasons and his affection towards his native land inspired him to write his magical realist novel, *Khowabnama*.

Elias mentions Hasan Azizul Haque among his contemporary writers. Shihab Sarkar, in his *The Unique World of Hasan Azizul Haque* claimed that the members of Azizul Haque's readers used to read the classics of Manik Bandopadhyay (1908-1956), Tarashankar Bandopadhyay (1898-1971), Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyay (1894-1950) as well as Syed Shamsul Haque (1935-2016). These writers are known for demonstrating social realism in their writing, a subgenre of realism that seeks to portray the lives of the working class and their everyday issues. The

contemporaries and near-contemporaries of Syed Haque were Alauddin Al Azad (1932-2009), Shaukat Ali (1936-2018), and Borhan Uddin Khan Jahangir (1936-2020), are considered writers of the 1950s which was the 'boom' period of magical realism. At that time, Syed Haque's *Rokto Golap* attempted a new trend of combining fantasy and social reality through myths in Bengali literature, which is mentioned in the 'Introduction' section. As a reader and critic of Hasan Azizul Haque, Elias also read Syed Haque. He found the content of their writings appealing and took inspiration from their works. On the one hand, Elias had Rushdie in mind, and on the other hand, he had these social realist writers and the proper elements to produce a work of magical realism. Accordingly, Elias forces the readers to comprehend their postcolonial existence by contemplating the surreal nature of the North Bengali myths, legends and superstitions through the cycle of events in his novel *Khowabnama* because *Khowabnama* consists of the history of *Tebhaga* movement "that tormented and elevated the revolutionary Bangali nation during the second half of the forties of the twentieth century" (Das 02). The long-held dream of the majority of the population was crushed by the split of Pakistan and India, which was later widely accepted as the outcome of political opportunism. The issue of the partition of Pakistan and India sowed a significant breach in the tranquillity between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Like the other states of independent India, Bangladesh also went through a difficult period of communal instability, which started in Calcutta and eventually expanded to every region of the country, as depicted in the novel. Massive evacuations and violence became usual outcomes of the partition during the latter half of the 1940s. With Elias's mighty pen, he had drawn a line through this notorious period, for which he twisted local and traditional beliefs by telling the tales of several local families and villages. Likewise, the author compelled his Bengali readers to review their identity under the

colonial regime through his work. In that case, the ghost ruler of the swamp, Munshi, was a blessing for the fishing community. Because the ownership of the lake Katlahar went into the hands of the Zamindar Shorafot Mondol, the fishermen became deprived of fishing from the lake and lost their livelihood. Later, Elias depicts the cunning manipulation of a particular class of people for whom the land ownership was transferred to the blacksmiths. The surreal events and people's superstitious beliefs emerge through the flow of the novel's events. Moreover, the themes of Elias's *Khowabnama* reflect the village settlements, people, their lives and livelihood in a particular geographical location woven with local myths and history. Likewise, readers get the essence of reality inside this amalgamation of myth, history, and reality, gaining the upper hand throughout the book. Consequently, the complex socio-political landscape of postcolonial Bengal comes to light, making Elias a conscious user of magical realism. For instance, the story's beginning shows the price hike of goods because of the Second World War, which even impacts rural village life. The War left two typical outcomes: famine and the slaughter of thousands of people. It is the Tebhaga movement that begins before things calm down. This movement inspires Tamij, the story's central character, and his numerous fellow men. However, regrettable events like the Hindu-Muslim riot and the partition of India lead to a drastic shift in their actions and beliefs, which is shown as the climax of the novel.

Other than the encounter with the ghost of Munshi, the story has several juxtapositions of magical elements, such as dreams and supernatural visions. Dreams play an important role in demonstrating the magical realist element in the novel. For example, Kulsum, Tamij's stepmother, possesses an enigmatic book named 'Khowabnama', which she inherited from her grandfather. She often experiences supernatural dreams because of this possession. Occasionally, fairy components are mixed in with them such as Kulsum's conversation with her dead husband

in her dream. Additionally, narratives concerning Katlahar Beel and the individuals involved are equally essential magical elements. Through these, the author has blended the unthinkable with possible outcomes. For instance, the most absurd event in the book is Tamij's physical relationship with Kulsum, which begins immediately after Tamij's father dies. Previously, their affection was frequently expressed, but following Tamij's father's passing and Tamij's discharge from prison, their physical attraction was fulfilled through dream.

