

**Magic & Mindscapes: A Psychological Approach to Magical
Realism in Selected Works from Humayun Ahmed's *Himu* Series**

By

Sajia Afsara

ID: 22303051

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

The Department of English and Humanities

BRAC University

January, 2026

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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:

Sajia Afsara

(22303051)

Approval

The thesis titled “Magic & Mindscapes: A Psychological Approach to Magical Realism in Selected Works from Humayun Ahmed’s *Himu* Series” submitted by Sajia Afsara (ID: 22303051) of Fall 2025 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelors of Arts in English on January 2026.

Examining Committee:

Supervisor:

(Member)
Dr. Sabiha Huq
Professor,
Department of English and Humanities
BRAC University

Departmental Head:

(Chair)
Professor Firdous Azim
Professor and Chairperson,
Department of English and Humanities
BRAC University

Dedication

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother, the iron lady and coconut. Without you, Ma, I would not be in this university, nor in this position, accomplishing this thesis. I got the idea for this research from a conversation with you. Most of it has been sincerely yours. Thank you and I love you, Ma.

I would like to recall my father on this propitious moment as I do every other ordinary moment. This paper is dedicated to my beloved late father. May your soul rest in peace for eternity.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to you, dear husband, because of whom I could complete this work. I acknowledge every sacrifice, the hardship and continued support from you. I dedicate and convey my deepest gratitude, respect, and love to you.

Lastly, I dedicate this paper to me for having completed this work even after enormous obstacles.

Again, all my efforts and hard work on your bequeath, Ma.

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge the continued support and guidance provided by my supervisor, Dr. Sabiha Huq, professor at the department of English and Humanities at BRAC University. I would like to convey my sincere gratitude for supervising me and introducing me to various aspects of literature that I was unaware of and for teaching me to see *Himu* through a different lens.

Next, I convey my deepest gratitude to my friend Seetun Mahyan. You are the “friend in need” and a friend indeed. It started perhaps as a figurative need but turned into a symbolic need to me. Without you, I doubt if I could have completed this thesis this well and on time. Jajak Allahu Khairan for continuously staying by my side throughout the journey. I acknowledge all your contributions in completing this thesis. Thank you so much for editing this paper so beautifully without losing the essence of it. Thank you for helping me in translating as well. My endless gratitude for continuously motivating me. In a Humayunian style– “1 ta pakhi 4 ta pakhi 3 ta pakhi.”

I convey my heartiest gratitude to all the faculty members from whom I have learned a lot, and received their support in shaping the present Sajia. On this propitious occasion, I offer my special thanks to Sumaiya Tasnim ma'am, lecturer at the department of English and Humanities at BRAC University, for her unwavering support and motivation. Thank you, miss, for believing in me undoubtedly when I doubted myself. Thank you so much for the precious time you took out for me and for hearing me out.

My heartfelt thanks to Dr. Md. Habibur Rahman, professor at the department of Bangla at Kushtia Islamic University. Sir, you are one of those great people I have encountered till now. I

can never repay you for the way you talked to me, guided, treated, and took on the hassle to collect sources for me. Kindly accept my acknowledgement and gratitude.

Further, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Dr. Mohammad Golam Mowla (Ahmed Mowla), researcher, author, and professor at the department of Bangla at Comilla University. I remain indebted to you, sir for sending me your book when I was in dire need but unable to find it. Making time from your busy schedule and sending the book illustrates your generosity. I sincerely acknowledge your contributions.

I sincerely offer my gratitude to professor Md. Farhad Hossain, Chairman and Head of the department of English at Mohammadpur Kendriya College, for introducing me to professor Dr. Rahman Habib. I thank you, sir, for your kind gesture and the invaluable help you provided.

I extend my earnest appreciation to Dr. Din Mohammad Sumon Rahman, professor and dean of School of Social Sciences at University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, for providing me with his incredible essay which was unavailable and inaccessible to me. You took the hassle to email it to me even when you did not even know me. Your writing inspires me towards deeper study, sir.

I convey my heartiest gratitude to my eldest maternal uncle Dr. Sirajul Hoque, professor (rtd.) at the department of Soil, Water, and Environment at Dhaka University, for the affection he holds towards me and for helping me find two incredible scholarly sources which I have broadly used in this paper.

I proffer my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. MD Sajidul Islam, Education Specialist, UNICEF, Bangladesh. Sir, according to me and my mother, there are only a few individuals as humane as

you on this earth. I am indebted to your benevolence. Thank you so much for your thoughtful gesture of introducing me to Professor Farhad.

Again, my deepest indebtedness to my mother for introducing me and for suggesting the people I could contact to get academic sources. It all started with you and took a new direction through you, Ma!

Lastly, I put forward a special thanks to everyone I have failed to mention for contributing to shape this thesis.

Abstract

Humayun Ahmed's (1948-2012) acclaimed character Himu has been a controversial figure to readers and literary critics since its very inception. Critics like Din Mohammad Sumon Rahman state that Himu is a central figure in Ahmed's literary tendencies which is present in almost all of his works, and thus, the judgement of Himu is the judgement of Humayun Ahmed. Scholars like Mohammad Azam mention that many Bangladeshi scholars have created a collective barrier in reading Ahmed's writings by labeling him a popular author instead of delving deep into his writings. These critics consider Himu as someone 'insane', much like Himu's uncle (Badol's father) or his friend's father Minister Mobarak Hossain does. Critics like Azam, Rahman, and others highlight the intentions of Himu, the maverick; intentions that are advanced through his peculiar activities, psychological control and supernatural power that influence the characters and capture the readers' attention in a realistic setting behind the veil of an itinerant ceaseless traverser wandering around strangely and indulging in meaningless activities. This paper imparts critical insights into magical realism as explored in Humayun Ahmed's *Himu*, through the titular character who is someone with magical attributes indulging in apparently strange activities and exercising strong psychological control over the other characters. Himu has kept a mark on Humayun's readers too. This paper offers a close examination of four novels from the *Himu* series, *Dorjar Opashe* (1992), *Angul Kata Joglu* (2005), *Himu Remand E* (2008), and *Himu Ebong Harvard Ph.D. Boltu Bhai* (2011) to show how through Himu's distinct psychological approach, certain social issues are unravelled and justice is imposed through punishment. This thesis aims to fortify this approach that helps establish magical realism and how such a technique cements Himu as Humayun Ahmed's mouthpiece.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Humayun Ahmed (1948-2012) is a Bengali author who produced over 300 books and is widely adored by countless fans. Syed Shamsul Haque, a multifaceted Bengali author said in the preface of *Humayun Ahmed Hamelin a Banshiwala* that, “Humayun was a storytelling magician, weaver of dreams, and a voice of reason to the nation in different contexts. I feel the urge to compare him to the Pied Piper of Hamelin” (Humayun n. pag., my translation). A name that appears almost invariably alongside Humayun Ahmed’s is that of Himu, a character he created to become permanent in the readers’ consciousness. This character is one that the writer breathed life into in the *Himu* book series, which has 21 novels. In an interview published in the book *Basanta Bilap*, Humayun Ahmed said that he continued the *Himu* series out of admiration (Ahmed 135).

Humayun Ahmed illustrated Himu as an unemployed youth traversing the streets of Dhaka city “barefooted” wearing a typical yellow punjabi that has no pockets. The author presented him as a dissident. Himu with his sharp intuitive power often perplexes and startles the people around him. He is a wanderer who excels all societal barriers having a way into the hearts of people from all spheres of society. Through Himu, Humayun Ahmed also wittily unfolded multiple recurring social issues that we overlook in our everyday life and how Himu tactfully tries to mitigate them. This unraveling is done wondrously through the author’s use of the technique of magical realism. This study will follow the method of literary analysis and bring out how magical realism helps unfold the serious societal issues in *Himu*.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Humayun Ahmed's unique interpretation of magical realism, its use in the unravelling of social issues in the *Himu* book series and how the protagonist Himu and various psychological elements in the stories enable this, are topics yet to be explored by academic scholars and lead to noticeable research gaps. Globally, magical realism has been adopted by post modernist writers throughout centuries prominently based on varied social, political, historical, and cultural contexts. This technique was implemented by many authors ubiquitously to tell stories to convey deep rooted flaws of society, its structure, and its inhabitants. There is dearth research regarding the use of magical realism in Bengali literature overall. Hence, naturally, there is a dirge in material that examines Ahmed's specific rendition of magical realism in the *Himu* novels as well.

The problem can be further understood from reading *Humayun Ahmed Path Poddhoti O Tatporjo* by Mohammad Azam where the author highlights Ahmed's writings as having been excluded from academic research. He says that if a thesis is to be conducted on Bangla language or Bangladeshi regional novels, scholars would hesitate to consider Humayun Ahmed's writings as a part of their 'serious' theses. He says, through academic background research, that Ahmed's writings should have been a must for conducting theses. Azam highlights prejudice regarding "fame" in terms of literature as popular literature is considered to be commoners' literature that is unworthy of comparison with the prestigious literary canon or the western literary canon, to be specific. He further adds that all serious discussion mostly surrounds 'modernism', to be more specific western modernism. For instance, theories like surrealism, Oedipus complex, stream of consciousness, absurdity, magical realism, existentialism, and so on, are conventionally studied in the prized texts. Any writer that veers away slightly from the conventions of such trends, such as Humayun Ahmed himself, is not regarded with the same reverence.

Fitting into these sectors allows writers to be accepted into the canon that often overlooks the deeper context of the writing. Azam adds that Humayun Ahmed writes in a way that fits the characteristics of ‘art conceals art’ which means that Ahmed’s important and serious writings can be read as simple stories as well. Against the established Bengali literary canon, reading Humayun Ahmed’s writings is not easy. His writings are distant from the trends of Bengali literary history. Thus, the similarities that Humayun Ahmed shares in his writings with the other authors are overshadowed by the overwhelming dissimilarities. The novel series *Himu* is no exception. Humayun Ahmed as per his distinct narrative style of storytelling has produced the fictional character Himu where the central character is portrayed as an apparent maverick using whom the author tries to bring forth various societal predicaments that the readers tend to neglect. Humayun Ahmed’s use of stylistic elements, narration, language, character development, plot, and others successfully fits into the characteristics of popular literature. The unconventional character Himu can be the indicator of popular fiction but the deep messages behind this apparent aimless wanderer conveys the seriousness of this art.

