Representation of Bangladeshi Everyday Culture in Selected Poems of Kaiser Haq

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

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Abstract

Literary works have always been an avenue to represent the culture of a society, time, and place in which they are produced. The present study is an attempt to read selected poems of Kaiser Haq in order to make sense of the culture of Bangladesh and the cultural identity of its people. Haq's selected poems from *Pariah* and *Published in the Streets of Dhaka* introduce the readers with cultural artifacts like -*lungi, muslin sari, Dhakai sari*, roadside tea stall etc. In addition, through a lively representation of ordinary life the poems help the readers to discover how the culture goes through uncertainty and changes with the emergence of new cultures in a continuously developing country. Informed by Raymond Williams' critical study "Culture is Ordinary," this thesis aims to explicate the ordinary aspects of Bangladeshi culture mirrored in Haq's selected poems.

Key Words: Everyday culture, cultural artifact, cultural identity, ordinariness, and Bangladesh.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Life, literature and culture have an intimate connection. Literature takes human life as the subject or raw material and imposes an artistic beauty on it. Hence, a common and ordinary thing of everyday life can appear with an artistic elegance in literature. Likewise, Williams said, "A culture has two aspects: these are the ordinary processes of human societies and human minds, and we see through them the nature of a culture….that it is both the most ordinary common meanings and the finest individual meanings. We use the word culture in these two senses: to mean a whole way of life" (Williams 93). Therefore, literature always represents human culture by portraying the struggles, experiences, beliefs, conflicts, food habits and entire life spent either partly or as a whole as culture encompasses life, both its refined and ordinary practices. The very job of any culture is to unify every aspect of human life. Besides, as culture is also an effort to understand meanings, semantics, practices which exist side by side, culture cannot be a lifeless representation, rather it is a three dimensional representation including place, time and history. Writers often unify these three dimensions of culture because they are the group of people who contribute to the refinement or refined understanding of culture. For example- Romantic poets opened the readers' eyes to the most beautiful aspects of nature. Like this, Kaiser Haq has been doing the job of introducing the broad arena of Bangladeshi culture and documenting them on the diverse genre of literature especially on his large collection of poetry.

The purpose of this paper is to engage critically with selected poems of Kaiser Haq from his collection of poetry *Published in the Streets of Dhaka* and *Pariah* to trace the representation of the everyday culture as well as the cultural identity of ordinary life in Bangladesh in them. My reading of Haq's poems is informed by the concept of "culture" as theorized by Raymond

Williams. I chose Haq's poetry for my thesis for their generous portrayal of everyday life, objects, culture of Bangladesh including both the beautiful aspects and the burning issues of the present Bangladesh society. In addition, the elements of culture are changeable with passage of time as time changes the pattern of human lives as well. In this contemporary world after the long colonial pangs, division of the subcontinent, industrialization and globalization the arena of culture has not only changed and broadened but also given birth to a cultural supremacy which has made fragmentation in the thoughts and minds of the people of the dominated and subjugated nations. Therefore, when they fail to identify themselves with the so-called supreme culture they feel poor with their culture which is considered inferior to the Western culture. That fragmentation drives them to suffer from issues like identity crisis and inferiority complex. Hence, the representation of the rich culture of South Asian countries is now a call of time. There is a number of South Asian writers who have been writing to represent the culture of the global South. They not only speak out against the misinterpretation of south Asian culture but also bring out the uniqueness of the place otherwise unseen by the world and Kaiser Haq is one of those literary figures who attempts to represent Bangladeshi culture in the realm of world literature.

Kaiser Haq is an eminent and leading poet of Bangladesh and a worldwide recognized figure for his contribution to the ocean of literature. He writes about the lives of people in the Global South and his works cover a vivid segment of ordinary culture of the native inhabitants. Haq's endeavor in literature upholds Bangladesh, and provides insights into its history to the global arena. Since Dhaka is the core and centre of Haq's poetic realm, Bangladeshi everyday culture gets true honor in his poetry. Another intriguing aspect about Haq's poetry is that he chooses to write in English, which helps the Anglophone readers to connect with Bengali culture, the

culture in which his poems are rooted. His craftsmanship of translation introduces the tales of Bangladeshi society and the beauty of Bangladeshi culture to the readers belonging to the another corner of the planet and the way he has represented Bangladesh by his works in the world anthologies mirrors how amazingly a poet can celebrate a culture. Besides, in many of his poems he uses his unique way of expression in Sub-continental English to make his characters more realistic. There is a literary historical background of the use of Sub-continental English in poetry. In an interview, Haq said, "Joseph Furtado first wrote poems in Indian pidgin. Then Nissim Ezekiel wrote a number of poems in what he called the language as 'Indian English'. I was inspired by him to attempt a few poems in the kind of broken English that many Bangladeshis use" (Haq). In addition, he mainly uses the imagistic prose in his poetry. Imagism, a subgenre of Modernism, is concerned with making imagery with words. It attempts to recreate the physical experience of any object through the use of sharp language. So, the modern poet, Haq avoids unnecessary use of language instead uses common but exact words in the poem. So in search of common words used by the native people, he depends on the Sub-continental English. In addition, Haq has translated the selected poems of Shamsur Rahman and selected poems of Shaheed Quaderi, *The Wonders of Vilayet*, *Quartet* and *The Woman Who Flew*. Besides, *The Triumph of the Snake Goddess* is his book based on the folk epic. In addition, his collection of poems *Published in the Streets of Dhaka* is the evidence that the poet has written those poems walking in the streets of the city of Dhaka and having every taste of the city life from the tea stall to the elite class party celebration. Haq's *Pariah* includes poems that reflect the history of the culture and its changes over time. In addition, *The South Asian Science Fiction* is an anthology that was published on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of partition. For this anthology he has written a poem about 70 years further on imagining that he will still be alive

and what South Asia will be like! In a sense it is a speculative fiction written in the form of free verse but it shows how amazingly he can imagine the future of South Asian culture. As the recent pandemic has created a dark history in world culture and South Asia is not out of it, Haq has also written a poem for the second edition of that anthology and this time he has written about covid or about the psychological virus which teaches people to feel compassion. Thus, his poems cannot formally be called in one category but one word that can unify many of his poems is ‘culture’ since his poems represent a diverse aspect of South Asian and specifically Bangladeshi culture. Thus, Haq's poetry emerges with acuteness and fluidity presenting Bangladesh as he has seen and explored, as he knows and imagines. His intimacy, fondness, sense of belonging to native country and deep observation of life have been reflected in the poetry. In addition, Haq’s poetry also talks about the changing cultural values and ideology of Bangladesh in this moving world and some aspects of the colonial impact over the culture of colonized Bengal. His selection of ordinary objects from the lives of the working class and the way of demonstrating them as a part of culture either with comic beauty having seriousness hidden inward or with sarcasm indicating the elites, his prosody, speech rhythms, musical phrases and the unique underlying sense of humor represents everyday culture of Bangladesh with a different taste and grace to the readers. Hence, Haq’s poems are the best examples to disclose how ordinary life is also one of the foregrounding elements of the culture of Bangladesh and according to the theorist, Raymond Williams that's how culture should be understood.