Although Elias' stories are more influenced by realism than by the use of magical realism, his novels serve as a springboard for later generations of writers. Besides, *Khowabnama* depicts the sufferings of class-divided and communally divided Bengalis. For instance, the novel adds a significant meaning by showing mysterious similarities between two different women, Kulsum and the woman in the refugee camp, who are one-breasted. When the other woman was sexually assaulted, one of her breasts was amputated by the Hindus in Bihar. Again, when Keramat first sees Kulsum, he imagines a single-breasted Kulsum. This vision materialises towards the novel's conclusion. A unique meaning is added to the entire plot of the novel by the loss of one breast of two Muslim women, one by the Hindus and the other by the Muslims, because this part of the novel represents the division of India and Pakistan, which left Bengal incomplete as Das's claim (08). This mysterious similarity and eerie vision demonstrate the magical realism the author presents through Keramat Ali's imagination of one-breasted Kulsum. Additionally, the soul of Bhavani Pathak ¹⁷appears in the novel to awaken the poor sufferers of the village against the English rule and the tyrannical feudal rule. Also, Munshi's dead body rules Katlahar so that exploitative landlords like Shorafot Mondol can never take the complete reign of the lake.

¹⁷ Pandit Bhavanicharan Pathak was the main leader of the fakir-sannyasi revolt against British Company rule-exploitation and tyrannical Nawabs in Bengal in the 18th century.

Perhaps the surreal events of the story may be the constraints of the natural environment, which combine with the superstitions of the rural people to create myths. However, superstition or fantasy, Elias, in his novel *Khowabnama*, through the successful use of these myths, has brought out various historical events related to national division, Hindu-Muslim riots, mass movements, rural life and the history of religious sectarianism. In this case, Akhteruzzaman Elias started using magical realism by successfully applying myth to the writers of the next generation. That is why he is indeed the pioneer of magical realism produced in Bangladesh region.

Chapter 02

Nasrin Jahan's National Allegory: An Advanced Form of Bangladeshi Magical Realism

Syed Waliullah and Akhteruzzaman Elias proved themselves social realists and set magical realism in motion in Bangladeshi literature. Syed Waliullah's *Kado Nodi Kado*, published in 1968, depicts the social reality of rural Bengali people in the pre-independence era. Elias took a similar path while writing his *Khowabnama*. Although *Khowabnama* was published in 1996, it incorporates major political events of pre-independence India. However, the ongoing political events, such as Hossain Muhammod Ershad's dictatorship, again formed a strong backdrop for magical realism. Usually, writers in oppressive regimes often use magical realism not just as an aesthetic device but more as a powerful political strategy in their narratives. Two key reasons drive this urge. The first reason is the unsettling nature of speaking out directly against those in power. The second reason is the transformative power of magical realism in redefining colonialised identity, which offers a unique perspective on the regime's historical and political evolution. By situating aesthetic events within the broader national context, the narrative weaves a bridge between the individual and the collective, navigating the imperial history of colonialism, political upheaval, and the nation's rebirth. Nasrin Jahan quickly grabbed the chance of the Bangladeshi political upheavals in the 1990s to write and publish her *Chondrolekhar Jadubistar* (Magical Exposition of Chondrolekha, 1995) on that setting. She incorporated Bengali myths similar to Elias. However, the origin of her myths and her way of writing were very different from the previously mentioned writers. Besides, Nasrin Jahan was the first among them

(Waliullah & Elias) to introduce a female protagonist in the genre of Bangladeshi magical realism. Before delving into that discussion, the author, Nasrin Jahan, needs a brief introduction.