This novel series can be read from the lens of multiple ideologies like Marxism, feminism, surrealism, existentialism, and magical realism as well. Adopting the western literary canon, Humayun Ahmed too has implemented many of the theories in his writings, particularly in the *Himu* series. Although some research has been conducted on Humayun Ahmed’s *Himu* series and other writings, his use of magical realism as a fundamental tool in the character Himu to unfold diverse recurring societal issues that readers have knowledge of but overlook is yet to be explored. There is research yet to be conducted on the novel series by scholars, especially with magical realism in the center. This thesis attempts to explore the use of magical realism as a tool to fortify societal flaws through one of Humayun Ahmed’s most famous novel series, *Himu*,

endeavouring to initiate and create a foundation of work in this area in hopes of inspiring further similar research in the future as well.

1.2 Rationale

This thesis tries to look at how Humayun Ahmed has incorporated magical realism in the *Himu* series to point out various recurring social issues existing in Bangladesh that people in general tend to overlook. This paper attempts to trace how Humayun Ahmed, using the character of Himu as his spokesperson, sees society, its structure, and rebels against it. It is said that Humayun Ahmed attracted readers in Bangladesh through his incredible writings which are accessible and easy to understand, especially with the *Himu* series. Although he is a popular writer, his writings have not been explored sufficiently from an academic point of view. Many times, *Himu* is read simply for entertainment but the serious themes behind the story remain unexplored from an academic lens. Although some papers have been written on *Himu*, they are limited in number and cover similar social concerns.

However, the use of magical realism in *Himu* through which Humayun Ahmed tried to present his agendas is yet to be explored. In fact, most of the aforementioned primary texts remain unexplored by scholarly papers. Furthermore, this thesis highlights how the development of magical realism in the *Himu* series unfolds with the course of time. This thesis portrays how Humayun Ahmed's way of using magical realism takes a new and different approach from the pioneering bevy of writers and how Ahmed adopts a narrative form of magical realism that plays with psychology.

1.3 Background

Humayun Ahmed remains one of the most celebrated writers in Bangladesh as of today. Even after thirteen years since his departure, his books remain on the top of the many lists of bestsellers, not only at the Ekushey Book Fair, organized by Bangla Academy, but also throughout the year in different book houses such as Rokomari, one of the biggest book suppliers in Bangladesh. From the ratings of readers on different platforms, it is clear that among the other series produced by the author, *Himu* has the highest ratings. Even today, readers, especially the youth, try to adopt the unique features of Himu. Readers not only from inside the country, but also outside the country tend to wear Himu's typical yellow punjabi wandering around barefooted as if some of them are in search of life. Whether it be through the search of life or doing any good work, often a huge number of youth tend to adopt Himu's attributes. Some try to liken themselves to the character by emulating his external appearance and the others that are not able to do the same, take inspiration from and imbibe his most defining characteristic, his intuition and wisdom.

Humayun Ahmed writes in a lucid manner that is easily readable and digestible. Many scholars have asserted that Humayun Ahmed did not 'write' stories, he 'told' stories through his writings. The use of the language, tone, and humour are prominent features of his writings which are predominantly present in his novel series *Himu*. Himu's distinct feature of having strong intuitive powers make him appealing to the readers, their souls are set free from the body, to be specific, from societal norms and boundaries, and can overcome earthly boundaries and have the freedom of doing whatever they want but in reality remain unsuccessful following the societal hegemonized structure. Through the use of magical realism it becomes possible for writers and scholars to comment or unfold multiple socio-political, historical, cultural flaws, and so on.

Ahmed has wittily used this technique to bring forth existing concerns and issues going on in the Bangladeshi society through the fictional character Himu by giving him strong intuitive powers.

Having read the series out of pleasure, the researcher's mother one day drew attention to how lucidly Humayun Ahmed is able to write something that does not require much attention and yet grabs the interest of the reader, especially once the reader finishes reading the *Himu* series and how easily the author brings forth various social flaws through the series. This statement got embedded into the researcher's mind and she started to think from a different lens. The researcher formerly only read for pleasure but after her riveting discussion with her mother, she was able to enjoy the writing whilst also being able to critically analyse the series. This was the inception and after seeing different visceral reactions in the researcher's own family on *Himu*, the researcher was inspired to dig deeper and conduct this thesis.

Humayun Ahmed's writings reflect the very distinct traits of Himu. The way Humayun Ahmed portrays the fact that a human soul is unfettered through Himu, who does not follow any earthly apparatuses, the author too, does not follow the established formula of literary writings. The very structure of a novel can be a prominent example of this. One of the very first characteristics of a novel set by scholars is that it maintains a certain length, and this is a rule Humayun Ahmed breaks like the rules that his character Himu breaks. Another example can be the use of the genre used in this novel and the subject matter of this study which is magical realism. Humayun Ahmed breaks the conventions of magical realism slightly by creating a different form using his narrative with the help of human psychology.

Many critics and readers often derogatorily label Humayun Ahmed as a "bajari lekhok" or mainstream writer of pop fiction since his writings do not follow the conventions of literary

work predominantly (Azam 16). His writings are written in comparatively ordinary, simple language that can be seen in the *Himu* series excessively. The fact that his simple, approachable texts give readers a source of escapism reflects one of the characteristics of pop fiction and this is present in the *Himu* series as well. To criticize, scholars and readers often bring examples of the novel series, labelling the titular character as a ‘psychopath’, doing strange things without meaning.

The argument that this paper intends to establish is that being a mainstream writer or “bajari lekhok” is not actually a negative quality rather a quality that not every writer possesses and that the *Himu* series actually contains serious subject matters that need attention. Starting from 1990 to 2011, this series has unfolded varied social flaws that are still prevalent around Bangladesh. Furthermore, Himu, instead of being a strange psychopath, is actually innately very humane. This paper makes an effort to show how Ahmed is able to maintain simplicity and accessibility whilst also infusing depth and addressing difficult subjects in his books and he is able to do this most successfully through the character of Himu.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

Magical realism is a literary style and genre that presents fantastical elements in realistic settings portraying it as a usual phenomenon. It is a technique which blends the boundaries of the real and the surreal. This artistic framework functions by extending supernatural elements or phenomena into a real world setting mixed with actual facts in such a way that the readers do not even question the strangeness. “A magical realist text will treat supernatural occurrences as if they were perfectly natural” (Warnes and Sasser 1). Post World War II and the holocaust, writers

across the globe employed this style in their writing often to comment on multiple recurring issues mostly revolving around socio-political flaws, religious connotations, corruption, misuse of power, and so on.

Coined by the German art critic Franz Roh in 1925 to delineate post-expressionist painting, the term “magical realism” established its place in literature by the hands of the Italian author Massimo Bontempelli to denote modernist narratives (Camyd-Freixas 3). Rooted and popular in Latin American folklore, the ‘Boom’ period of literature fostered this technique to make its way into the world of literature by the twentieth century and spread its wings around the world with a diverse range of context. Pioneered by Latin American writers like Alejo Carpentier and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, “magic realism” was adopted by authors like Salman Rushdie, Tony Morrison, Laura Esquivel, Emily Bronte, and others. One of the magical realist authors of Bangladesh, Humayun Ahmed, is an extraordinary writer who wittily incorporated this style in many of his writings. The *Himu* series is a notable work where along with diversified literary techniques and themes, magic realism has been pre-eminently applied.

The technique, magic realism, seamlessly collapses the line between the supernatural and the mundane. The supernatural is presented in a very realistic setting that helps blend the real and surreal. For instance, the *Himu* series is set in the capital of Bangladesh, Dhaka. The description of different areas of Dhaka city is mentioned with the existing description of the areas and sometimes of areas around the country which actually exist in the real world and allow readers to experience the very quotidian, mundane setting. Humayun Ahmed’s *Himu* is a ceaseless barefooted wanderer pondering around the city. While walking on the streets of Dhaka, his very own city, he brings forth various societal barriers and inconsistencies that remain unnoticed in front of the citizen’s naked eyes. Fitting into the characteristics of a saunterer who roams around

observing the society, Himu can be seen as a flaneur character. Flaneur is a French term referring to a wanderer observing the society. What sets a flaneur apart from a visitor or traveller of a place is the fact that they are often intimately attached to and are natives to their city. Himu himself says, “I walk all day. My path does not end. I am on a journey without a set destination that is not supposed to have an end” (68, my translation). Flaneur characters are able to observe social goings-on because they are connected integrally to the place they belong to. They are not mere visitors or local inhabitants. This helps the author to illustrate the ‘real’ aspect of magic realism.

Shedding light on the ‘magical’ aspect of the style comes from the ordinary yet complex character, Himu, who has access to supernatural elements. Himu has strong intuitive powers. In many novels of this series, the narrator reassures that he has strong intuitive powers which gives him access to some incidents from the past and sometimes allows him to foresee some events that will happen sometime in the future. Himu claims, “I have some supernatural powers. I can foretell it sometimes” (53, my translation). Many times, this power helps him escape the punishment set by law enforcement. For instance, in *Dorjar Opashe*, when caught by the police for simply enjoying the full moon in an unusual manner and being labeled as a “drug addict” by the then Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, Mr. Mobarak Hossain, Himu successfully perplexed the police officer by mentioning the sickness of the officer’s wife out of nowhere (91). Multiple incidents revolving around his intuitive powers have helped him foretell, grab attention to people around him and the readers, escape societal punishment, and so on.

Now, Himu is an ordinary youth aged around twenty-five to twenty-six. He possesses some complexity in his characteristics. Often, he contradicts himself. He says, “I continuously lie. People in need do not startle me” (32, my translation). On one hand, he says that people’s

sufferings do not affect him whilst on the other, his actions say that he has a heart that feels for the sufferers. Himu never ages. This series follows a non-linear and cyclical form that leaves the readers with a fluid sense of time, which is a key characteristic of magical realism. The author ends a lot of the books in the *Himu* series in an open-ended situation allowing the readers to form their own interpretations. Also, many times the novels start in media res, in other words, they start in the middle of an event or a dreamlike situation which is only explained later on in the novel.

Himu is a free spirit, seemingly roaming around the streets of Dhaka aimlessly, but delving deeper into his sayings and actions, it actually feels as though Humayun Ahmed brings forth different discourses, i.e., social issues, faulty law enforcement, religious dogma, class distinction, power abuse, corruption, and so on through him. Evidence from Humayun Ahmed's own statements portray how he himself considers Himu to be his mouthpiece and how he utilises Himu to convey his own opinions on multiple social discourses. For instance, in an interview with Sajjad Sharif, Humayun Ahmed mentioned that when a writer starts writing a plot, the characters basically reflect the characteristics or beliefs of the author. Ahmed further adds that all writers are "religious preachers" that spread their beliefs and values through their works. He elaborates by revealing his own fundamental humanistic beliefs that he intends to spread religiously through his works, especially *Himu* (Ahmed 115-116).