Chapter 1.1: A Glimpse of the Concept of ‘Culture’ by Raymond Williams

Culture has been defined differently by different critics as a complex word and its diversity is many times more than the number of countries in the world since each country has

variants of cultures among different groups of its inhabitants. However, all cultures “can be categorized as either material or nonmaterial culture. Material culture includes all the physical things….Nonmaterial culture includes creations and abstract ideas that are not embodied in physical objects.” (Erin). So by material it means all the visible activities that a community participates in. Whereas, abstract consists of an aesthetic understanding of values that form the basis of human relationships like interpersonal relationship, family relationship and all other relationships. Since people belonging to the same culture share the same lifestyle, culinary habits, dress up because of the weather that they live in and so on. In addition, the performative aspects of culture are the books, songs, films, festivals, rituals etc. Besides, when a group of people live together language connects them so language is an important part of any culture. In addition, Money is also an important element of culture which is considered as the base of consumer culture. Thus, the arrival of capitalism creates division between classes which give birth to the prominent division of high culture and low culture. Besides, everything in the world has binary divisions and culture is not out of it. Thus, all the aspects of culture also have their opponents which are also important in the construction of a culture and which go opposite to the beautiful aspects of culture. Hence, a selective study of only the positive aspects or the aesthetic and beautiful things of life cannot represent a culture truly.

Raymond Williams describes his theory of culture in his brilliant essay “Culture is Ordinary”. Williams attempts in establishing his argument that, as the best things which humans do is culture just like this, ordinariness too is a part of culture. Thus, the ordinariness of the working class and the everyday life of ordinary people of a society also contribute to shaping the cultural identity. He excellently shows that an important theory can be presented like a story not following the difficult rubrics of elite academic culture. To Williams the foremost fact is that

culture is ordinary and to emphasize on this he points it several times in the essay. Besides, the own shape, own purposes and own meanings of a society which it expresses through its institutes, arts and learning all together form the basic identity of a culture. In addition, to re-conceptualize the core idea of culture, Williams defines it as "both traditional and creative;.... both the most ordinary common meanings and the finest individual meanings….to mean a whole way of life - the common meanings; to mean the arts and learning - the special processes of discovery and creative effort" (Williams 93). So according to him, "A culture has two aspects: the known meanings and directions, which its members are trained to; the new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested" (93). Williams is not one of the elitists or blue eyed critics. He is one of the first theorists belonging to the working class. Coming from the working class he claims in the essay that he also has something to offer. According to Marxists, the working class cannot contribute to shaping culture as they said "a culture must be finally interpreted in relation to its underlying system of production" (95). However, as a react to this finding of the Marxists Williams says "it is a more difficult idea than it looks - but I still accept its emphasis"(95) and his essay discloses that while class and capitalism contributes to shaping the culture, there is also a potentially resistant and independent culture of the working class. Working class does not simply obey the capitalist norms, but creates and follows their own meanings. Even not only that, they contribute to the general culture that was understood as shaped by the ruling ideas alone. In addition, Williams also considers the twentieth century Marxism as too prescriptive as well as dogmatic. He talks about a temple as synonymous to a cultural artifact just like Cambridge, a big university. Since, he disagrees with the idea that knowledge can be only produced in big universities. If the temple is aesthetically beautiful and ordinary people visit it, why isn't it included in culture? In addition, he provokes the reader to

question, does one need to go through a special training to become cultured? When we recognize someone as a cultured man, what do we mean by this? By this we actually create a binary and try to mean that a cultured man is separated from ordinary life. Thus, Williams brings the raw and ordinary life in the discourse and emphasizes this as a very constitutive element of culture. Williams proposes that culture is ordinary, neither superior nor better. Both Arnold and Marx pointed out that only an elite few controls what would be considered as culture. In contrast, Williams argues that "A great part of the English way of life, and its arts and learning, is not bourgeois in any discoverable sense" (Williams, 95). Indeed, a great part of English arts and learning have been produced by the non-bourgeois people like Raymond Williams, D.H. Lawrence and so on.

In addition, he demonstrates the two opposing aspects of culture such as populist and elitist. To describe the popular view of culture he uses the word 'vulture'. Because according to Arnold's concept the ordinary mass culture is a threat and destroys the elite culture. However, Williams disregards the notion of calling certain refined things as culture and separating them in the museum or gallery as highbrow culture. According to him, we all contribute to culture and share in it. Just because one is not going to a big university, it doesn't mean that s/he is not a part of culture or not contributing to shaping the culture. In addition, Culture is also remarkable and rich. Culture is something which vitally constitutes one and also shapes one. As the best things that humans do is culture just like that, ordinariness is too a part of culture. The symbolic representation of elitist culture in the essay is the Cambridge tea shop through which Williams mirrors the idea of culture as "Only for a special kind of people, cultivated people" (Williams 93). Hence, he uses the word 'sepulture' and says "We don't yet call museums or galleries or even universities culture-sepultures" (Williams 94). By this he points out that we often see

culture as something old or dead and respect it. In addition, some writers reserve the word culture either for old or for new. Williams however, disagrees to confine it as a matter of ‘either or’. He thinks culture is both. Therefore, according to him, culture has both ordinary common meaning and the individual finest meaning. In this point he opposes Leavis’ view that new culture corrupts and decays the traditional culture. Williams doesn’t consider the progressive and new as negative. He also gives the example of his grandfather to point out the change of culture because of industrialization. This change should not be considered a loss rather it is also a gain of new knowledge. So the change is also a part of culture. Besides, loss and gain all together shape one's mind as well as help one to inter in the new relationship of production. He thinks industrialization has brought about a new cultural segregation and by believing in highbrow culture we are just reinforcing that segregation. So one should not be so puritanical about making walls and identifying something as culture. Since one cannot just keep culture in a box or gallery. Culture is not just about to read and write. It is also about our daily life and a cultured man is not different from ordinary life.

Having a glimpse of the theory of culture given by Raymond Williams it is clear that although culture is an immense and complex arena, ordinary life is not out of culture; rather that is an inseparable part of every culture. As many of the aspects of culture from this theory can be explored in Haq’s poetry which are rooted in Bangladeshi culture, my paper is aimed at studying Haq’s selected poems through the critical lens of this theory.

The paper is divided into four segments. The first chapter is the introduction. The following second chapter of literature review will discuss how Haq's works have been read and analyzed by the literary critics so far. The third and fourth chapter will represent the close

reading of a number of Haq's poetry named 'Ode on The Lungi", " Forever Amber", "Inheritance", "As Usual", "Sahara Desert", "Growing Up or Softly Falling" and "Welcome Tourist Sahib". I have attempted an analysis of these poems to locate the representation of Bangladeshi everyday culture. In the fifth chapter the focus is mainly given on the shades of everyday culture in the capital of Bangladesh, Dhaka. Eventually, the conclusion part of the paper will sum up my entire thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Kaiser Haq's poetry has been extensively studied by scholars and critics because his poetry from *Pariah* and *Published in the Streets of Dhaka Collected Poems* can be explored to analyze South Asian culture and to understand the uncertainty that especially Bangladeshi culture is going through. This literature review will focus on existing criticism and readings of the poetry of Kaiser Haq. The reading of Haq's poetry can be categorized in different patterns. Such as firstly the most common response to Haq's poetry is to read in them a postcolonial voice, representing a world no longer in shackles, yet marked indelibly by colonial history and its aftermath. Secondly, Haq's poems are read as transnational literature because of the language used. And thirdly, some critics point out the representation of urban life in Haq's poetry.