Nasrin Jahan is a prominent Bangladeshi fiction writer, poet, and Newspaper editor. She was born on March 5, 1964, in Mymensingh, Bangladesh (East Pakistan at that time). She began her writing career in the early 1980s and published five volumes of short stories. Her novel writing began with her famous novel *Urukku* (1993). However, she came into international light much later when *Penguin India* published *Urukku's* translation under the title *The Woman Who Flew*. Although the publication made her well-known across borders later, she was already a famous writer in the Bangladeshi reader's community because of her complex psychological themes in the setting of social realism. In addition, she frequently explores with her storytelling by blending elements of realism, surrealism, and magical realism. Jahan's adept use of literary devices such as metaphors, symbolisms, and stream of consciousness, associated with her unique perspective on human nature about women's psyche and man-woman relationship, has earned her a well-deserved reputation for her harmonious writing. She can handle the complex human psyche inside her works of fiction. Besides, her writing tends to study the complexities of the man-woman interaction against the backdrop of society. Likewise, her works often shed light on the psychological and social challenges that middle-class women experience in society. She published three novels in a row, namely *Urukku* (1993), *Chondrer Prothom Kola* (The First Phase of The Moon, 1994), and *Chondrolekhkar Jadubistar* (Magical Expansion of Chondrolekha, 1995). She worked as the literary editor of the biweekly publication *Annyadin* for many years. This career as an editor has paved the way for her to explore political writing. In addition, in a literary talk show by *GTV* named *Shilpo Bari*, Nasrin Jahan expressed her interest in magical realism to the host, Moni Haydar. Besides, she expresses her fondness for Marquez's

work. Likewise, her novels, *Chondrer Prothom Kola* and *Chondrolekhar Jadubistar*, represent her attempts at this genre. In *Chondrer Prothom Kola*, Jahan creates a fantastic setting by infusing dream-like imagery. The plot revolves around a writer and the surroundings of that writer. On the other hand, her plot depicts the contemporary political reality in *Chondrolekhar Jadubistar*. Because of this plot, this book has been selected to trace the elements of magical realism.

Magical Realism & Nasrin Jahan: Chondrolekhar Jadubistar:

The protagonist is a woman named Chondrolekha, who has mystical powers of hypnotising people. She comes to a village by floating on a piece of wood and takes on the governance of that village. It is later revealed in the novel that the previous government of that village was an exploiter who used to keep people asleep by feeding weed. Meanwhile, the king was smuggling all the village resources. However, nobody could see through the exploitation of the previous king because they were intoxicated and asleep. In that setting, Chondrolekha arrives in the village as a saviour. Nasrin Jahan infused various local myths, such as *Ola Otha Debi* and the Mymensing region's folklore songs about Mansa and Behula-Lokhindor. Jahan incorporated these myths to fuse magic in the novel, creating a supernatural tone. However, she constantly moves her narrative back and forth to pass on underlying comments on the political situation of Bangladesh at that time. Likewise, Nasrin Jahan contributes to the genre of magical realism in Bangladeshi literature and makes the style more mature than the previous ones.

In *Chondrolekhar Jadubistar*, the narrator sets the fantastical tone from the beginning while depicting Chondrolekha. The opening remark of the book is,

"Her source of power is her capability to hypnotise. Thus, she flourished. Her name is Chandrolekha. It is said that she was born of a river—a manifold legend. She was floating on a wooden deck. What a wonder with that wood—the roaring water could not touch her breath" (Jahan 491).¹⁸

Likewise, the narrator sets the tone similarly to a fairytale story with a fantastic description of Chondrolekha. This type of fairytale imagery is present throughout the novel, and the effect is intense in some places. In this manner, the author uses 'fantasy' as a literary device. Right after describing Chondrolekha, the narrator returns to the ruling period of the Bangladeshi government, Hussain Mohammad Ershad. In 1982, Ershad led an army coup to overthrow President Abdus Sattar. After that, he suspended the Constitution of the *Republic of Bangladesh* and initiated martial law. In 1983, Ershad proclaimed himself as the President of Bangladesh and forcefully remained in power until 1990. Bangladesh is a democratic republic. Hence, winning the public vote is necessary to take on the nation's lead. However, Muhammad Ershad formed a dictatorship, setting anarchy in motion. Finally, in 1990, Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina teamed up to form a mass uprising in favour of democracy, which compelled him to step down from power. Later, Khaleda Zia took over the governance, and Sheikh Hasina again started to resist. The narrator comments on this particular anarchic state, where other political leaders, such as Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, fight to take the power over the regime. However, nobody is looking after the helpless people of Bangladesh. Children are dying because of diarrhoea. The farmers were unable to sell their crops because of the price decrease. As a result, they were committing suicide. In addition, university students started robbing instead of studying because education did not provide them with food.