The aforementioned core idea that magical realism can act as sociopolitical commentary is evident in the fact that while wandering around the city of Dhaka, Himu brings forth different deep rooted societal issues that need strong attention but remain unnoticed by the people. He frequently ends up in the police station for breaking the rules of society. However, he does not feel confronted or threatened by law enforcement. He is beyond being disciplined and punished.

Following Michel Foucault's theory, Himu can be judged by being placed within the panopticon. Foucault highlighted the way societies punish and control people's lives using a disciplinary institution through surveillance, normalization, punishment, and domination of daily life. In the 19th century, the form of punishment changed from brutal and public display of execution to imprisonment, as a tool to control an individual's mind and behaviour instead of the physical properties. To embed discipline into individuals, institutions like prisons, schools, and others are created to entail rules, timetables, and constant observation.

Foucault further illustrates how this idea of surveillance is embedded into people's lives to create self-regulation to practice power dynamics with the help of Jeremy Bentham's design of the Panopticon, a jail where captives are under continuous watch without even knowing. Power works invisibly through these institutions to shape the way people live, think, dress, or work in the name of discipline to avoid punishment. However, Himu does not follow these rules and regulations. He is portrayed as an indisciplined character who rejects these conventional institutions like employment, education, marriage, wealth, and so on. He does not even wear shoes and his punjabi does not have any pockets where he can keep any sort of wealth. He is uncontrollable by the rules and regulations of society and its institutions. For example, his aversion to any means that ensure a stable and sustainable livelihood. People around him like Badol's father in *Mayurakkhi*, the owner of Mansur Group of Company in *Angul Kata Joglu*, and others have offered him jobs with handsome salaries but he refuses to accept. Hence, he has been subjected to ample criticism by many readers for his strangeness, unconventional appearance, and apparent bizarre activities. Himu's ability to forgo societal restrictions and expectations is deeply linked and established through the use of magical realism.

Foucault, in his book *Discipline and Punish* (1975), highlights that power is not superior to man. If willing, people can reject these institutions without the fear of surveillance. Himu is an example of this. He resists power and control, ignores surveillance, disrupts the disciplinary societal structure, and so on. He does not follow convention. Foucault talked about conventional humans but Himu is different since he breaks convention. The self-policing that occurs among individuals in a modern state is clearly absent in Humayun Ahmed's Himu. Through the genre of magical realism, these society-defying characteristics in Himu become more prominent. In a setting that straddles both the real and surreal, Himu unravels multiple problems going on in the Bangladeshi society and its structure without feeling fearful or threatened by the controlling state apparatuses.

Magical realism in the *Himu* series allows miracles to happen and Himu reassures his connection to a mysterious power for which nobody can control him. He is not affiliated with any structural job, yet he manages to survive. He is often caught by the police but is unfearful of law enforcement and somehow always forgoes imprisonment. His intuition sets an aura of magic that works against the 'real' in our everyday life. Societal regimentation and all these state apparatuses do not work for Himu. Humayun Ahmed successfully shows that a human soul is unfettered and nothing can control it, as it has established its connection to the metaphysical world.

1.5 Objectives

1.5.1 General Objectives

This thesis aims to perform an extensive analysis of Humayun Ahmed's *Dorjar Opashe* (1992), *Angul Kata Joglu* (2005), *Himu Remand E* (2008), and *Himu Ebong Harvard Ph.D.*

Boltu Bhai (2011), novels from the Himu series, to unfurl how by using magical realism as a prolific tool, the author brings forth varied interminable cultural, historical, socio-political, and other issues through the central character, Himu, portraying him as the author's spokesperson. Magical realism, a post modernist literary genre, has been used by writers worldwide for over the centuries shaping its form based on different socio-political, historical, and cultural contexts.

Around the world, this technique was used by different authors who have used it to tell stories that would otherwise have been difficult to convey in settings devoid of magical realism. The “boom” period that the literary world faced adopted this style to criticize existing unrest worldwide. Stepping into the Indian subcontinent, this style formed a different form of storytelling by authors like Syed Waliullah, Akhteruzzaman Elias, Shahidul Zahir, and many others whose writings could easily fit into the earlier and predominant structure of magical realism presented by scholars like Wendy B. Faris. Humayun Ahmed, too applied this literary genre into his writings, especially in the novel series *Himu*.

However, Humayun Ahmed's use of magical realism is different from the national and international writers. This is because the continuity of events, to be specific, one incident cannot be understood without context or without the idea from another. The magic in one scene cannot be understood without understanding incidents from the past and the future. This is a unique feature that separates Ahmed's writings from both Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Syed Waliullah's *Kado Nodi Kado*. The magic and the wonder of Ahmed's Himu is apparent in how the incidents are all connected and they are all somehow very elegantly entwined. One incident cannot be understood in isolation whereas in other texts by Marquez and Waliullah, isolated incidents can be interpreted or understood easily and the use of magical realism as well. Himu's magical realism is very subtle in the way that it is interconnected. The

magic presented by Ahmed is not clear until the readers read and understand the sequences of the events.

Another prominent aspect that distinguishes Ahmed's Himu from the other pioneering magic realists is the portrayal of psychology. The existence of the psychological state, the ambiguity infused through the human psychology differentiates this series from Marquez's and Waliullah's writings. Besides, Ahmed presented the actual setting where he illustrated the Dhaka city, however, Marquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* illustrated the fictional village named "Macondo" (Marquez 8) and Waliullah in *Kado Nodi Kado* demonstrated the fictional village of "Kumurdanga" (Waliullah 11). Both Marquez and Waliullah's setting are fictional but with realistic descriptions with magical elements present throughout the texts. Whereas, Ahmed depicted the exact places that exists in real life and this sets Ahmed's Himu apart from the other pioneers.

This thesis endeavours some excerpts by both Bangladeshi and international authors' to explore the implementation of magical realism, its features, and how Humayun Ahmed has moulded the literary technique that is magical realism in the texts mentioned above. This thesis refers to how Humayun Ahmed has personalized the technique and created a distinctive form of magical realism of his own that cannot be likened to any other writers' work. He allows the readers to rediscover and reinterpret magical realism through his own rendition of the fundamental elements of the genre through the Himu series. Using a distinct narrative style in which the magical realism hinges critically upon the portrayal of human psychology, the author tried to point out multiple societal flaws that the readers know of, yet, often overlook in their daily lives.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives

Specific objectives of the thesis are the following:

1. To see how magical realism plays an imperative role in portraying diverse societal predicaments existing in Bangladesh and its residents
2. To evaluate Himu, the protagonist himself, as a tool of magical realism
3. Starting from the late twentieth century to the early twenty first century, tracing the development of the use of magical realism throughout the novel series, *Himu*
4. To explore the psychological aspects being used by Humayun Ahmed to establish the distinct way of implementing the magical realism in the *Himu* series prominently

1.6 Research Questions

This thesis attempts to resolve the following questions:

1. How is Humayun Ahmed's presentation of magical realism different from that of the other pioneering magic realists?
2. How do psychological aspects in Himu's interactions with other characters help strengthen Humayun Ahmed's iteration of magical realism? How does Himu create a moral hegemony through his influence?
3. How does Humayun Ahmed unravel social problems with the use of magical realism through Himu?
4. What are the discourses Humayun Ahmed tried to portray through the titular character of the novel series, Himu? How is Himu presented as the mouthpiece of Humayun Ahmed?

1.7 Research Methodology

This paper entirely contemplates a qualitative research approach, proffering novels from the series *Himu* by Humayun Ahmed. Humayun Ahmed is a widely celebrated Bangladeshi author. He wrote over two hundred novels among which the *Himu* series has twenty-one books. Of those twenty-one books, four have been chosen after close examination to fortify the arguments of this paper. They are *Dorjar Opashe* (1992), *Angul Kata Joglu* (2005), *Himu Remand E* (2008), and *Himu Ebong Harvard Ph.D. Boltu Bhai* (2011). Employing in-depth research, these four books have been chosen carefully to explore the themes of magical realism which have been used to present various social predicaments. This study focused on these four books also with the intention of showing how with time, the titular character along with the novels employ and develop the features of magical realism. Humayun Ahmed's stylistic presentation was distinctive from other magic realist writers. Keeping pace with some of the prominent features of magical realism discovered by the theorists, Humayun Ahmed portrayed the psychological features to establish the magical part of the respective genre. To strengthen its claim, this paper further uses Mayurakkhi (1990), the very first novel from the *Himu* series as a metatextual reference.

These four primary texts were consciously chosen for a number of reasons following a thorough reading of all of the books from this series. Afterwards, the researcher listed down the various societal frailties that the author brings forth in the novels. Parallely, the researcher noticed the development of the use of magical realism over time. Among the multiple predicaments presented by the author, a large number relate to the power holders, specifically members involved in law enforcement e.g., policemen, RAB, and so on. *Dorjar Opashe* was chosen because it displays both the policemen and a minister, two different power holding

positions in one text, portraying the main traits of the abusers of power. Additionally, this text reveals the subtle and gradual use of magical realism.

Moving further, *Angul Kata Joglu* and *Himu Remand E* were chosen because these two texts share some similarities and also significant dissimilarities. Both of the texts highlight terrorists like Joglu and Ayna Mazid. However, Himu is able to treat them differently by showing how criminals like Joglu can be treated with compassion whereas ones like Ayna Mazid are brought under nature's remand by Himu. In both of the texts, Himu identifies characters that resemble some of the criminals' loved ones. In *Angul Kata Joglu*, he brings along Shuvro, a child of similar age to Joglu's son Babu. In *Himu Remand E*, he brings forth Bakul, a girl with exactly the same name, age and pet dog as the sister that Ayna Mazid killed. The pattern is similar but with time the use of the genre develops.

Moreover, the reason behind choosing *Himu Ebong Harvard Ph.D. Boltu Bhai* is that this is the very last novel of the series in which the author captures the heinous crime of sexual assault that goes unpunished in Bangladeshi society. Besides tracing the growth of the genre, Himu sheds light on the severe issues that need to be acknowledged and how the innocent are punished and the criminals are not. When the faulty law fails to serve justice, Himu applies other means to punish the wrongdoers.