Haq's poetry is marked by an abundant presence of ethnic attire, which invites a lot of postcolonial readings. Discussing the "The Ode on the Lungi," for example academic Shahadat Hossain observes this as a sign of colonial dominance (Hossain 2). Hence, He emphasizes on the sartorial inequality and represents how clothes play the role of a social and cultural identity of a particular group of people derived from colonial dominance and eurocentric overview. Hossain argues that because of the power supremacy the sartorial hegemony takes place in the society which determines a person's class and standard based on the clothes s/he wears. Thus, he said, "one's dress code tells of the culture and society he or she belongs to, are now standing for 'status symbol' as well as social and cultural division – a division….generated by power supremacy – an immediate outcome of economic and cultural hegemony of one nation and culture upon another" (1). He discusses that the eurocentric ideology and dominant mindset flourished mostly in the last decades and fetched diverse social and human psychological issues

like identity crisis, alienation from the root, depressing situations and so on. After digging deep into the poems Hossain affirms that "In this depressing situation, Haq's "Ode on the Lungi".....is unquestionably a postcolonial resistance poem to the imperialist cultural hegemony" (2). He also observes that Kaiser Haq's poetry can be studied to acknowledge how the Bangladeshi people feel shy of wearing *lungi* being influenced by the foreign culture. So, according to Hossain, when a post-colonial poet like Kaiser Haq pens such an elaborate celebration of the all too casual wear instead of other more universally appealing objects it is to establish the mundane object's right to be equally spoken and written about. In his study, Hossain also demonstrates Haq's poetry as an endeavor to search for an impartial society where every culture will have the equal homage and there will be no citizen of a supreme nation, rather all will be the global citizens of the planet.

In a nutshell, Hossain attempts to point out inequity, otherness and cultural supremacy mirrored in Haq's poem. Although I haven't attempted a discussion focused on the postcolonial take of Haq's poetry in this paper, like Hossains's insights, the submissive attitude of Bangladeshi people towards Western culture echoes in my thesis too.

Another study of Haq's poetry focused on the Eastern socio-cultural issues is offered by two academic researchers Farhana Yeasmin and Nahid Afroz (Yeasmin, Afroz 47). They try a postcolonial take to scrutinize western tactics of controlling, authorizing and dominating the Eastern countries exploring Haq's poetry. Their research connects the poems of Kaiser Haq with the idea of binary divisions. They argue that the concept of binary divisions which depicts one culture inferior to another is merely fabricated by mostly European countries. Yeasmin and Afroz attempt to trace the representation of East in Kaiser Haq's poetry as it is by introducing the culture with its true values, rituals, beliefs as well as myths and I built on that aspect of their

study. Besides, they point out how his poetry can be read to understand the absurdities of the binaries between the East and the West or the dominated and the dominant as well as the brute and the civilized. They also observe that Kaiser Haq's poetry "question the hegemony of Eurocentric tradition offering a counter discourse of a world of mutuality"(47) and the poems are “deeply grounded in socio-cultural issues of the East, resists the marginalization of non-European cultures and the world-wide internalization of Eurocentric assumptions"(47). Hence, like Hossain they too come to the point that these poems reflect the idea of establishing an egalitarian planet where every culture will enjoy the same power and right.

To sum up, cohesively Yeasmin, and Afroz discuss how Kaiser Haq's works can be studied to deconstruct the universal acceptability and the falsified representation of the Eurocentric tradition revisiting the East, its beauty and vitality.

Following the same pattern Kaiser Haq's poetry is also considered as an attempt to reflect a desire for decolonization. For example, two more academic critics Sayeef Ahmed and Md Sajib Miah address in their paper about how identity crisis, cultural consciousness and desire for decolonization can be explored in Haq's poetry. According to them, Haq seems meticulous and spirited about recollecting his identity which can be even achieved by wearing a traditional costume like *lungi*. Thus, in the poem he invites everyone to wear the cultural artifact to show the self-freedom from sartorial hegemony. They point out that by praising the traditional costume Haq actually indicates the democratic ideal of equity. According to them, the poem “Ode on the Lungi” shows that the 'elites' of the society suffer from a syndrome which is called 'colonial hangover' and the economically downtrodden as well as uneducated backward people of the society are looked down upon by these elites. Therefore, Ahmed and Miah think that this type of

behavior gives the message that some aspects of neo-imperialism exist among us. This particular finding of that paper has helped me to develop the discussion in my thesis on the attitude of elite's in Bangladesh. They also identify Haq's poems as an attempt to inspire the readers to decolonize the nation from the colonization and power of others for which the foremost need is to restore their own culture and own identity, for example "wearing lungi or khaki like Mahatma in Narayan's writing." (Ahmed, Miah 13). In addition, in Haq's poetry they find a kind of rejection for the concept of migration in order to have a fortunate future and Haq's expression seems sarcastic for the man-made artificial paradise, even Haq seems to be fond of the natural beauty of the motherland which he remembers even staying outside of the nation. In that sense they think of Haq as similar to Salman Rushdie, who also restores memories of own land and own cultural identity in 'Imaginary Homeland'.

To sum up, according to them in that sense Haq also resembles Stuart Hall because in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Hall also talks about root and identity. Alike Sayeed and Miah's discussion, my thesis also explores Haq's representation of root and cultural identity in his poetry.

Apart from postcolonial lens, a researcher Tahmina Ahmed sheds light on the broad arena of Kaiser Haq's works as a contribution to transnational literature. Researching on Haq's poetry, she traces the features of transnationalism and observes the poet's diverse experience of living in different nations. According to her, transnational literature can be considered as a movement away from postcolonial literature because she considers it as "the production by poets and writers from various geographical locations and ethnicities who are united by their choice of creative medium, i.e. English" (Ahmed 126). In one sense, though both have much similarity, but

these days, transnationalism is getting more prominence over postcolonial. Transnational literature extends across the national boundaries and appeals for a place where equity exists. Whereas postcolonial writings are more focused on nationalism, culture and resistance. Besides, she thinks that globalization and technological advancements have led to an enhancement of transnational readers along with the easy access of literary texts. Her reading of “Haq's famous poem, "Ode on the Lungi," illustrates how a poet can cross boundaries and appeal to a variety of people who share common concerns and viewpoints"(126). Because the poem is written in the English language, it can reach readers outside the country having a different language but same viewpoints. In addition, she also discusses an interview where Kaiser Haq expressed his desire to be known by his individual identity, because the national identity is a given one and Haq wants to explore the world more through his individual identity. His poetry also reflects his individualism since he underplays the standard version of both his national language and the international language, opting for his unique and individual style by writing in subcontinental English. This paper helps to strengthen my thesis because it offers a vivid discussion on Haq’s representation of individual identity which is foregrounded in Bangladeshi everyday culture. Besides, she said, "In spite of the gravity of the topic, the humour in the treatment of his subject cannot be overlooked or denied: therein lies the appeal of this poem"(132). This stylistic discussion of Haq’s writing is also a concern of my paper. To sum up, after a deep observation and close reading of Haq’s poetry she emphasizes on the fact that Kaiser Haq's writing has put Bangladesh to the arena of world literature.

Following a different pattern, Haq's poetry is marked by an ample use of urban life. Hence, another researcher Mohammad Ataullah Nuri identifies Dhaka as the epicentre of Haq's

poetry during the long sixty years of the poet's poetic career. He observes that Dhaka has been both the setting and the subject matter of Haq's poetry. This finding of Nuri is also connected to my thesis since it attempts to locate the ordinary city life in Haq's poetry as a part of culture. Nuri finds the characters of Haq's poems roaming in the Dhaka city having desires, loneliness, frustration and anxiety of an urban man. Thus, he thinks that Haq has been a "ubiquitous observer and explorer of the mystery of Dhaka" (Nuri 87). According to Nuri, Haq's poems not only represent Dhaka city but also can be examined to discover the Dhakaite sensibility. Nuri associates Haq with other modernist poets and points out that as Pound, Eliot, Yeats portrayed the cities of Great Britain, Shamsur Rahman, Shahid Qadri and Al Mahmud portrayed the capital of Bangladesh in Bengali, Kaiser Haq has also portrayed Dhaka city, its development "from a polis to metropolis" (87), and the metropolitan life of its inhabitants in the time of rapid development having depression, alienation, dejection, spiritual sterility and so on. According to him, as Haq belongs to Dhaka, the curves and contours of it get abundant space in his works. Nuri identifies the speaker of Haq's poetry as "a city flaneur" (89), a modern concept that characterizes one as a passionate observer of the complicated aspects of city life or in other words a walker of the city street who drowns in the crowd, established by Baudelaire in "The Painter of Modern Life". Therefore, Nuri thinks that Haq has found his "spiritual home" in Dhaka city where his origin is rooted because Nuri finds Haq comparing himself with Jibanananda Das and expressing his profound bonding with the motherland where most of the modern people have a tendency to build the career in the West. In addition, Nuri points out an ambivalent love-hate relationship of Kaiser Haq with the Dhaka city like other modernist poets of the time.