¹⁸ All translations are author's own, unless otherwise specified.

"People of Bangladesh were facing hardship because of the disastrous flood. Farmers were committing suicide [...], and looting tendency was increasing among the University boys. Hasina is saying, Kaleda is another dictator" (Jahan 495).¹⁹

Likewise, the author connects the fantastical kingdom of Chondrolekha and Bangladesh by describing contemporary political instability. She also indicates a particular event in the story's timeline, which makes *Chondrolekhar Jadubistar* a successful magical realist novel.

Even though the story of Chondrolekha and her magical expansion happens in a place surrounded by mountains and rivers, the writer's skilful depiction reflects the exploitation of Ershad and the aftereffects of his tyrannical rule in Bangladesh. Throughout the story, the characters and events take on new symbolic meanings. Near the end of the story, Chandrolekha's early life is revealed to the readers, and the readers can easily relate to the popular tales about Khaleda Zia's past life. For instance, the author reveals that Chondrolekha is a king's wife from a faraway kingdom. While the king was at war, enemies entered the palace where Chondrolekha, the king's wife, lived. The enemies violated her virtue. Even though it was not Chondrolekha's fault, her husband banished her from the kingdom. Similarly, the Pakistani army kept Khaleda Zia imprisoned during the liberation war of 1971, which is evident in the national news article *Begum Zia and revisionist history* written by Syed Badrul Ahsan that The Daily Star publishes. Another news article written by Mahbubul Alam Khan for *News Bangla24* is evident that Khaleda Zia was abandoned by her husband Ziaur Rahman, just like Chondrolekha, because she stayed with the Pakistani army for nine months during the liberation war. Jahan initiates this connection of Chondrolekha with the prime minister of Bangladesh at the end of the novel with the profound purpose of critiquing the political turmoils. Likewise, Jahan reaches her ultimate

¹⁹ All translations are the author's own, unless otherwise specified.

success in creating a national anecdote in a fantastic narrative style, *Chondrolekhar Jadubistar*, where reality is inseparable from the realm of the fantastic.

According to *The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature*,

"Magic realist novels and stories have, typically, a strong narrative drive, in which the recognisably realistic mingles with the unexpected and the inexplicable, and in which elements of dream, fairy story, or mythology combine with the every day, often in a mosaic or kaleidoscopic pattern of refraction and recurrence" (Drabble et al.).

Likewise, *Chondrolekhar Jadubistar* holds a strong first-person narrative drive. Besides, Jahan skilfully blends the realistic setting with the fantastic and bizarre. Moreover, she shows her expertise in using Bangladeshi myths and folktales native to the Mymensingh region to establish a surrealist depiction in the novel, which is another crucial element of magical realism. For instance, the narrator describes the birth of Chondrolekha,

"When hundreds of people died of cholera during her birth...only death, skeletons, what a horrible situation, then the disease also came to Chandralekha's house. Father died; mother died. When that death raised his hand towards Chandralekha, a baby snake encircled Chandralekha's body. Yama's kick fell on the snake. In return for death, the snake gave her life. This story flows far and wide. That snake was the first to meet Chandralekha under the water. That Gokhra ²⁰is now Chandralekha's constant companion" (Jahan 493). ²¹

This section underscores how Jahan incorporates magical elements while simultaneously maturing the style in Bengali literature. Firstly, she describes death as a person with hands. This

²⁰ A poisonous snake.