This paper consults magical realist writings and theories linked to discover the application of magical realism and its distinctive form put in the novel series. The primary texts were selected keeping in mind both the application of magical realism and the different social issues that this literary technique helped shed light on. After reading every text from the novel series, these four primary texts were selected carefully as these texts offer various social

predicaments illustrating a development in the use of magical realism and strong psychological elements. These excerpts were chosen based on definitions and characteristics of magical realist texts denoted by many magical realist scholars, primarily Erik Camayd-Freixas's essay titled "Theories of Magical Realism" where the author highlighted the formation, features, and nature of magical realism in different regional contexts and also where the author mentions, "They narrated from inside the protagonist's mind in order to express, either a poetic view of the world and the self, or else a psychological and existential search for authenticity in a lurid world, viewed through the distorting prism of an alienated individual, who nevertheless succeeded in exposing disquieting existential truths" (Camayd-Freixas 5).

The principal method of this study adopts a 'close textual analysis' process, a conscientious procedure of deep and comprehensive textual probe by annotation. This research follows a close reading of the novel series *Himu* to analyse the characters especially Himu, its plots, themes, point of view, narrative strategy, tone, and various stylistic elements portrayed in the selected primary texts which manifested many of the characteristics of magical realism mentioned throughout this paper including and emphasizing the abovementioned attribute. To better understand the technique and its application, other Bangladeshi and international writers' work like *Kado Nodi Kado* by Syed Waliullah, excerpts from Gabriel Garcia Marquez's writings and other author's texts were read throughout the research.

To establish the comprehensive subject matter presented in the novels, this paper confers literary analyses of books, journal articles, book reviews, souvenirs, memoir, newspaper articles and so on. This paper additionally incorporates videos, book chapters, and interviews concerning the *Himu* series and the author Humayun Ahmed to fortify its claims. Followed by the theoretical framework, historical overview, and so on, these resources scrutinized the primary texts by

offering critical perspectives on the panoramic subject matter of this paper. Data collected from primary sources and secondary sources have been analysed and cross examined to provide a clear picture of the use and development of magical realism in Humayun Ahmed's popular novel series *Himu* through which the author depicted various recurring social problems surrounding the distinctive cultural, historical, socio-political strand, and so on.

1.8 Scopes and Limitations

This thesis employs an in-depth analysis of both the primary and secondary sources. It closely examines the four selected texts from the novel series *Himu* by Humayun Ahmed to scrutinize its objectives. The famous novel series *Himu* includes 21 novels, among which only four have been analysed in this study with a primary focus to trace the revelation of different existing societal flaws with the use of magical realism. Though a few more books from the series have scholarly research, most of the novels remain unexplored by scholars. Thus, the rest of the novels still remain uncovered by intellectuals.

Further, this paper offers its primary focus revolving around the theories of magical realism besides the supporting theories. The other texts are yet to be discovered from the lens of magical realism to further unfold the various themes illustrated in the novel series. Additionally, the scholarly papers that are available have explored materialism, societal exploitation, power dynamics, and so on. This series has plenty of potential to be explored by scholars such as feminist point of view, postmodern narratives, and others.

Moreover, the use of different literary elements, the use of yellow colour of Himu's punjabi, an empirical study to trace the human conscience caused after reading the series Himu, characteristics of popular literature, mention of varied food connected to the Bengali identity,

characteristics of other recurring characters such as Himu's cousin Badol, his "apparent beloved" Rupa, his aunts and uncles' characters, and so on can be considered to be studied. Besides these huge possibilities, there are some pressing limitations of this study. Humayun Ahmed's writings being lucid, comparatively short, and full of humour probably have left his writings aside from academic studies. Thus, there is a significantly lesser number of scholarly sources that can be used to conduct this study. Finding academic sources is quite difficult. The limited number of papers, books, or scholarly sources that have been written on Himu or Humayun Ahmed's writings are not available to buy or borrow since the publishers do not print them frequently. For instance, *Humayun Ahmed Shrishtishilotar Shilposutro* by Dr. Ahmed Mawla and many other books.

Lastly, even with endless hard work and efforts, this thesis has some confines. In spite of efforts being made to stay as loyal to the original text as possible, the translated excerpts inevitably lack the essence of the original. Even so, some counteractive techniques like proficient peer checking have been integrated to combat the translation loss. Besides, the researcher's exposition might convey the potential subjective bias due to the kind of textual probe. Nonetheless, this paper has ventured to offer ample textual references filled with facts to lessen possible bigotry to perpetuate a stabilized viewpoint.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Magical Realism Globally and Locally

According to Erik Camayd-Freixas, writers that utilised magical realism “narrated from inside the protagonist’s mind in order to express, either a poetic view of the world and the self, or else a psychological and existential search for authenticity in a lurid world, viewed through the distorting prism of an alienated individual, who nevertheless succeeded in exposing disquieting existential truths” (5). This technique, establishing supernatural elements by outlining it in precise realistic detail, is a fundamental technique of magical realism. The genre is characterised by a “countercultural and counter-hegemonic literary style” (Camayd-Freixas 7). Mundane occurrences are transformed into fantastical, awe-inspiring incidents in fluid, refreshing narratives. Magical realism does not warrant the creation of a fantasy world that is removed from reality but astonishing and bizarre incidents are narrated naturally in the stories. “Magical realism presents as an antinomy two coherent perspectives in conflict, one based on a rational view of reality, and the other one on an acceptance of the supernatural as a normal everyday occurrence” (Camayd-Freixas 11). Magical realism allows the narrative to straddle both ends and balance the natural with the supernatural.

Magical realism was first applied in literature in the 1940s in Europe and after its popularity declined in said region, it met its “boom” in Latin American literature, particularly starting from the late 1960s. Later in the 1990s, when fervor around the genre dampened in Latin America as well, it had already spread across the world in terms of popularity. The genre is

chiefly known for a few fundamental characteristics, “an irreducible element of magic; a strong presence of the phenomenal world; some unsettling doubts on the part of the reader in the effort to reconcile two contradictory understandings of events; the narrative’s merging of different realms; and the predilection for disturbing received ideas about time, space, and identity” (13).

Tabassum Sayara Fariha, in the paper titled *Tracing the Trajectory of Magical Realism in Bangladeshi Literature*, explored the adoption of magical realism by the Bangladeshi authors. She mentioned that the earliest Bengali pioneering magical realists were Syed Waliullah and Akhteruzzaman Elias who employed magical realism in their works such as *Kado Nodi Kado* and *Khowabnama* to bring forth social issues in the rural setting of Bangladesh. Waliullah used "personification" of the river to establish the technique of magical realism. Fariha highlights “Including personification and the blend of myths, legends and superstitious beliefs” (47) Waliullah, Elias, and Jahan presented fantastical elements which left Dhaka city behind which later was brought in by Shahidul Zahir with “collective narrative voice to construct a universal theme” (48) in his work. However, according to Azam, the way Dhaka has been widely portrayed throughout the *Himu* series is unmatched and no other literary work has been able to illustrate Dhaka in this way” (54). Overall, Fariha unfolded how Bangladeshi literates employed this genre as an effective tool to ponder the nation's complex “socio-political realities, cultural identities, and historical legacies” (48).

2.2 Humayun Ahmed’s Craft

Ahmed Sofa compared Humayun Ahmed's writings to “chanachur”. He said, “Chanachur khete moja kintu pet bhore na (Chanachur is delicious to eat but one keeps asking for more without feeling full” (Rocky 42, my translation). Rakibul Rocky (43) highlights how critics disregarded

Ahmed's writings by saying that his writings will lose popularity with time because they do not have any seriousness, are full of middle class struggle stories with no deeper value, and so on. Then, he juxtaposes these arguments referring to the huge readership that have accepted Ahmed's writings. This can be proven through his extraordinary book sales even 10 years after his demise. This readership is primarily captured by the most popular of his characters, Himu (as quoted in Mandol and Kabir 116). Sumon Rahman stresses in his essay "Humayun Ahmed Er Himugiri" how "in one sense, Himu is present in almost all of Humayun Ahmed's writings." (n. pag., my translation).

Humayun Ahmed is known for being a magician of storytelling. He captures readers through the magic of his stories. Therefore, readers tend to search for themselves in his creations. They find themselves in the characters of Himu, Misir Ali, Rupa and more. Humayun Ahmed is applauded for being a strong storyteller as "readers look at the moonlight and enjoy the rain through the lens of Humayun Ahmed instead of many other prominent novelists. Humayun Ahmed is one of those fortunate writers whose writing has reached his contemporary people." (Rocky 44, my translation). Humayun Ahmed made use of a plethora of elements in his writings—family, the emotion of compassion, attractive narratives, fantasy, mysteries, a procession of light in the darkness—each of these elements are common threads in Himu's story (Azam 53, my translation). Sumanta Ray (10) conveys, "I titled this book, 'Kotha Shilper Jadukor Humayun Ahmed'. However, the publisher changed the name into *Shobar Prio Himu O Humayun Ahmed* saying that Humayun Ahmed was an exceptional writer so the name of a book about him should be exceptional as well" (my translation).

According to Azam, Ahmed did not write stories, he told them (114-115). There are sincerity and hypnosis in the way he speaks. The narrator is present while speaking. His gestures

and tone of voice work in sync with the words but the story is being told in writing. Humayun wrote in spoken Bengali and his language is deeply dialogical” (my translation). Rocky further states about Ahmed’s works,

The reader becomes one with the story. This is where the strength of the writer lies, as the reader reads, he/she unknowingly becomes one with the story [...]. In Humayun Ahmed's stories, human hopes and aspirations, inner conflicts, mental disorders, lust, contemporary crises, wants and needs, dreams, and disappointments emerge, sometimes directly, sometimes in the guise of metaphors. (48, my translation)

Humayun Ahmed, himself asserted, “The craft of writing is undying to me” (87, my translation). He was a proponent of writing accessible and authentic stories with realistic characters. He expressed, “I want to tell true stories through literature” (my translation). He said that many writers write page after page, filling the pages with words that make no sense and telling stories of no value. However, a group of people and publishers consider this meaningless drivel to be great literature. Upon being asked which time of writing feels most joyous to him, Ahmed replied saying that it is when the characters start talking to each other. He relayed, “Often I spend time through conversation with the characters I have written. This brings great joy to me” (Ratri 47, my translation). A freelance journalist puts it this way, “Humayun Ahmed has illustrated mainly human life in his novels. His language fostered the plot of his stories. Humour and wit were the primary elements of his stories. His observation powers were innovative and distinguished” (57, my translation).