Eventually, Nuri's long observation of Haq's poetry sum ups that Haq's city seems both beautiful and ugly at the same time, where with the appearance of the darkness a park turns into a parlour of the landless prostitutes. Hence, the speaker of Haq's poem too seems both a happy citizen as well as an unhappy person and these duality inherent in the life in Dhaka also get importance and vividly discussed in my paper.

Similar to Nuri, Zaman too attempts to find out the urban consciousness in Haq's poetry, claiming that the urban consciousness has shaped the poetic imagination of Haq. Zaman finds Haq's character in the poems having a desire to leave the urban city and go to a peripheral place where a peaceful departure is possible. In addition, Zaman sees an authentic representation of the city life which is beautiful but bustling, which life can be celebrated but which cannot provide one a peaceful death. She depicts that the city has become significant for the existence of such contradictory issues and complexity which are lucidly portrayed in Haq's poetry. Where most of the poets only focused on the negativity of city life because of chaos, corruption and safety issues, Zaman points out how Haq created a new dimension by portraying the delighted aspects of the city life along with the struggles involved in it. She also draws connections of Haq's poems with other literary works such as "Forever Amber" with Jason Finch's "Modern Urban Theory and Study of Literature" which identifies the cities of 20th century as more professionalized and more theorized than the cities were ever been. She compares "Buriganga Blues" with "The Problem of London" where Nicholas Freeman identifies Paris as a true capital but Dhaka lacks that title because of it's corruption created by the city dwellers; associates "Eid Mubarak" with "Writing The City" where the authors define a city embodying the history of the personal experience of human beings, because in "Eid Mubarak" the poet has portrayed his experience of celebrating Eid in a diverse way than the past.

To sum up, Zaman identifies the representation of history of Dhaka city, its change along with the rise of global capitalism, its policies, it's class contradiction, political condition or in a word the entire struggle of citizens in Haq's *Pariah*. Similar to Zaman's observations, my paper is also an endeavor to demonstrate the diverse aspects of the ordinary life of an urban citizen in Haq's selected poems.

In conclusion, after reviewing the analyses of different critics Kaiser Haq's poetry seems to be eye opening works of literature not only to read the culture, feel the culture and travel through the culture but also to question the problematic areas of it. Therefore, Haq's masterpieces of South Asian poetry highly motivates the critics to attempt research study and grab the attention of readers on ins and outs of South Asian culture, cultural inequity, dominance of the so called civilized supreme culture and question the problematic aspects of the culture of less powerful groups. Eventually, it can be said that Haq's poetry mostly represents the everyday life of people as the foremost part of cultural identity.

Chapter 3: Everyday Culture of Bangladesh in Haq's selected poems

Haq's longest and most read poem "Ode on the Lungi " is a comic attempt having a very serious theme beneath. The ode deals with a very known, common, ordinary but essential everyday male attire lungi. The use of allusions and parody makes the ode a masterpiece. In addition, with the use of musical phrases, alliteration and imagery Haq creates a beautiful rhythmic cadence. Hence, the poem reveals a pattern in the way ideas unfold that the long ode of 216 lines doesn't create monotony to the readers rather offers an enjoyment of reading literature. In each stanza the poem introduces thought provoking issues and connect those ideas with lungi, a common casual wear in Bangladesh. About this poem Haq says in an interview that "In retrospect it seems to me that one source of inspiration for 'Lungi' was Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poem "Underwear" (Haq). Like the poem "Underwear" Haq's poem is also a comic take on serious themes, focuses on something human beings wear in everyday life, and also Haq uses literary allusions and parody as Ferlinghetti did. The poem has a deep sociological theme that almost every Bangladeshi wears lungi but in Bangladesh it is considered as an inappropriate attire for outside use or in any party. It is considered as an appropriate attire for inside the home and forbidden for formal events. Therefore, Haq feels the urge to take that essential but inexpensive attire as the subject of his ode and protests with his pen against the sartorial hegemony. In addition, Haq encourages the readers to think about the class distinction of the society in everyday life which is even determined by clothes. Lungi is associated with a particular class of people like rickshaw pullers, farmers etc. or the less powerful group of the society because lungi is affordable for them and they are more accustomed to this comfortable costume than the so called gentle attire. Thus, Haq's poetry seems to follow Williams' overview

of culture by not adhering to the elitists and exclusionary conception of culture rather reaffirming his belongingness to the working class. Williams claims that he also has a culture to offer and a great part of English arts and learning have been produced by the non-bourgeois. Haq's celebration of the lungi follows the same line of arguments. Hence, to represent the common men's costume throughout the entire poem Haq creates a conversation with the Western great democratic poet Walt Whitman who represented himself as a common man in a drawing in his work *Leaves of Grass*. Addressing him as grandpa Haq makes an ironic remark at the beginning of the poem: "Grandpa Walt,/ Allow me to share/ my thoughts with you,/ If only because/ every time I read/ "Passage to India"/ and come across/ the phrase/ "passage to more than India"/ I fancy," (Haq, lines 1-10)

Here Haq uses the direct allusion to E.M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India* and makes the parody of the title as "passage to more than India" (Haq, line 9). That novel is very relevant since the novel portrays the racist attitude of the English and how Indians were oppressed by the English in their everyday social life. And the existence of the same cultural inequality in contemporary Bangladesh even after getting freedom from the British exemplifies that though the British have gone yet the cultural inequity is still in practice in the subcontinent. However, Haq speaks out against the racist attitude towards ethnic culture of Bangladesh:

"No, I'm not complaining about/ the jacket and tie/ required in certain places-...../I'm talking of/ something more fundamental./ Hundreds of millions/ of men and women,/ from the Pacific to Africa/ wears the lungi" (Haq, lines 26-35)

Haq argues that there is no problem if other attires are given prestigious position in any event like "fancy dress parties"(Haq, line 28) but he questions the discriminatory behavior to

lungi which is an everyday attire of millions of people in the subcontinent. Clothing is one of the fundamental rights of human beings and lungi as a daily wear meets one of the basic needs of a large number of ethnic group in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar etc. If lungi can be regarded as a subaltern garment, why is it discriminated against? Doesn't the discrimination of lungi mean a discrimination toward one of the fundamental rights of all those ethnic people? Haq is concerned about that fundamental right of wearing ethnic costume. Even not only men but also women wear lungi for example, there is a popular costume in Bangladesh used by women of the tribal area named as "thami" which is also a kind of lungi. Lungi is also worn by the people of Sri Lanka and Myanmar with diverse name and style-"as the sarong, munda, htamein, saaram,/ pinon, ma'awaiis kitenge, kanga, kaiki,/ or the variant dhoti./ They wear it day in day out,/ indoors and out."(Haq, lines 37-41).