²¹ All translations are the author's own, unless otherwise specified.

idea of personification derived from the local idea of Yama (the God of death), whose duty is to take people's lives. Waliullah has also incorporated this personification technique in his *Kado Nodi Kado*, which was discussed in the previous chapter. Despite Elias's scepticism towards incorporating personification in his work, Jahan wholeheartedly embraces its potential for creativity and expression. By giving 'death' human-like qualities, she creates glimpses of magic in her novel. Secondly, she infuses the history of cholera in Bangladesh by recollecting Chondrolekha's childhood memory. Bangladesh first went through a Cholera outbreak in 1985 and then in 1989. The first epidemic declared by the *World Health Organization* was in 1991. Many rural people died during that time. Because of this outbreak, many superstitious beliefs have emerged in the rural regions, including *Ola Otha Devi*²². Through commemorating Chondrolekha's birth period, Jahan carefully gives the readers a ride through history. This is another crucial characteristic of magical realism, which Akhteruzzaman Elias has incorporated in his *Khowabnama*. Thirdly, she infuses a tone of Bhatiyali folk. *Mansamangal* ²³*Kabya* is a famous folktale from the Bhati region. The story is about the deity Mansa, who fought with Chand Showdagor for a long time because Chand refused to worship her. The deity Mansa had power over snakes. Therefore, she sent a gokhra snake to kill Chand's son. According to local beliefs, anyone who died from a snake bite was supposed to be allowed to float on a raft down the river in the hopes of magical resurrection. Behula, the wife of Chand's son, followed this tradition, hoping to bring her husband back to life. In the end, she managed to revive him. The latter part of the story is the famous *Behular Pala*, native to Bogura and nearby districts such as Sherpur and Mymensingh. Hence, her narrative style intermingled the real and magical in a way

²² See Mandal, "Oladevi - Banglapedia."

²³ See Bhowmik. "Mangalkavya - Banglapedia."

that nobody can differentiate them. The Gokhra anecdote, the calamity of horror because of cholera, the folk custom of floating dead bodies on a raft, and the usage of myth and folktale have the scent of Bengal's rebirth after the Cholera epidemic, making Jahan's magical realism as a product of Bangladeshi soil.

To sum up, *Chondrolekhar Jadubistar* is a very complex Bengali novel that provides readers with many choices. The novel serves the role of a national allegory of Bangladeshi folk culture and folktales. Besides, it serves as an analogy for the political turmoil of the two respective governments of Bangladesh. In addition, it provides a vast amount of national history, making it the country's historical documentation. Where Waliullah remains attached to the themes of social reality, incorporating rural and social lives and their existential crisis as the major themes of his texts, Elias intermixes those themes with the history of North Bengal's resistance to ground his plot. On this stance, Jahan has created this metaphysical magical reality in *Chondrolekhar Jadubistar*, where political history, along with Bangladeshi folks and mythologies, takes a turn to manifest her triumphant story of magical realism in Bangladeshi literature and contributes to this genre.

Chapter 03

Zahir's Magical Realism: A Voice Who Speaks for The Marginalised

In the previous chapters, this thesis has discussed several authors who contributed to the genre of magical realism in Bangladeshi literature. Among them, Syed Waliullah incorporated 'social realism' into his plot without any historical entanglement. Besides, he utilised 'personification' to infuse magical elements in his text. In contrast, Akhteruzzaman Elias included a robust history of resistance from the North Bengali people to depict the social reality of the rural Bengali people. In addition to that, he utilises myths, legends and superstitious beliefs to incorporate magical elements. It is important to note that both writers centred their plot in a rural setting of Bangladesh. In this case, Nasrin Jahan furthered their attempts by blending both writers' techniques. Her protagonist is a queen of a village. However, she aligns the political turmoils and the uprisings in Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka. Besides, her magical elements resonate with Bhatiyali folktales and legends of the Mymensingh region, including personification and the blend of myths, legends and superstitious beliefs. Moreover, all three writers' plots revolved around a central character. For Waliullah, Hakeem Mustoafa's existentialist crisis was pivotal in forming the central plot. For Elias, it was Tamij and the five generations of his family. Jahan is the first to introduce a female protagonist, Chondrolekha. However, their setting lacks the capital city's geographical location, where many Bangladeshi people find their livelihood. Therefore, the struggle of these marginalised people is yet to be depicted, where Shahidul Zahir takes the lead. Therefore, Zahir and his narrative tendency should be mentioned before discussing his contribution to the genre of magical realism in Bangladeshi literature.