An aspect of Ahmed’s writing that attracts readers is said to be his use of humour. The author in an interview with Shariyar Kabir mentioned that he writes impulsively and says, “the

whole of it comes spontaneously” (Kabir 17, my translation). Kabir asked if Ahmed thinks that Bengali people’s lives are filled with humour and Ahmed replied saying, “Yes, that is what I think. I find the people of our country to be extremely humorous. Even in the midst of enormous suffering they make comedy which I enjoy very much” (Kabir 19, my translation). Ahmed emphasized that writers of Bangladesh do not use humour much in their writings because they perhaps think that “humour dampens the writing. Maybe something serious is being said. Maybe they think that as writers saying something supposedly silly could sabotage the weight of the serious, highly labelled thing being said. However, humour is included without hesitation in my writing” (Kabir 21, my translation).

2.3 Elements of Magical Realism in Humayun Ahmed’s Work

There has been little investigation into magical realism in Humayun Ahmed’s work. It has been mostly mentioned by scholars in passing or vaguely without explicitly mentioning the genre. Rabeya Basri Ratri mentions in the dustjacket of the book *Jonoprio Humayun Ahmed* (2013) that Ahmed's writings are “profoundly based on social life, mystery of nature, and magic realism” (my translation). Moreover, In the preface of the book *Shobar Prio Himu O Humayun Ahmed*, Professor Nazrul Islam, former chairperson of University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, reflects on how Humayun Ahmed has depicted his stories and narratives in such a simple manner and how he reached readers’ hearts. Islam adds, “His writings employed humor, wit, mystery, dreamlike qualities, and postmodernist literary style like magic realism” (Ray 7, my translation). According to Azam, Ahmed lessened the level of fantasy in *Himu* and expanded the area of the real world to create a different level of fantasy where “the real plays the leading role within fantasy's boundaries” (46, my translation).

Himu is poetically described through the sentence in the essay titled “Humayun Ahmed er Himugiri”, “He is a path, not the destination. He embodies some questions, not their answers” (Rahman n. pag., my translation). In general, scholars have themselves conveyed how they believe both in Himu's logical intuitive powers and also his illogical supernatural powers. For example, Dr. Ahmed Mawla in *Humayun Ahmed Srishti Shilotar Shilpo Sutro* lends his support to both interpretations, directly stating that Himu has fantastical supernatural powers and that he also functions using logic and normal rationality (38-39, 44). This vagueness in the line that separates logic and anti-logic is what supports the magical realism in the *Himu* series.

Without explicit reference to the genre, magical realism has been characterised in scholars' work describing Ahmed's characters and their multiple characteristics, filled with varied mysteries, different imaginary powers, praised due to intelligence, even because of complete absurd strangeness (Hafiz 9, my translation). According to Azam (54), “the *Himu* series is special in two ways. First, Himu's comic presentation, second, Himu's wish fulfilling that happens without any logical reason and can be simply labeled as ‘supernatural powers’ (my translation). Furthermore, Rahman states that the foundation of the *Himu* series has some magical elements because of which these trivial errors do not compromise the character. *Himu's* readers stay ready for anything to happen, be it melodrama or severe symbolic statements. As a result, a sense of trust grows in the readers that everything is possible for Himu. This trust provides immunity to Himu as a result to Humayun as well in any kind of situation.

In the memorial essay edited by Hasan Hafiz, “Jawa to Noy Jawa”, Anisuzzaman conveys, “A large part of Humayun Ahmed's work is permeated by unknowability and mystery - where we cannot always determine the coherence or causality in the behaviour of characters or the sequence of events. Before doubting these mystical attributes, the story moves forward taking

its readers with it. Actually, it is undoubtedly that Humayun believed in the supernatural” (Hafiz 37, my translation). Elements of magical realism are evident in these references to supernatural events permeating the *Himu* novels that are rooted mainly in the mundane realities of life. Humayun Ahmed easily and trustworthily writes about supernatural events that can be related to the genre of “magical realism.” His stories and novels are principally dialogue based. His narratives are limited in nature and using limited sentences he phenomenally illustrates the characters. Yet, he does not lack social consciousness in his writings, political incentives are significantly absent (Ahmed 75, my translation). Social commentary enacted through magical incidents rooted in reality is a primary characteristic of magical realism (Omeje n. pag.).

Reflecting the non-linear passage of time in texts of the magical realism genre, time is absent in Ahmed’s writings (Camayd-Freixas 13; Rocky 42). Non-linear and inconsistent narratives are woven into the human world one is familiar with. Nonetheless, the author presents the readers with such sceneries from this familiar environment that the readers even after confronting everyday are prone to miss. Rocky (46) says, “Humayun Ahmed’s pen has introduced us to the familiar in a new way.” (my translation). The need for wish-fulfillment drives the magical realism forward in the novels. In *Basanta Bilap*, Ahmed mentions,

Himu is one of my favourite characters. Himu does many things that we want to but cannot. [...] Our latent desire. We cannot but someone else is there who is able to do all these unhesitatingly. He has no desires towards anything. This man is free from all pressure, thus making him as a character very dear to us. We do not want to be like him, but a very part of us wants to stay with this person (Ahmed 114, my translation).

The whimsical aspects of magical realism are often categorised under the term ‘anti-logic’. Rabeya Basri Ratri (10) drew attention to how Ahmed’s everlasting characters like Misir Ali follow logic and Himu follows ‘anti-logic’ (my translation). In an interview, Humayun Ahmed relayed, “Himu is an anti-logical person. He follows the path he likes ” (Ray 38). The logic and anti-logic that resides in Humayun Ahmed has been presented through “Misir Ali and Himu respectively” (Ray 40, my translation). Humayun Ahmed in *Ei Ami* (1993) mentioned,

Himu’s actions are related to a very mysterious dimension or world. He follows anti-logic. Most of the time he walks around. He keeps waking and walking at night on the streets and is an introvert (...). The world of Misir Ali is not the only possible world, this is what needed to be proven through Himu. Logic is good but anti-logic is also logical, this information needs to be kept in mind. (...) In search of the fundamentals of the physical realm, scientists have found quarks such as up, down, charm, strange... What is happening? Where are we heading? Are not we eventually stepping outside of the logical world? This world cannot be told through Misir Ali's voice. We need a Himu for this (Ahmed 69, my translation).

Magical realism is fundamentally infused in the Himu series due to the fact that despite having multiple logically indescribable incidents, the characters and the stories feel real and plausible. Mazumder asserts how Himu is a hyper-real character as he has an existence in the real world and has immense impact on it even though he does not exist in reality (42). He refers to the postmodern term ‘hyperreality’, “a term associated with the effects of mass production and reproduction, suggesting that an object, event, experience so reproduced replaces or is preferred

to its original: that a copy is ‘more real than real’”. Despite being a fictional character Himu exists in the hearts of the readers (Mazumder 42).

2.4 Social Commentary in *Himu*

In the preface of the book *Humayun Ahmed King Bodontir Songe Bish Bochor* it is said that, through his writings, Humayun Ahmed has illustrated the middle class Bangladesh, which attracted the readers very much. Ahmed demonstrated the intention of presenting human beings to human beings themselves (Das). Ratri (9) highlights that Humayun Ahmed's writings are simple and fluid. He depicted the middle class, the similarities and differences of their thinking in a detailed way. According to actor Jahid Hasan, Humayun Ahmed “possessed supernatural powers. [...] He had the rare ability to turn people towards serious thinking” (Das 60, my translation).

The conflicts in the hopes and disappointments of the middle class, different interpretations of the different phases of life, and lighthearted humour were the foundations of Humayun’s literary works. Two major characters of his literary works are Himu and Misir Ali who are reflections of the daily lives of human beings. Himu, especially, comes through strange experiences who uses humour to bring forth the complex theories of life in a lucid manner (Ratri 60-61, my translation). The exhausted middle class, constantly beaten by fate and defeated in the battle of life, discovers themselves in a miraculous dream world by reading Humayun's works (Kabir 10, my translation).

In *Sompurno Humayun Ahmed*, Ahmed asserted, “Are my liberation war related works outside of politics? Or consider Himu’s stories, is Himu beyond politics? I don’t write anything directly, I don’t even want to. All writers are different, I am like me” (Rahman 110, my

translation). The writer infused profound social commentary into his works without explicit name-calling and degradation (Rahman 110, my translation). Himu's principal skill lies in his "indifference". According to Azam (55), "There is a deep philosophical significance in observing the world from outside the world, avoiding the illusion of the world. [...] In this way, one can transcend one's own small world and become connected to the larger world. In this way, one can bring people to the same level, regardless of class and other differences". Azam sheds light on multiple social issues that Humayun Ahmed highlighted in many novels from *Himu* like drug addiction, abuse of power, and so on in different novels like *Aj Himur Biye*, *Parapar* and *Holud Himu Kalo Rab*. Ahmed's prominent liberalism is the foundation of the entire *Himu* series. It can be said, Himu's stance is against all forms of fundamentalism (my translation).

Humayun Ahmed expressed moving aspirations of seeing a "happy earth" with no hunger and no wars. He wished to see this exemplified in Bangladesh. He also exhibited sadness at the political conditions of the country. He explained,

I get shocked, my dream gets shattered. Sometimes I feel like calling on some known names and building a party. This party will be named 'Bangladesh Himu Party'. Those who will be members of this party, each of them will be dedicated like Himu. They will be dressed in yellow fabrics. Just as how wearing white clothes brings about the feeling of widowhood, wearing saffron clothes brings about a sense of detachment. Each of them will have detachment within them. Dispassion towards greed and self-interest (Rahman 125-126, my translation).

These ambitious dreams are illustrated in the many novels within the *Himu* series.

To the readers, Himu has grown into a spokesman for unveiling the inconsistencies and obscurities of the social realities through fun and sarcasm. Mandol and Kabir express

A boundless bird-like life he lives but has chiselled a great human life for himself furnished with an illusion-free personality enriched with boundless knowledge gathered from extensive study of books on science, religion, health, psychology, astrology, biography. He is armoured with humility, tolerance and sympathy and blessed with very high and rare ESP. Being a solid human being, he is never prone to show and assert his worth, rather he interacts with haughty assertion with hollow pompous people to test their lengths. As these people always end up in their messes, Himu turns out to be their solver and rescuer and the setter of standards both physical and moral. (117-118)

2.5 Psychological Focus in Humayun Ahmed's Work

Humayun Ahmed himself stated, "I have no interest in reading anything other than stories and novels. I find interest in reading "psychology" however. I read it out of my own interest, the same goes in terms of writings". His deep fascination with human psychology is evident in his writing, especially *Himu*. Ahmed has also expressed a love for "dreaming" (Kabir 23-25, my translation). His portrayal of "ESP" or extra sensory powers is also connected with these interests. In an interview, Humayun Ahmed also demonstrated knowledge of research being carried out in America surrounding ESP and expressed how he truly believes that people with such powers exist. He remarked, "I have seen my own mother having such powers. If she saw something in her dream and mentioned said dream, we would be sure in our minds that her dream would come true. I have mentioned in *Amar Chelebela* that my mother possesses this intense power " (Kabir 61, my translation). Hafiz (9) states that Humayun Ahmed has repeatedly discovered the subtle and complex psychology of the human mind with a searching eye, and has given it a captivating artistic form in his exemplary prose.