It is unfortunate that, though in many countries a large group of people wear lungi outside in public, it is yet not recognized in many other countries because of the cultural arrogance of the so-called supreme culture. Haq also mentions- "there are more people/ in lungis/ than the population/ of Europe and USA./ Now try wearing one/ to a White House appointment-/ not even you, Grandpa Walt,/ laureate of democracy,/ will make it in."(Haq, lines 44-51). By this stanza Haq offers a sarcasm that although the number of lungi users is more than the population in the West, even the great democratic poet cannot wear lungi in the White House because it is not a recognized formal attire. Hence, Haq questions, "But why? - this is the question/ I ask all to ponder." (Haq, lines 55-56). Thus, Haq questions Whitman why he had not spoken out for lungi though he believed that everything and everyone is equal. Haq doubts perhaps Whiteman had not

spoken out because lungi is not kilt. Because "the Kilt is with "us"/ but the lungi is with "them"!" (Haq, lines 59-60)

Thus, Haq brings the idea of "otherness" in the poem, a concept introduced by the Occidental writers, and in a comic way Haq points out the very serious issue of contemporary world which is the hollow democratic attitude, or which is a hypocrisy in the name of democracy, which cannot cross the boundary of the word "us" and cannot include "others" with "us" to create an egalitarian world. Hence, in this stanza Haq urges for a world where there will be no superior or inferior culture but all will be equally included in the ocean of culture. Similarly in Williams's concept of culture he also disagrees with the belief that the ordinary mass culture is a threat to destroy the elite culture rather he considers both as territory of culture. Haq observes that though the elites wear lungi at home as a comfortable attire, they feel uncomfortable to accept it as a standard cloth and doesn't allow it as a costume for any occasion. Such behavior discloses their alienation from the root. Hence, Haq reminds the reader to "Think too of neo-imperialism/and sartorial hegemony, / how brown and yellow sahibs/ in natty suits/ crinkle their noses/ at compatriots/ (even close relations)/ in modest lungis:" (Haq, lines 61-68)

Haq addresses those elites of the society as Brown Sahibs. Because they are so submissive to western culture that their own cultural elements and actions seem insignificant to them. As if they live two lives or live a life in between the two opposite ideas; one is at home in lungi, and another one is totally opposite to it in public where even they neglect others for wearing lungi! Also this hegemony is being played out within the family in private space. Therefore, Haq shares his cousin's story - "Hegemony invades private space/ as well: my cousin

in America/ would get home from work/ and lounge in a lungi-/ till his son grew ashamed/ of his dad and started hiding/ the ridiculous ethnic attire". (Haq, lines 82-88)

That humiliating attitude towards the ethnic attire of more than million people makes the poet disappointed and he clamors against such assault on his native attire by proudly announcing-"I'll proudly proclaim/ I AM A LUNGI ACTIVIST!/ Friends and fellow lungi lovers,/ let us organize lungi parties and lungi parades,/ let us lobby Hallmark and Archies/ to introduce an International Lungi Day/ When the UN Chief will wear a lungi/ and address the world." (Haq, lines 89-104). Here Haq declares himself as a lungi activist and the noticeable thing is that he writes this line with all the capital letters. This unique way of expression undoubtedly portrays his strong emotion for his native culture and his ideological war against the contemporary hybridity in human attitude which brings a crisis for the deeply rooted ethnic culture. Terry Eagleton also points out this crisis within culture in his essay "Culture in Crisis" saying “culture and crisis go together” (Eagleton 40). Haq wants to lobby big companies to introduce a lungi day when the UN chief himself will wear the lungi, so that neither the white sahibs of West nor the brown sahibs of East can assault lungi anymore and the whole world recognizes lungi as a cultural attire for all. Haq surely is not alone in voicing his discontent. It is to mention that, recently a lungi brand named Amanat Sha Lungi is seen to represent the same idea like Haq’s and they have created an advertisement of lungi in which a group of men wearing lungi have taken part in a parade in front of foreigners and shout out the speech-

"Nijer desher nijer poshak pore egie cholo jorse"

or “Walk with courage, wearing native attire ”

Going back to his poems, Haq makes a parody of Whitman's "Song of Myself" in which Whitman's celebration of himself by the lines "I celebrate myself, and sing myself,/ And what I assume you shall assume," (Walt Whitman, lines 1-2) ludicrously becomes Haq's celebration of lungi as "Grandpa Walt, I celebrate my lungi/ and sing my lungi/ and what I wear/ you shall wear." (Haq, lines 105-108). Thus, Haq gives lungi the great honour. Again as Whitman sees- "Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,/ Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly;/ Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome." (Walt Whitman, lines 199-102). Referring to those twenty-eight young men Haq says- "and lounging in a lungi/ in a cottage on Cox's Bazar beach/ (the longest in the world, we proudly claim)/ watched 28 young men in lungis bathing in the sea." (Haq, lines 111-114). Thus, Haq wants to see those twenty eight men or the one thinking of twenty eight years of womanly life bathing in Cox's Bazar wearing lungi. Thus, Haq frequently takes literary allusion from Whitman's poetry and searches for the freedom of subaltern culture. Because Whitman's poetry infused the idea of equality and uniformity and he is considered as the voice of democracy. In addition, Haq wants to establish the idea that lungi is not less significant than any fashionable attire of West and says- "But what is this *thing*/ (my learned friends,/ I'm alluding to Beau Brummell)," (Haq, lines 115-117)

Beau Brummell was an arbiter of male fashion in England and he invented the necktie. Haq alludes to him and gives a scientific description about the size, shape and diverse use of lungi to justify his idea that lungi is a comfortable, useful and good looking attire which deserves to be recognized by the world as a fashionable attire. Hence Haq says- "A rectangular cloth,/ white, coloured, check or plaid,/ roughly 45X80 inches,/ halved lengthwise/ and stitched// to make a tube/ you can get into/...../ One size fits all!" (Haq, lines 120-129). Then with the perfect

application of humour and sarcasm Haq praises the utility of lungi by the Bangladeshi men and makes the readers visualize a common man's appearance in lungi by the lines- "The hem serves as napkin/..../ to bring lips to raised/ lungi edge: only ensure/ it's not raised too high,/ . . . the lungi can be folded up/ like a scarf./ Or converted into a carrying bag/ for groceries and things/.../ Or you can let your imagination/ play with the textile tube" (Haq, lines 133-151)

He goes on to emphasize the appropriateness of the garment as a regular wear for a majority of the people by referring to its affordability. As the price of lungi is very reasonable and it has diverse uses Haq portrays that even a needy man can afford lungi and easily spend most of the time wearing only lungi- "Most of the year, when barebodied/ is cool, you can lead a decent life/ with only a couple of lungis,"(Haq, lines 160-163). Hence, according to Haq lungi is “a complete wardrobe" for any user and a symbol of equality in the globe (Haq, line 183) . Then Haq uses another allusion to *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* in which the poet repeatedly praises wine for its positive effects considering it as a source of happiness, wisdom and divinity saying- "A loaf of bread, a jug of wine, and thou." (Edward FitzGerald lines, 45-48). Haq treats lungi in the same manner as a source of happiness where wine replaces lungi and the line becomes- "a book of smutty jokes, a bottle of hooch/ and your beloved inside your lungi-/ There's paradise for you." (Haq, lines 201-203)

Eventually, another allusion to Whitman's "Song of Myself" "...flag of my disposition" (Whiteman, line 101) turns into "flag of your indisposition -/ and wave it at the useless stars!" (Haq, lines 216-217) in Haq’s voice. By this parody Haq indicates the Western attitude of neglecting Eastern culture as a symbol of their indisposition. Haq's selection of the subject of the poem, his election of English language for the foreign readers and the unique style of using

English language in the easiest way for the native readers, his examples from native everyday life and in a contrast the use of allusions from western literary works, his creation of the imagery of a common man in lungi and in a contrast alluding foreign fashion arbiter, his shout for the true establishment of democracy, his voice for justice and equity and his vivid description of lungi as well as a strong argument for it- all in all appeals to the readers of the world literature to stand for the establishment of an egalitarian planet for each inhabitant.