Shahidul Zahir (1953–2008) is one of Bangladesh's most renowned short story writers. Throughout his life, he authored four novellas and three collections of short stories where he effectively aligned himself with the principles of Marxist philosophy. Even though his narratives reflect the patriarchal norms of Bangladeshi society and lack strong female characters like those of Nasrin Jahan, his works transcend the mere representation of patriarchal values. He skilfully intertwines human consciousness in his stories, effectively aligning himself with the principles of Marxist philosophy. Besides, his characters do not have any special features or names. He often uses similar and insignificant names for his characters so that his characters do not dominate his themes. Moreover, Zahir often uses the third-person narrative voice in his stories to pass down the narrator's personal statement based on collective observation. On this matter, Asik Istiak, in his *Constructing the Magical Marxist Style of Shahidul Zahir: A Critical Reading of "The Woodcutter and The Raven" and "The Fig Eater"*, states that "The multiple perspective narration facilitates the conceal any authoritative voice which also provides an opportunity for the writer not to take any responsibility of what is being narrated" (Istiak et al. 125). One of Zahir's favourite writing approaches is to include surreal elements. He blended this interest with his Marxist philosophical stand, resulting in his second collection of short stories, *Dumurkheko Manush O Onnannyo Golpo* (1998), to make room for the genre of magical realism. The stories of this collection were composed between 1991 and 1999 when his contemporary writers were contributing to this genre. Besides, in an interview conducted by Ahmad Mustafa Kamal, Zahir stated that he intentionally incorporated the concept of magical realism into his works, citing Gabriel García Márquez as his inspiration. However, after reading Shahidul Zahir, one would naturally wonder if the reader's understanding of magical realism in Latin literature or Marquez's writing is similar to Zahir's or if there is a slight difference. Any direct response to this query is

not feasible. Therefore, the next section will look into one of his short stories from this collection, *Kathure O Darkaak* (Woodcutter and Raven), to closely inspect his style.

A Close Reading of Zahir's *Kathure O Darkaak*

The captivating tale of Shahidul Zahir, *Kathure O Darkaak* (Woodcutter and Raven), centres on Akalu, a woodcutter, and Tepi, his wife, who reside in the modest village of Baikunthapur in Sirajganj. The narrative delves into the themes of wealth, morality, and matrimony, portraying the deep bond shared by the couple as they navigate a world where they have only each other. However, their lives are tumultuous as crooked individuals exploit Akalu's innocence and sincerity, leading to unjust accusations and deception. Within this 'reality' context, Zahir masterfully operates crows' encounters to include the element of magic. Bangladeshi tradition often interprets different animals as good and bad omens; the black crow is believed to be the latter. Therefore, Zahir incorporates this superstitious belief to depict the couple as plagued by misfortunes from the crows' encounters in their lives, and the birds always appear to follow them. Besides, he blends superstitions to induce magical realism, such as when Akalu goes to a fortune teller to seek help. However, a metamorphosis occurs as the couple realises their intertwined fate with the crows, disclosing the real purpose of the birds' presence in their lives. The significance of the crows becomes apparent when they start living in harmony with one another. However, misfortune does not seem to leave them as the neighbours start envying the couple for their prosperity because of the crows. They tried to hurt both the birds and the couple by setting their house on fire. Zahir skillfully employs instances of bodily suffering to foreshadow impending misfortunes for these individuals.

It is necessary to dissect the narrative structure to understand Zahir's theme of his work. The opening remark of the story is,

"Older residents of Dhaka city may recall that, long ago, Dhaka once became crow-free. At that time, this event, or events, took place for five years. And it began in a village called Baikunthapur" (Zahir 72).²⁴

This story's opening does not follow the traditional literary storytelling approach because, the sentence's lingual structure is fragmented. In contrast, writers usually try to depict a clear picture to the readers initially. However, Zahir incorporates this method to move the readers' attention away from the characters or events and give the theme a floor to flourish. As the narrative progresses, the narrator introduces Akalu and his wife, Tepi. Here, the writer's indifference to the choice of names indicates that he is either careless toward building his characters or trying to bring a broader perspective. Besides, the author breaks the linear narrative structure to demonstrate the essence of universality. Likewise, his approach challenges traditional narrative structures, aligning with post-structuralist principles of Jacques Derrida's concept of the *Freeplay of Structure*. According to Derrida,

"The Center is at the centre of the totality, and yet, since the centre does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its centre elsewhere. The centre is not the centre" (Derrida, 278).²⁵

The way Zahir opens his story effectively supports Derrida's ideas because his fragmented language drives the reader towards a communal totality. In other words, Zahir is trying to build a story that is symbolic of a communal whole. Therefore, Akalu and Tepi represent all the

²⁴ All translations are the author's own, unless otherwise specified.