Ahmed's inclination towards psychological aspects is reflected in his depiction of his iconic characters, Misir Ali and Himu. He believed himself to be a combination of these two characters and "the unknown" (Ahmed 69). Azam (43) dissects Ahmed's writing style and finds that he starts with an incident and connects it with multiple other incidents keeping the readers' attention through the narrative. He reflects, "Humayun is a mind entrancing writer. Human psychology is both the theme and technique that he uses" (my translation). He finds his writings to be mostly written through dialogues instead of incidents, portraying the characters' minds vividly. Ahmed understood readers' psychology and used this understanding in his writings. In his science fiction work, he portrayed mysteries through science. Thus, it can be said that he did the same thing in his many other works, demonstrating the illogical using logic creating a fantastical atmosphere and the *Himu* series is a prominent example of this technique.

Research Gap

Magical realism has been, of late, a principal tool in postmodern narratives employed by literates worldwide to shed light on multifaceted recurring themes, predicaments and to provide commentaries varying from cultures to cultures, states to states, and others. Its historical context provides the ground for adopting magical realism in world literature making the notion evident that when 'realism' falls inadequate to highlight severe frailties of a society and a nation throughout history, magical realism steps in to indirectly depict and criticize the existing frailties. Ascertaining only realism is insufficient, Humayun Ahmed ingeniously crafted magical realism in the novel series *Himu* instrumentally applies sarcasm, wit, humour and psychology to unveil social, political, cultural, personal, and many more functioning distortions. Often, critics and readers fail to discover the seriousness of his writings, specially in terms of *Himu* focusing only

on the character and the plot which can be significantly noticed at such low academic research on Humayun Ahmed's writings.

The few scholars and critics that have conducted research on Humayun Ahmed's works left his most famous work *Himu* behind in terms of thorough examination into specific novels. Areas of magical realism, its distinct form of development throughout the series, and the intelligent craft of psychological aspects that has been portrayed through the titular character in particular incidents have yet to be explored. Moreover, whilst there are a few scholars that have highlighted social commentary in *Himu*, the role of magical realism in enabling such narratives and in delivering justice have not been highlighted. Discovering these gaps, this paper attempts to shed light on the incredible one-of-a-kind use of magical realism in the *Himu* series by Humayun Ahmed and how it unfurls before the reader through the complexities of human psychology and presents a profound handling of pressing social issues.

Chapter 3

Discussion and Analyses

3.1 Magical Realism and its Portrayal through Human Psychology

Humayun Ahmed remains fresh in readers' minds through the novel series *Himu*. The central titular character of the novel series is a frivolous dissident. He is a juvenile predominantly wandering around the streets of Dhaka city barefooted and typically wearing a yellow punjabi without pockets. The author has wittily employed a humorous tone and uses human psychology at the centre to establish magical realism as the main genre throughout the series to unsnarl various recurring social evils embedded in the state and nation of Bangladesh. This aspect is inherently linked to Himu as a character because he is the one who initiates these psychological interactions and reflections. In *Dorjar Opashe*, Himu's uncle (Badol's father) who is critical of Himu, once remarked about Himu saying that, "The power of disabling someone's brain is not an easy task. Not everyone is able to do this but you can" (97, my translation). This shows that he has a grasp over the human mind or psychology that is extraordinary.

The magical realism in the *Himu* series is embedded in ambiguity. The most prominent characteristics of magical realism is the seamless interplay between the real and fantastical. The reason for this seamlessness is Himu himself. On multiple occasions he talks about his supernatural power but on other occasions he mentions his intuition which delivers a contradictory self to the readers. In *Dorjar Opashe* he says, "I have strong intuitive powers" (99) but in *Mayurakkhi* he says, "I have some supernatural powers" (53, my translations). This makes the readers question whether Himu actually has supernatural powers or if he is simply very

observant and intuitive. Therefore, Himu's psychological manipulation is effective not only with the characters around him but with the readers as well.

The influence Himu has over people is also exemplified in *Dorjar Opashe* by the statement, "Badol thinks I am a fifty-fifty mixture of Rasputin and Gautam Buddha. Not only a great man but an absolute man" (94, my translation). His own cousin is able to recognise the power he has over people. Even when it comes to his sceptical, unnerving uncle, Himu has a proper grasp of how to deal with him. He says, "To calm uncle down, one of the best ways is to not answer his questions. At one point of continuous talking he gets tired and shuts up" (96, my translation). The interplay of logic and the supernatural is heightened because Himu himself tends to be a chronic liar which raises a question of whether he can be trusted or not. For instance, in *Dorjar Opashe* Himu states, "I chronically lie a lot and make a lot of fuss. I make conscious attempts to perplex people. I have no ability to work hence keep wandering around." (74, my translation).

Himu says in *Mayurakkhi*, "I walk all day. My path does not end. I am on a journey without a set destination that is not supposed to have an end" (68, my translation). By endlessly walking, Himu is parallelly able to deliver various observations which makes him a "flâneur" character, an urban aimless wanderer, as proposed by Charles Baudelaire. Baudelaire reflects on this concept saying,

The crowd is his domain, just as the air is the bird's, and water that of the fish. His passion and his profession is to merge with the crowd. For the perfect idler, for the passionate observer it becomes an immense source of enjoyment to establish his dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel at home anywhere; to see the world, to be at the very centre of

the world, and yet to be unseen of the world, such are some of the minor pleasures of those independent, intense and impartial spirits, who do not lend themselves easily to linguistic definitions” (4).

Himu’s existence throughout the novels are exemplified through these lines. He is significant to the people he interacts with in the city he inhabits but also exists as an impermanent, fleeting individual that never settles. When he is taking this liberty of walking, he observes the city and introduces the reader to the mundane in an unconventional way which aligns with the features of magical realism.

During their university days mentioned in *Mayurakkhi*, Rupa, one of his primary one-sided admirers, asks Himu if he has supernatural powers and Himu replies in the affirmative. He predicts correctly, saying to her, “Today your car will not pick you up.” Further, Himu says, “You have two one hundred taka notes, one twenty taka note, seven one taka notes and some paisa,” which after counting, Rupa finds, matches exactly as well (66, my translation). This is one of the earliest examples of Himu’s intuitive powers. His abilities are not as pronounced and his progress regarding the magical attributes are not significantly portrayed here.

At first, he only displays his abilities by correctly answering with details and providing information that he is not supposed to be aware of. For example, in *Dorjar Opashe*, he is able to guess the name of the wife of the officer-in-charge, her characteristics, and her severe illness. In the same book, Himu is able to prove to the former Minister of Power, Energy and Minerals that he has extraordinary instincts by remarking that the latter “is in big trouble” after having been dismissed from his position as a Minister, a fact that Himu was not supposed to be privy of (105-106). Moving forward with further examples, the significance or development of magical realism unfolds.

In *Dorjar Opashe*, when his usually mean-spirited and resentful uncle happily welcomes Himu to his home, he quizzes Himu on what has made him want to treat Himu differently and Himu is able to correctly answer, saying, “Your concern regarding Badol has come to an end, hence, you are happy. He is going abroad. Most probably America” (143, my translation). His uncle further asks, inquiring about his own future and Himu replies, “You have a terrible future” (144, my translation). The former gets perplexed and further asks to confirm by asking if he was saying all of this out of mere guesswork or his supernatural powers and Himu replies, “I am saying this from my supernatural powers. However, it can be justified through logic as well” (144, my translation). This ambiguity between the supernatural and real reflects the unique kind of magical realism that is delineated by Humayun Ahmed.

To give another example, Himu asks Mr. Mansur, the owner of Mansur Group of Industries and the captive of terrorist Joglu, in *Angul Kata Joglu* for how long he could hold his breath inside water. Mr. Mansur questions back asking the reason behind such a question and Himu replies that “suppose instead of me they started drowning you” (988, my translation). Although Mr. Mansur disregards this possibility by saying that the ransom the abductors asked for will be given and he will leave this country, just a few moments later, Himu’s prediction comes true as the abductors did not get the ransom. This exemplifies how he is able to foretell very naturally what is to happen. This is not explicitly shown as extraordinary but very casual in the text.

The abductors in *Angul Kata Joglu* drown Himu in a tank filled with water. Himu, using his training from his father, successfully holds his breath for 2 minutes. The criminals think that Himu is most likely dead but after raising him from the water, Himu gives them a smile. Himu reflects, “I am staring at them with a smiling face. This act is for intentional drama. It is difficult

for a person to smile after being deprived of oxygen for two minutes. Everyone is looking at me. They are astonished, and a bit afraid as well” (996, my translation).

Intentional rudderless acts by Himu help him take control of tense situations and work on his behalf since the abductors are fearful of Himu as he is able to hold his breath and continue smiling. Later in the novel, Himu is able to psychologically influence Mr. Mansur to spend his wealth for social welfare which is mentioned in a letter sent by Mr. Mansur’s daughter. This is possible because of Himu’s peculiar behaviour and he successfully embeds strange and uncanny feelings in Mr. Mansur for which he cannot spend the regained ransom for his own benefit.

In *Angul Kata Joglu*, Himu’s abilities help him guess the criminal Joglu’s weakness when it comes to his son. He also displays his knowledge about the son’s birth date and coaxes Joglu to go see his child. Himu provides logic behind his statements by saying, “I am saying this out of guesswork. I do not know anything. Assuming your age, it feels like you won't be unmarried for a lifetime. If you are married, then you might have children,” but Himu possesses knowledge that could never simply be a result of mere guesswork (1011, my translation). Himu further asks if Joglu has only one son and Joglu replies in the affirmative. Himu continues the conversation by stating correctly that since Joglu has only one son, his son's name might be “Babu” (1011, my translation).

At this point, Himu uses his intuition to capture Joglu's psychological attention towards Joglu's weak point, his son. Since Joglu is a criminal, he is constantly in fear of getting caught by the police hence does not even go to meet his one and only sick son. Further in this novel, it is revealed that Joglu gets caught by the police on “September 11” while celebrating his son’s birthday exactly as foretold by Himu (1046). Thus, it becomes clear that the author Humayun Ahmed creates Himu as a tool of magical realism where the conflict between supernatural and

intuitive powers blurs the line between reality and fantasy and gets enabled through control over human psychology. Himu did not even know who Joglu was, what his family background was, or anything else. Yet, he starts the above-mentioned conversation, further unraveling Joglu's weakness.