In search of such an egalitarian world where Bangladeshi culture will also be explored by the western readers Haq includes Bangladesh in the edge of world literature by writing a prose poem of 1000 words for an anthology of Harvard University press. It is written in an essay format named as "Forever Amber" in which Haq discloses the history of traditional Bangladeshi culture and its movements with the passage of time. After introducing Lungi Haq introduces another cultural attire which was once the pride of Bengal, "Muslin Sari". "Until Manchester textile destroyed the muslin industry, Dhaka was an emporium for the finest fabrics ever." (Haq) That time Dhaka was famous for the muslin sari all over the world. However, with the change of time and with the rapid development, culture has moved to a new avenue and that attraction of Bengal, muslin sari is surviving with only one variety known as "jamdani or Dhakai saris" (Haq) which is much expensive although "the weavers ill paid, perhaps worse off than garment workers whose dismal working conditions make the news, particularly when tragedy strikes" (Haq)

Thus, Haq moves on to the rising contemporary capitalist culture of the country. Bangladesh has a large number of garment factories and one of the biggest foreign remittances of the country comes from that leather industry. In addition, that industry has also changed the everyday living pattern of the country. Haq says about this change nicely- “Never before were so

many women seen on Dhaka streets: a sociological revolution." (Haq). Once in the rural areas of Bangladesh women were only considered as a cook of the home and the producer of children and as they were deprived of basic education they couldn't be self-dependent. But now these women are working in the garments and factories, they are earning their livelihood and contributing to the family which gives them a power to speak their thoughts in the family. As Williams doesn't consider the progressive and the new as negative attribute of Culture, Haq also praises that newness in the life style of women and includes them in the poem- "From slums within walking distance of their factories they walk in groups, for safety, out of a sense of solidarity; purposefully, with serious expressions, when going to work; relaxed smiling, chatting when heading home." (Haq)

However, Haq speaks for their rights too though these workers work very hard they are paid very little. These cheap laborers work the whole day in the factories and even often they work at nights. However, there is no security of their life inside those factories where even they remain locked at working time and cannot go out even if any emergency happens. In this regard Haq mentions about Rana Plaza tragedy and says- "Rana Plaza is a symbol of inhuman side of global capitalism" (Haq). Rana plaza collapse is one of the biggest tragedies that happened in Bangladesh where the biggest number of workers lost their lives and even many of the dead bodies hadn't been found by the families for funeral. The whole world wobbled on that human made tragedy. The worst scenario of the practiced capitalist culture in everyday spare is that the factory owners take the biggest part of the income and the workers who actually make the products get the lowest part of it and the rich get richer, the poor become poorer. Thus Haq says-

"Also, the richest in city or country are richer- the gap between the richest and the poorest wider-than ever." (Haq)

Hence, Haq urges the readers to think deeply about what is always seen in the street which is- "The state of governance, whichever party holds power, is evident in the street. Mercedes, BMW, aLexus." (Haq) And the ordinary people can only use "public buses, motorised three-wheels, rickshaws, pedal vans." (Haq) Hence, Haq points out the corrupted political condition and the abuse of power practiced in the country which gives birth to various problems and makes the everyday life quite difficult to lead for common people. In addition, Haq identifies some other cultural changes like the change of muslin culture in the same poem and mentions about the tiny houses "all pulled down and replaced with stuffy jerry- built quarters" (Haq) and also mentions about the new culture of virtual society such as "chatroom in cell phone, Viber, Skype, Facebook or dreary soap operas." (Haq) Haq also reminisces about his boyhood days. Despite of " the background rumble of traffic and the manic tooting of horns" (Haq) he hears the colloquial phonetics of the hucksters "tea (*Chai garam!*), peanuts (*Cheena badaam!*), paan cigarettes *(Paan-bidi-cigarette!*)." (Haq). Besides, Haq shows another changing aspect of everyday life in Bangladesh that a great number of people are leaving villages and "The city's population has risen dizzyingly since independence." (Haq) Thus, the loaded people are making the capital a densely populated city.

Eventually, in that poem he remembers the days when he used to get excited for ice cream and hot patties hearing the hawkers cry. Although Haq still hears these sounds which are locked in his memory, nowadays children are very rarely familiar with all these. Because these sights and sounds are fading away in the developed cities, where children are always seen to be

busy with playing games on smartphones or looking on the screen of any other device. In cities like Dhaka hawking is a profession of many people but normally their customers are working class people and in some restricted elite areas these hawking is also forbidden. Hence, the change of culture has changed the lifestyle here and the poet is also worried about those hawkers who used to hope for a "buyer for the last couple of his savouries, for they may not keep till the morrow, and a few extra takas matter." (Haq). Because of the change of culture, those needy hawkers may have lost their large number of customers or have become jobless or may have found some other way to earn. Haq prays for those hawkers in a touchy manner and says- "My sleepy head fills with a prayer: may he find a customer and go home in quiet satisfaction.....may he reach his slum home safely...and if he dreams his dreams be sweet" (Haq). Thus, Haq doesn't shy away from portraying the seamy side of the otherwise developing city and creates the imagery of co-existing poverty through a hawker's misery. Haq prays for the hawker so that he can dream sweet knowing that one cannot dream sweet if he sleeps with hunger in the belly and anxiety in the brain. Thus, in that prose poem with the use of imagistic language Haq beautifully describes the city life of Bangladesh in a way that the reader can feel the pride of Bengal at the Mughal time, realize the inhuman aspects of recent capitalism and also can feel the agony of the poet's heart in search of the past life when things were different.

Although Culture changes and that change often hybridizes or decays the root culture badly but the beauty of culture is that culture carries the beautiful legacy of history too for example in the poem "Welcome, Tourist Sahib " with the use of Subcontinental English and the same imagist style Haq introduces Bangladesh once again with its historical legacy. As if the readers can see the image of the entire country in this poem that focuses on the tourism sector of

Bangladesh. The speaker of the poem is a tourist guide and by his voice Haq describes many serious things in a comic way. That guide doesn't know English well and often mixes codes with Bangla words. However, his way of speaking makes the readers have fun, but it also incites their critical reflection. In the poem the guide beautifully describes the beautiful aspects of Bangladeshi culture and points out the fact that instead of customary pleasures, our day-to-day life has to offer to the tourists tremendous joy in the form of food. Here, the extraordinary heritage is to be found in the ordinary. So the guide says- "...but please try/ local Mughal dishes - biriani, chicken pilau, dahi barra/ and sweetmeats - rashgolia, shandesh, chom chom" (Haq, lines 44-46) These foods are the pride of Bangladeshi culture because in the West these spicy dishes are not that available and South Asia is still famous for spicy food all over the world. Biriani was first cooked in the kitchen of Mughals and they kind of tried to create a new dish using Persian rice with meat as Nilanjan Hajra writes in his article "The History of Biryani" that "For over three hundred years, the Mughals brought into India the finest of the examples of the art of cooking from Persia…There is documented evidence that a dish, with five distinct varieties, was being cooked in Shah Jahan's imperial kitchen, which without an iota of doubt was the immediate precursor to today's biryani" (Nilanjan Hajra). So, Bengal got that rich food habit from Mughals and still proudly carries that legacy which is now one of the most attractions of tourists. In addition, sweetmeats like *roshgolla shandesh* are also very rarely found in the Western countries. There is an age-old tradition in Bengal that guests are considered as similar to god. So generally Bangladeshi people welcome foreigners in the best possible way and offers all the traditional foods. However Haq criticizes the blatant submissiveness. Hence Haq creates the character of the guide to portray those submissive attitude of people and the guide seems to have an inferiority complex when he says- "When you come I go to airport (international wing)/ to

receive you and conduct with welcome./ you are Very important person, VIP to me, / full of £ and/or $. I am BA pass/ in History, Economics, Philosophy/ and General English and Bengali/ are the compulsory of course./ Now I training for tourist guide." (Haq, lines 3-10)