²⁵ See "Writing and Difference", trans. Alan Bass, London: Routledge

marginalised people of society who are like them. In this sense, Zahir's work comprises a strong Marxist ground in the magical realist genre. He slowly reveals this theme through the flow of events.

One day, Akalu felt lazy and wanted to avoid going to work. His wife insisted he go, telling him the crow had spoken to her. While cutting down a tree, Akalu found a sack of money hidden inside it. Instead of keeping the money to himself, he became concerned and sought legal advice from his friend, a cigarette seller. He takes Akalu to a lawyer. Unfortunately, the "lawyer," the cigarette seller, and even some dacoits claimed the money Akalu had discovered. As a result, the couple was forced to leave their village, believing that the crows were bringing them misfortune. However, the crow did not leave them. After some time, the crows reappeared, and Akalu was exploited by the 'police officer', 'constable', and 'fortune teller'. When Akalu was in jail, a crow brings a gold ring to his prison cell. As a result, bad luck increases, and so does Akalu's punishment. Finally, he decides to live in harmony with the crows. So, he built nests for the crows with bamboo on the house's roof and began rearing crows. After some time, good luck starts knocking at the couple's door. After some time, Akalu breaks the crow's nest and sells seven hundred and forty kilograms of bicycle spokes, iron wire and iron parts. Tepi even finds gold ornaments from the nests. Besides, they quench their hunger by eating crow's eggs. Zahir incorporates the reality of marginal life with the magical appearance of the crow. His story also incorporates folklore of 'crows being bad omens', techniques practised by magical realist writers. Instead of disbelieving or questioning them, those living in that society become aware. They started building nests in the hope of rearing crows.

"The people of the neighbourhood then became concerned of the matter. They were amazed at the business intelligence of this villager and his wife... Many

people of Nayatola Mogbazar area then gave up pigeon rearing and left their pigeon nest and bamboo lofts in the premises empty for black crows" (Zahir 86).²⁶

Zahir skillfully waves the appearance of the crow whenever Akalu is in danger. In addition, he makes his reader perceive that rearing crow is a normal, everyday occurrence through the neighbour's assertive activity. This narration reinforces the idea in the reader's mind that rearing crows could be a valuable tool in the hands of the people of Nayatola, Mogbazar. Likewise, Zahir uses collective experience to construct the magical appearance of the crow as a normal phenomenon. The story's final scene incorporates elements of magical realism as the narrator firmly establishes that crows took Akalu and his wife Tepi away, an incident witnessed by many without surprise. In the last scene, crows carry Akalu and his wife, Tepi, away in front of people's eyes. Moreover, people are not too surprised to witness that. The narrative effectively illustrates the exploitation of two impoverished individuals by various members of society. The black crows are untouchable in society, much like marginalised individuals such as Akalu and his wife. Akalu has been let down by the legal system, specifically by the lawyer of Shirajganj, the police and the constable of Dhaka, and the entire community (the people of the *mahalla*).

To sum up, the story of Akalu and Tepi is not primal in this story. They are mere representatives of simplicity and marginalised people who believe that watching a black crow is auspicious. Likewise, the elements are consciously devised to show Akalu's misfortune to bring out humans' crooked and complex nature. Moreover, *Kathure O Darkaak* narrates the tale of two seemingly innocent marginalised individuals who ended up with nothing, defying the established norms. Correspondingly, Zahir's motive for writing these types of stories can be deduced. The real purpose of the story is not to describe the fate of Akalu-Tepi as a human being. Shahidul Zaheer

²⁶ All translations are author's own, unless otherwise specified.

uses them to reveal the dirty, fabricated reality around them. Hence, he settled them in a village in Sirajganj like aliens without land, without relatives who end up nowhere, as the crows take them away. Likewise, Zahir uses magical realism as a symbolic representation of urban Dhaka and depicts the ridiculousness of everyday life.