Even while interacting with a criminal, he is able to treat them as normal human beings and this can be seen in how Himu starts a conversation with Joglu in *Angul Kata Joglu* by asking about the qualities that a terrorist needs to possess. Himu adds that he found some points amongst which, first and foremost, a terrorist must have bad parents. Himu plays with Joglu's psychology and the latter reaction comes exactly the way Himu intended as Joglu replies that his father was an ideal math teacher who considered his students to be his children. This shows how Himu's philosophy allows him to be able to find the humanity in the people that society labels as "criminals". This understanding of the fact that good and evil cannot be clearly defined is reflected in the ambiguous use of magical realism in the books as well. In the conversation, Himu observes that Joglu's eyes were reflecting his joy while talking about Joglu's father. Himu says, "The joy you experienced while speaking about your father, your son will not experience the same" (1027, my translation). Himu is able to delve into Joglu's psychology and make him reveal his deepest thoughts and feelings.

Moreover, in *Himu Remand E*, a conversation between Ayna Mazid and Himu takes place. Mazid asks Himu to keep answering all of the questions directly. Himu asks if he was in remand and Mazid replies, "Yes, in remand". Himu says, "Listen brother Ayna, I am not in remand. You are. You shall answer my questions" (50, my translation). In the text, Ayna Mazid is described to be getting stiffened with this turn of dialogue by Himu. Everything feels like it has stopped including his movement, eyelids, and even breathing. As if this conversation inserted a

fear in Mazid giving him the sense that the opponent who is Himu is a tough man to handle and needs to be handled cautiously. The author, through the protagonist, delivers the idea that dangerous people are always extremely cowardly. They do not fear humans but the supernatural. However, Himu's power is never directly addressed which maintains the ambiguity throughout the text.

The magical realism in the *Himu* books develops with time. The book *Himu Remand E* came out in 2008. Earlier, in this novel series there was an implicit representation of Himu using his influential powers which was revealed explicitly in the latter series. He recognises that he has this ability to tweak people's psychology. For instance, an idea appears in his mind while being followed by the terrorist Lumbu Khokon at Ramna Park. Himu in his mind says, "An idea has occurred to me. I think an overly hyper and agitated brain will react easily. Lumbu Khokon's brain is already immensely agitated regarding the lock-opening matter. I have to take action after making him a bit more agitated" (54, my translation). From this, it can be understood that a criminal's brain remains weak thus making the ground for Himu to successfully sway the wrongdoer's mind.

The use of psychology to display Himu's "magical" tendencies can be seen as Himu starts a conversation with Khokon about his father. Himu asks Khokon about his father being alive or not, Khokon replies saying that his father died of a heart attack, the time was exactly before evening, mirroring the time of his present conversation with Himu. Himu asks if that day was a rainy day just as the day of their current exchange and Khokon answers in the affirmative. Himu then asks about the items that his father took as his last meal and continues by inquiring about the food Khokon's father would actually have requested if he had known that he was going

to have his last meal that day. Himu gradually lays the groundwork by displaying unusual knowledge about aspects he is not expected to know about and by asking unsettling questions.

Henceforth, Khokon becomes more perturbed as Himu technically plays with his mind and inserts the fear of death in him. Further in the conversation, Himu asks Khokon, “What do you want to have as your last meal? Think of it” (54, my translation). Himu is able to give him an uncanny premonition of his own death. Khokon’s brain is lured into grappling with both the positive thoughts of food and the negative thoughts of death. Although Himu does not inflict any physical harm upon, he toys with Khokon’s mind, leaving him uneasy and alarmed. The two have a philosophical interaction about identity when Khokon poses the question “Who are you?”. Himu responds by saying he is “nobody”, further setting himself apart from regular people. Himu starts circling a medlar (Bakul) tree in Khokon’s presence and leaves Khokon with the statement, “We will meet again under the medlar tree” (55, my translation). Later in the novel, it is actually seen that Khokon has started mindlessly and perpetually circling a medlar tree as well, saying that he does so because he has seen Himu do the same.

Furthermore, In *Himu Ebong Harvard Ph.D. Boltu Bhai*, Himu embeds the idea of a ghost in the prized PhD holder Boltu bhai’s head and influences him to write about Bengali folk ghost stories as opposed to American ghost stories and infusing science along with it. Boltu bhai says worriedly, “Himu has put the concept of ghosts in my head, these things work like catalysts in the brain. Catalysts do not take part in the reaction but they facilitate the reaction” (428, my translation). This shows how Himu is able to miraculously influence peoples’ minds and control their thoughts at will.

Himu’s control over people supersedes all intellectual and social categories, people from all social strata and educational brackets become vulnerable to Himu’s mechanisms enabling

magical realism to be propagated in the story. Additionally, Himu, as he wanders across the city meeting a plethora of people in a seemingly coincidental manner, is able to see the design and patterns in everyday events and somehow control their outcomes and impacts. This characteristic further cements Himu as a “flâneur character” that is a detached observer of the city interacting meaningfully with the crowd (Baudelaire 4).

In a particular incident from the same novel, Himu’s uncle and aunt argue and the latter leaves the house. Himu plays a part in reuniting them both whilst also saving his uncle’s life. His aunt steps on faeces on the road and asks Himu to fetch her water to clean it but Himu does not do so and instead compels her to go back home by deceptively disappearing from the place. Once his aunt reaches, she finds her husband experiencing a heart attack. Himu is somehow also able to locate the hospital his uncle is taken to without ever being contacted or informed. Not only this, Himu, having expected that his aunt did not have the time to clean up, also takes soap and water for her. This elegant unfurling of events and how one event seamlessly leads to another is all through Himu at the centre. This convenient and interconnected web of affairs establishes suspicions of the supernatural in the novel whilst also leaving prominent evidence of rationality and realism. This straddling of the real and surreal through the character of Himu introduces the reader to Humayun Ahmed’s distinctive model of magical realism.

Similarly, *Himu Ebong Harvard Ph.D Boltu Bhai* shows how weak psychology makes people prone to Himu’s abilities of psychological control. For instance, Himu tweaks Jahir’s psychology. Jahir is a rapist and is completely aware of his wrongdoings thus possesses a weak psychology. When a criminal knows that what he is doing is wrong, he/she always remains in a turmoil since they do not have the inner strength or peace. This type of person is in fear of

getting caught thus undergoing restlessness. Himu understands this psychology extremely well and uses this power as a weapon to unfold or sometimes punish the criminal.

3.2 Social Issues Addressed through Magical Realism

Himu's powers make him hyperaware of the intricacies of society. He knows that powerholders have control over who remains employed and who does not. To attain the attention of his friend's father, the then Minister for Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources, Mr. Mobarak Hossain, he wittily plays with his friend's psychology. Himu knows that his friend Jahir has attributes of a bohemian and that he loves adventures, so he suggests that he join Himu to enjoy the full moon at the "Dredger Colony" at Narayanganj by getting inside dug up holes under the ground donning only their underwear to completely unify with nature. According to Himu's plan, despite their odd but harmless act, the police are called and they are able to attract the attention of his friend's father. There are a lot of incidents going around in Bangladesh that need prompt action. For example, rape cases, murder cases, bribing, and so on but the police scarcely shows as prompt of a response as they show for Himu's innocent act. Here, two people are harming no one by simply enjoying the moonlight but the police force is there to apprehend them in the middle of the night.

Humayun Ahmed inserts clear meta-commentary in the Himu series. Himu himself says, "For instance, prose, novels are lies. But through these lies we can acknowledge the truth" (38, my translation). This shows how the use of magical realism is an intentional, creative effort to uncover various harrowing truths about society. The novels are all set in actual locations that exist in Dhaka. Clear and real descriptions of the areas of Dhaka are paired with surreal, dreamlike incidents, further exemplifying magical realism and uniquely illustrating social

circumstances. Mr. Mansur once remarks directly towards Himu, “It doesn’t seem like you’re scared from the way you’re talking,” and Himu replies, “If there was any benefit to being scared, I would be. Since there is no benefit, why should I needlessly be scared?” (987, my translation). Himu is unfettered and fearless of law enforcement or of authoritative figures. He is able to influence and manipulate them using his powers.

Even in the mere incidents that seem insignificant, there is profound social commentary about Bangladeshi society and its authorities. In *Dorjar Opashe* Himu observes, “That is an interesting thing about police stations that I have seen. Everything is documented by pencils. This is probably because there remains a chance to erase documentation when one pleases” (89, my translation). He comes to this observation when the interrogation takes place. The Officer-in-Charge (OC) asks about his family backgrounds and other details to jot them down. Himu humorously asks the OC to ask questions that do not need to be documented first. The OC asks the reason behind such a suggestion and Himu responds by saying that the officer's pencil is blunt and that no one will be able to find any sharpener to sharpen it, which is later proven to be true. Himu then reflects on how everything will be at a pause at the police station because of their reluctance when it comes to using pens and because of a trivial object like a sharpener.

Using a pencil allows the officer to erase facts and distort reality and the lack of a sharpener permits inactivity. These tendencies are indicative of their stubborn ties to corruption. Himu’s confrontations surrounding law enforcement reflect Michel Foucault’s reflections in *Discipline and Punish* (1975). Foucault conveys how the powerful in society are often in control and indiscriminately exploit people that have less power and knowledge. He says, “it would be hypocritical or naive to believe that the law was made for all in the name of all; that it would be more prudent to recognize that it was made for the few and that it was brought to bear upon

others” (276, my translation). This sentiment is reflected in how Himu directly addresses dishonesty and injustice through his powers in authoritative entities.

More of Himu’s interactions with the police renders how his bewildering intuitive abilities confront people in positions of power. He is able to present the truth to them and display miraculous knowledge regarding the people around him. Himu remains calm in tense situations and makes statements that perfectly describe people’s states of mind such as, “Your mind is extremely scattered. Your wife is sick. When someone's beloved becomes extremely ill they lose their temper. The whole world becomes a place of discontent” (91, my translation).