In these lines in a comic way Haq indicates something very deeper. That character actually represents many of us in the society since it is very common in our society that people consider the white skin of a foreigner as superior for whom they can do each and everything. The guide speaks to the tourist noticeably in a way as if he is doing an advertisement of himself and the country to sell. In the context of neo-colonialism, that kind of submissive behavior can invite the foreign nations to take control over previously colonized lands like ours once again. Therefore, Haq criticizes such type of behavior by portraying this character of the guide. Thus, even breaking rules of traditional usage of the English language, Haq creates a new idiolect, the subcontinental English to express his thoughts. And not following the British or American academic rules of using English language, he again protests against such submissive behavior. Haq's patriotic spirit is again seen in the lines- "Bangladesh is a new nation/ with very ancient history heritage, Hindu, Buddhist,/ Muslim Moghul, British, Pakistani,/ Bangladeshi finally - and forever " (Haq, lines 23-26)

These lines give a glimpse of the history of independence. After the rule of Mughal Empire for three hundred years, British colonial rule for two hundred years and finally defeating the Pakistanis Bangladesh got freedom, the freedom that brought for Bangladeshis an individual identity of their own and here Haq proudly and boldly declares that the identity of being Bangladeshi is an identity forever. In addition, in Bangladesh Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists all live together as it is a secular country. Hence, the culture of Bangladesh is a mixed culture

having some aspects of all these religions and all those colonizers. Though Bangladesh is a secular country, the majority of people are Muslims and the amazing thing is that only Dhaka city has more than 300 beautiful mosques. So, Bangladesh is worldwide famous for the age old beautiful mosques hence the guide says- "There are many mosques of course every where,/ old and new, because ninety per cent people/ are believing Muslim religion." (Haq, lines 57-59). Then the guide moves on to the tribal area from the city and villages and mentions about the tribal culture.

"But in tribal area I take you to see/ men and women especially living naturally/ in topless. Believe me/ they invent topless before west!" (Haq, lines 65-68). Although tribal culture is often neglected Haq brings it in the poetry as a part of Bangladeshi culture. The guide talks about their dress that they wear only on the bottom part of their body without tops. In the 9060s there was a culture of topless dress in the West. Comparing the tribal dress up with those topless dresses the guide proudly says that these tribal people invent topless culture. However, here the irony is that these tribal people wear topless for vulnerability and poverty whereas the westerns wore for style only. Besides, to meet the sensual desire the guide is trying to give the tourist a kind of ‘scopophilic pleasure’ by seeing those topless women. ‘Scopophilic pleasure’ is a form of having pleasure through sight “using another person as an object of sexual stimulation” (Mulvey Laura 61). So, it represents how insecure the lives of tribal people are. Hence, news of even child rape in tribal area is seen very often. Therefore, in a sense, by portraying tribal costume and culture in the poem Haq makes the readers aware of the vulnerability of the life of tribal groups in Bangladesh. And finally the guide of the poem ends his introduction of the country and himself saying- "This is our philosophy: we believe in peace,/ prosperity, progress.

It costs money in foreign exchange./ So come. I believe in friendship also strongly" (Haq, lines 74-75)

This last line once again takes to E.M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India* where the conversation concluded by the message that an English and an Indian can never be friends. Here through the voice of the guide Haq says the exact opposite idea than Forster's with the hope of a friendly world, where there will be no power culture and all the aspects of every culture both refined and ordinary ones practiced in everyday spare, both supreme and inferior ones will get the same homage sharing the same power.

Chapter 4: Everyday City Life in Haq's Poetry

Haq is essentially and entirely an urban poet. Hence, Dhaka, the city of his own, where he grew up in, its inhabitants and its everyday culture have a strong and recurring appearance in his works. Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh has been celebrated by the poets for both its beauty and drawbacks. Though the city has its unique culture which is followed by a group of people, it also gives shelter to the people coming from the other corners of the country. Hence, Dhaka can be recognized as a cultural hub of Bangladesh where more or less every culture is practiced. Therefore, to have the taste of the everyday culture of the country it would be wise to explore life in Dhaka. As Shamsur Rahman imagined Dhaka as floating in the moonlight in his poem "Jyotsnay Vasche Dhaka" or as Syed Shamsul Haq wrote "Amar Shohor Dhaka", Kaiser Haq also creates imagery of life in Dhaka in many of his poems with the brilliant use of imagism.

Haq's poetry makes the readers visualize diverse aspects of Dhaka and in this attempt the use of imagism – an attempt to create an image with language – embellishes his poetry. In the poem "Inheritance" Haq portrays a picture of Dhaka with the use of words. He commences with the name of a hotel that reminds of the Mughal Empire and creates a contrast between the lives of that hotel visitors and the lives of street children who live in the hotel neighborhood. He introduces- "Hotel Sonargoan, named after an ancient capital, now a pile of mouldering bricks," (Haq, lines 1-2). Hotel Sonargoan is one of the most luxurious five star hotels in Bangladesh situated in the heart of the city. The hotel provides such accommodation that offers a peaceful respite from the chaotic, hustle and bustle of downtown city. Besides, the contemporary comfort of the hotel such as modern amenities, plush rooms, spa etc. promises to refresh senses and ensures peace of mind. The hotel's grand Ballroom remains busy with the grand programs of the

city crowded by all the gentlemen, upper class and educated people. So, this hotel can be a symbol of the representation of refined culture as Williams considers the refined aspects of the society as a part of its culture.

However, that luxury is out of reach for most of the people in the city and the worst scene of capitalist society which is very common in Dhaka city. The visitors of Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel who travel in luxurious cars can never feel the agony of the people in the crossroads. But Haq brings those roadside ordinary people too in this poem and includes them as a part of culture as Williams also conceptualizes culture as ordinary and life itself, not beneath or above it. Thus, Haq says- "...the crossroads/ where we spend a sizeable fraction/ of our days trying to ignore/ beggars of all ages and juvenile hustlers," (Haq, lines 6-10).

Even if the poem is about the fancy hotel and actions that happen surrounding it, Haq's depiction makes space for the people who are otherwise invisible from the aesthetic world, considered as misfit. Dhaka city has a number of luxurious places and at the same time the number of beggars can amaze anyone. The most noticeable thing is that there is no age limit for the beggars. For example a five years old child will ask for money with a team of four or five more friends and also an old man will ask for money walking on the road having life risk. That picture of the city shows the increasing capitalist culture in Bangladesh. As Dhaka is crowded with people from different parts of the country who come to Dhaka for a better life and to earn money, one can meet hustlers in every street of the city. Because when one comes with the dream of earning money and doesn't get any suitable opportunity s/he easily gets fascinated to other ways of making money and that fact of the city life is also seen in the poem. In addition, people of Dhaka city spend most of their time on the road because of huge traffic. Hence, near to

the Sonargaon hotel in the road named Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenu people often pretend to see the "stainless steel fountain" (Haq, line 12) that is situated near Karwan Bazar, to ignore the roadside beggars because it is quite impossible to meet that large group of beggars' plea. That fountain is named as SAARC Fountain and "That looks like something/ from a chemical works/ and sprinkles water/ only on the national festivals" (Haq, lines 13-16). On the national festivals Dhaka city appears in such a beautiful look as if it is a new bride and those days that fountain sprinkles water. On other days though there remains nothing to watch yet people on the cars and buses pretend to watch it with much amusement while waiting"...for the traffic light/ to turn green,..." (Haq, lines 17-18). Then Haq portrays the picture of that busy road at midnight and says- "Past midnight- traffic cops all abede-/ lights shine and change pointlessly/ Trucks laden with produce/ to three times their capacity" (Haq, lines 24-27)