Conclusion

This thesis aims to explore the trajectory of magical realism in Bangladeshi literature and evaluate its significance within the region. Bangladesh has a rich literary tradition that ranges from folk poems to epics, and the country's landscape provides an excellent backdrop for magical realism. So, some of the most prominent writers incorporated this literary technique in their works, including Syed Waliullah, Akhteruzzaman Elias, Nasrin Jahan, and Shahidul Zahir. Therefore, the study will delve into the trajectory of magical realism in Bangladesh and provide an in-depth examination of some of the most notable works in Bengali literature, such as Syed Waliullah's *Kado Nodi Kado* (Cry! River, Cry), Akhteruzzaman Elias' *Khowabnama* (Dream Epic), Nasrin Jahan's *Chondrolekhar Jadubistar* (Magical Expansion of Chondrolekha), and Shahidul Zahir's *Kathure O Darkaak* (Woodcutter and Raven). Therefore, this thesis is a graph of magical realism in Bangladeshi literature that offers to find Bangladeshi magical realist writers' inspiration and their way of utilising the technique.

The early section shows that most magical realist works were produced in Bangladesh from 1991 to 1999. However, many notable authors attempted the style much earlier. Syed Shamsul Haque and Shahid Ali's works provide a glimpse.

Bangladesh's first successful magical realist work is Syed Waliullah's *Kado Nodi Kado*. His themes revolved around 'social realism'. However, he did not provide any historical entanglements. He utilised the 'personification' of the river Bankal to infuse magical elements in his text.

In contrast to Waliullah, Akhteruzzaman Elias included a robust history of resistance of the North Bengali people to depict the social reality of the rural Bengali individuals. He selected the context of pre-British resistance, namely, 'The Fakir Sannyasi Movement' and 'The Tebhaga Movement', for the setting of his story. Therefore, his *Khowabnama* is a historical document of North Bengal. In addition, Elias utilises myths, legends and superstitious beliefs rooted in this soil to incorporate magical elements.

It is important to note that both Waliullah and Elias' plots were biased toward the rural setting of Bangladesh. In this case, Nasrin Jahan furthered their attempts by blending both writers' techniques in her novella, *Chondrolekhar Jadubistar*. Her protagonist is a queen of a village. However, she aligns the political turmoils of Hossain Muhammod Ershad with the uprisings that were taking place in Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka. Besides, her magical elements resonate with the Bhatiyali folktales and legends of the Mymensingh region. She incorporated the folktales of Behula-Lokkhindor and deity Mansa to set a fantastical tone in her novel.

Including personification and the blend of myths, legends and superstitious beliefs. Moreover, all three writers' plots revolved around a central character. For Waliullah, Hakeem Mustoafa's existentialist crisis was pivotal in forming the central plot. For Elias, it was Tamij and the five generations of his family. Jahan is the first to introduce a female protagonist, Chondrolekha. However, their setting still lacked the geographical location of the capital city, Dhaka, where many Bangladeshi people find their livelihood.

Therefore, Shahidul Zahir takes the lead in compensating for their shortcomings. His themes depict the struggle of the marginalised, people who are often left out by other writers. Therefore, Zahir utilises magical realism to symbolise the class struggle of the labour-class people. Besides,

he incorporates fragmented narration and collective narrative voice to construct a universal theme.

To sum up, this thesis has meticulously followed the development of magical realism in Bangladeshi literature, uncovering how Bangladeshi literature writers use this genre as a potent instrument to negotiate the nation's complex socio-political realities, cultural identities, and historical legacies. Through critical analysis of some Bangladeshi literary works, this investigation sheds light on the distinct combination of magical and realistic components in Bangladeshi narratives. It becomes evident that magical realism will always be a vital and dynamic genre in Bangladeshi literature, providing authors with fresh and powerful approaches to the complicated issues facing their community.

In the end, this study unlocks the door to investigate more research in modern world literature while highlighting the significance of appreciating the rich tapestry of Bangladeshi literary traditions.

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