In *Himu Remand E*, the author directly addresses the reader as he asks them to guess which guest Himu intends to take to Ayna Mazid to perplex him. This blurs the line between the supernatural and the reality as Himu himself acknowledges the audience and invites the readers into the narrative. This meta-commentary provokes and subverts expectations and perceptions, it warps reality just as magical realism as a genre itself. Himu decidedly takes a 4/5 year old beggar girl named Bakul to the terrorist Ayna Mazid. Mazid gets startled as though he has suddenly encountered a ghost. Bakul takes a shine to the dog at Mazid’s hideout named Tiger and fondly calls him Bhulu. This brings Mazid further distress as he himself had a sister of the same age named Bakul, who had died years ago and had a pet dog named Bhulu. It is later revealed that Bakul was Mazid’s first murder. Later, when Bakul refuses to have dinner at Mazid's place and becomes disinterested in Bhulu, Himu takes Bakul to the police officer Mr. Kabir's place and leaves her there to be cared for by Mr. Kabir and his wife Shobha, who do not have any children of their own.

This progression of events portrays how Himu’s casual actions are of inordinate significance to the characters that surround him. His seemingly coincidental interactions lead to

resolutions that deeply affect the other characters. Such interactions also propel both the people around him and the readers to question whether it is all by supernatural, fateful design or simple results of Himu's informed rationality. At the end of this novel, Himu is able to psychologically influence both Mazid and Khokon to confront their crimes in delusion and distress. He remarks reflectively saying, "Before I go, let me tell you something. There are two types of remand. One is a police remand and the other is nature's remand. One can escape from police remand but there is no way to escape from nature's remand. Both of you are under nature's remand" (90, my translation). This statement highlights how Himu is linked with natural entities beyond human comprehension and despite there not being any depiction of overt 'magic', Himu's understanding of human psychology and his connection to nature introduce elements of the fantastical into the narrative.

In the book *Himu Ebong Harvard Ph.D Boltu Bhai*, Jahir Khandaker and Porimol Babu both are friends and teach mathematics. Out of interest, Shormila, a student of Jahir's, went with him to the latter's village at Barishal without informing anyone. There, she is sexually assaulted by Jahir and his friend Porimol. They also record a video in which Shormila's face can be seen clearly but not Jahir's. Porimol shared the video online which resulted in Shormila's suicide. Morally degraded people like Jahir and Porimol wear masks of intelligence. For instance, Jahir Khandaker says to Tuturi that Porimol is a talented man and that he is about to publish a book series from *Bangla Academy* on Bengal's Heritage. Jahir adds that Porimol intends to write a book on "Dhaka's Mazar" (458, my translation).

In a conversation with Shormila's friend, Tuturi, Himu asserts how he believes that anyone claiming to have supernatural powers is uttering nonsense and Tuturi promptly agrees but when they speak on the subject of "doing bad things" (469), Himu he says he intends to do bad

things and teach someone a lifelong lesson. When asked about the identity of that ‘someone’, Himu reveals, “I am still unable to understand who it is. The image is blurrily coming to mind, he is your mathematics teacher”(469, my translation). This leaves Tuturi bewildered, wondering how Himu came to know about her friend’s assault. Himu then casually conveys to her that he “read her mind”.

Later, as a result of having these memorable conversations with Himu, Tuturi, without properly realising, starts adopting Himu’s mannerisms. She starts speaking like him and dressing in yellow. Himu’s casual psychological control over people is clearly observed. Moreover, these interactions being interspersed into the narrative of the story like other mundane incidents contributes to the magical realism and is instrumental in addressing social flaws. When it comes to threatening the rapists, Himu is able to confront them with knowledge that scares them as well. He threatens Jahir telling him that Tuturi is getting potassium cyanide for Jahir and Porimol to drink. He also mentions how the poison will be mixed with margarita for them to enjoy. Jahir had himself previously thought about making Tuturi drink margarita without her knowledge and Himu miraculously happened to know.

Himu continues to play with Jahir's mind. As Jahir is a rapist and is completely aware of his wrongdoings, he possesses a weak psychological state. When a criminal knows that what he is doing is wrong, he/she always struggles with turmoil, lacking inner strength or peace. These kinds of people are in fear of getting caught and experience severe restlessness. Himu understands this psychology extremely well and uses this power as a weapon to unfold or sometimes punish the criminal. Himu unsettles Jahir by constantly mentioning “death” to him and tries to convince him to “repent” as “it is normal to repent before one’s death”. Himu also is able to control Jahir’s bodily reactions. When Jahir steadies himself by holding on to the railing

of the mazar or mausoleum, Himu playfully tells him that when someone wicked and corrupt touches the railing of the mazar, their hands tend to get stuck. This frightens and stiffens Jahir and he is physically unable to lift his hands to pick up a call when his phone rings as they remain “stuck” in position.

Jahir asks for water but Himu advises against it as he Jahir cannot move and drinking water might lead to Jahir needing to use the washroom. Himu remarks how “urinating in the mazar” is likely to make the saint of the mazar angry and Jahir becomes even more desperate to be freed (495-496, my translation). The situation in the mazar attracts a crowd, including a doctor who arrives to examine Jahir. The doctor studies Jahir’s muscle stiffness and asks Jahir if he can move his legs. Jahir, initially, replies that he can but his legs are hot from having stood for hours so he asks to be spared from his socks and shoes. Himu eagerly removes them and manipulates Jahir’s mind by saying, “Perhaps, it was wrong to remove your shoes and socks because your legs might get attached to the floor now” and unsurprisingly as soon as Himu says this Jahir whines out saying, “My legs are stuck” (500-501, my translation). The author, through Himu, enacts a punishment for the two rapists. The author through the developing use of magical realism highlights multiple social issues and through Himu, creates a situation that actually punishes the wrongdoers. This punishment serves the mob justice that rapists undoubtedly deserve.

As a prime example of the unique form of magical realism presented in Himu, logical and supernatural elements are balanced to make the readers wonder about the series of events and whether there is any rational explanation behind it all or if it is all a clear display of magic. Furthermore, seemingly disjointed and unrelated events at different points conjoin in harmony towards the end due to Himu’s activities. Like cogs working separately but in tandem to move

the same machine, incidents around Himu appear to be distinct but end up being integrally connected to one another. The magical realism is evident in the non-linear passage of time and portrayal of the setting of Dhaka city. For instance, *Angul Kata Joglu* begins at the “bus terminal at Fulbaria” (981), terrorist Ayna Mazid in *Himu Remand E* studied at a school at Karwan Bazar (31) and the ending scene takes place at “Ramna Park, Bakul-tola” (86) and Boltu bhai checked in at the Sonargaon Hotel (419).

Ahmed portrays actual existing places of Dhaka city for realism and delineates startling fantastical events that occur in them to properly establish magical realism. Himu travels from one scene to another, from one setting to another and from one time frame to another as though he is gliding across the space-time continuum of Dhaka city. He appears both as an active contributor but also as an all-knowing observer shedding light upon various social predicaments. It is also clear in how the social resolution appears to be uncontrived and natural for all characters despite the fact that a number of events had to be set in motion by Himu himself, again posing the question of whether his ventures are all logical and premeditated or completely supernatural.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Following the meticulous process of literary analysis, this paper bolsters the position of magical realism and its employment in *Himu* by Humayun Ahmed to fortify the solemn societal, cultural, political, personal predicaments, and so on that readers tend to overlook in everyday life. This unveiling is employed by the author using the titular protagonist as his mouthpiece crafting the genre of magical realism in a unique way of using psychological aspects with an intention to combat the existing frailties in Bangladesh technically. Humayun Ahmed secures his position to this day on top of the list of popular writers in Bangladesh and his most famous creation has been *Himu*. Humayun Ahmed in multiple interviews has made it evident that he possesses a part of Himu in himself and that he pours his own values into the character in his writings subconsciously. Ahmed created this character to address Bangladeshi society by testing the boundaries and limitations of logic and reality.

From its inception, magical realism made its way to world literature from being a literary style or technique to a literary genre adopted by world authors of different nations framing and giving their local sensibilities blended with the original core traits. Bangladeshi authors, too, have applied this genre in their writings. Following similar core traits, Bangladeshi pioneering literates like Syed Waliullah, Akhteruzzaman Elias followed by Nasreen Jahan, and Shahidul Zahir like many other writers have employed this literary genre in their works. Through time, their use has developed. They incorporated personification, local myths, legends, beliefs to employ magical realism to comment on multiple socio-cultural, political, historical issues of Bangladesh. Humayun Ahmed, an incredible writer has employed magical realism in his writings, specially in *Himu*.

Ahmed has woven magical realism in this series to bring forth various existing predicaments of the nation. To comment on these issues, Ahmed has created his own rendition of magical realism using his strong understanding of human psychology. Though many critics and readers tend to believe that Humayun Ahmed's writings lack seriousness due to his massive use of humour, this paper endeavours to prove the opposite by analysing how Humayun Ahmed has crafted postmodern literary style like magical realism in Himu and developed a distinct form of the style adding a new essence, actually portraying severe existing issues of Bangladesh. This paper attempts to prove that Himu by Humayun Ahmed, despite being 'popular literature', is able to portray serious subject matters to the readers in a digestible manner.

The protagonist of the series Himu is a forever youth ceaselessly traversing around the streets of Dhaka city mostly. Ahmed in this novel presented the most realistic setting of Dhaka. Ahmed's way of narration is the ordinary people's language that makes the readers get connected with the text and the character. *Himu* is a character-driven novel series. Himu is created as a vagabond by the author who, with time, does not age but develops strong intuitive powers possessing strong control over the human psyche. Ahmed provided logic behind these anti-logical attributes at times. However, his narration creates a blurry line between the real and surreal making evident the core formula of his form of magical realism. Humayun Ahmed's use of magical realism is different because the magical attributes that are present in the titular character Himu, are not directly mentioned in the series. This supernatural essence in Himu can be interpreted through the way the author narrated the stories. The magic is created through a narrative that makes it evident in readers' psychology that Himu has some supernatural powers that cannot be explained yet readers cannot help but believe in it.

In the earlier novels, the intuition was not as prominent as the later ones. Earlier, Himu could only foretell and mention some unknown names or characteristics of an unknown person. Eventually, psychological narratives and dialogues portray his supernatural powers that are infused in the stories in such a way that one questions them while also inevitably trusting them. A conflict is created in the readers' minds between the supernatural and mere intuition. In the novels, as criminals have weak psychology, they fall easily into Himu's traps and through his supernatural powers, the criminals receive punishment. Himu is able to control the characters' minds as well as the readers as they also grapple with the dilemma concerning whether he has some powers or not due to the fact that Himu himself contradicts himself by alternatively admitting to and denying the existence of such powers. With his mind games, Himu is able to create moral hegemony in the characters that are psychologically disturbed through his realistically fantastical attributes.

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