The Trucks often start after 8pm in the roads and gradually the number of large colorfully decorated trucks increases in the road with the increase of time in the clock as well as with the increasing depth of the night. However, the noticeable fact is that in this crowded city as the local buses carry more passengers than their capacity in the same way the Trucks carry more product than their capacity. To mention about the products of the Trucks Haq introduces the "largest grocery market" (Haq, line 5) of the city which is Karwan Bazar and it was also named over "Mughal caravanserai"(Haq, line 4). Karwan Bazar is the biggest business and commercial hub situated in the heart of the city. These Trucks come and go there from various district of the country carrying rice, vegetables, dry fish etc. and the whole night the road remains busy where the "street brats materialize/ like apparitions;" (Haq, lines 34-35)

This couplet is important to understand the uncertainty of the life of street children who roam on the road and often jump on the trucks like apparitions taking life risks in the dark night to collect things that are the source of their earning. That scenery is very common in Bangladesh but a common man can never think of seeing this everyday action in any literary work. That is the unique characteristic of Haq's writing that he brings this mundane phenomenon, the loaded truck and the story of its being robbed by street brats, in the literature as an aesthetic subject of his poem. By drawing on such small pleasures and excitements from everyday lives from the roadside he pays the much-deserved homage to the life of the working class that Williams talked about. Eventually, Haq ends the poem portraying a serious picture in a comic tone that in one sense makes the readers worried and in another sense makes the readers amazed about the deeds of street children. He says- "and slithers down like a cat/ to vanish with his friends/ like exhaust from a beat-up old truck." (Haq, lines 43-45)

That is how the children steal vegetables as much as they can from the truck and flee with their friends like cats because the driver cannot notice them from the front of the truck. Although it is very risky, they do it in an enjoyable manner as they have no other way to survive and that is their earning source. That's rendered in an apparently unsuspecting humorous tone and through strong use of imagism Haq recreates a physical appearance of the street children's everyday action. Here Haq creates an overall picture of the society and this poem goes on in such a sequence as if a reader is gradually realizing the harsh reality of life. As if by the artistic depiction of the poet, coming from the luxurious dreamy world of Pan Pacific Sonargoan the readers end up with knowing the hard reality from the lifestyle of street children.

It seems, Haq travels all over the city through his poems and from Karwan Bazar he turns to another part of the city and creates the imagery of the life of a single man standing in the New Market. Dhaka is the city of dreams for many people of Bangladesh who come to Dhaka for a better future and struggle alone leaving the family in the village. Even after getting a job very few of them can bring their families to the city because their limited salary doesn't allow them initially. Kaiser Haq's “Sahara Desert" is such a dramatic monologue that introduces an urban man of Dhaka city. That poem is written on sub-continental English to create the perfect imagery of the character of an urban man who cannot speak that second language perfectly and often code mixes with the mother tongue. For example there is a line in the poem "Band party will play film music," (Haq, line 40) in which the noun phrase "Band party" is actually used in Bengali language. In the poem the speaker is a middle class employee of a commercial firm who lives in Dhaka city. He goes to New Market which is a popular old market at the center of the city. A large number of people gather there every day from different backgrounds. As according to Williams, culture is both refined or artistic and ordinary, the New Market is the place where both types of culture is practiced. Because, one can find a writer or a reader where the big book shops are situated in the market, one can see an artist on the corner of the market where every kind of colors, canvas and everything related to art can be found and also one can find the people who want to buy things on cheap price from the hawkers in the market. The entire area of the New Market is arranged in a way that every class of people can find their necessary things within their budget. Even the misery of Hawkers is also visible there since they are often seen to be beaten by the police and run away with all their products in a hurry. In the poem the speaker talks to an unknown person who is also a middle class service holder in an insurance company. And the

speaker pleasingly says- "how do you do, Brother? It is pleasure/ to know you for gossip purpose."(Haq, lines 2-3)

So he is happy to have someone, who he address as ‘brother’ to gossip with as well as freely shares his thoughts, experiences, everyday habits, melancholy, dejection, desire and fantasy about the future. Perhaps, it is because *adda* is a very popular culture in Bangladesh or maybe he belongs to those working class folks who work in Dhaka city leaving their families in villages. Thus, being alienated from family, he feels lonely and seeks for the company of someone to listen to him. Again as the everyday habit of a group of people is also a part of culture, the everyday habit of that man can be seen in the poem. He mentions his habit of seeing girls and says- "I come now and then/ for viewing of girls."(Haq, lines 11-12)

A very important aspect of urban masculinity reflects here which gives a sort of license to gaze at women. Dhaka is very heterosexual in a sense that, it appreciates one to marry and give birth to children. However, it is opposite in a sense that the display of intimacy in public is not appreciated here and the entire society is against any conversation on this discourse. Thus, every sexual feelings, thoughts and all discourse related to sex remain repressed which makes a man frustrated with repressed thoughts and desires. For example the man says- "Then we are in same boat./ Viewing is our hobby." (Haq, lines 14-15). Hobby is known as such activity that one does for enjoyment. It provides mental peace and pleasure. When a person admits viewing (girls) as his hobby, it directly indicates his sexual frustration which makes him gaze people in public places like New Market. That frustration makes the gentleman behave opposite to the title of being "gentleman". That is the way the poet breaks the traditional belief about the word "gentleman" in the poem and reflects the real picture of the society as it is. It implies a gap

between the existing ideals and reality showing that the social moral values a man has internalized as a respectable gentleman excludes the articulation of desire and passion.

This very frustration and loneliness compels him to dream of marriage. He wishes to make the person he is talking to in the poem, another middle class service holder, a part of his family. Eventually, he wants to have "peace and quietness and love" (Haq, line 27) by getting married which is another straight surface of his loneliness and deep sexual frustration. So, while portraying a real picture of city life Haq doesn't hide that dark side of the city where frustration engulfs people. Generally being alienated from the root when one starts a new life in an unknown place, s/he suffers from an identity crisis. That identity crisis gives birth to ambivalence which is the position of having assorted feelings, uncertainty, fluctuation and contradictory thoughts and ideas as well as conflicting beliefs or reactions about something. It is also a common consequence of the existential crisis which is often seen in the people of Dhaka city. In the poem "Sahara Desert", ambivalence is portrayed in the speaker. Even often, he seems to be a hypocrite having ambivalent thoughts. He once says- "I come now and then/ for viewing of girls" (Haq, lines 11-12). Then he says- "What is happening to world?/ Ladies are like mother and sister, no?" ? (Haq, line 21-22)

Although he satiates his desire of having a wife by seeing unknown girls, he again describes them as mothers and sisters that reflects his self-contradictory thought. Perhaps, he has respect for women in the depth of his conscience but his frustration and loneliness in the rapidly developing busy city makes him gaze at them. Again, he thinks of himself as a gentleman as he does the so-called white collar job and does not disturb girls just gazes at them. However, this gawking at women, which is an all too common activity in public places, implies what the

established gentleman narrative chooses to repress and exclude as unruly and uncontrollable the realm of sexuality.

Then he says about the chaos of the city- "Bad manners everywhere/ Riot and civil war."(Haq, lines 23-24). So, it is seen that the reflection of all the chaotic things of city life is demonstrated in the poem. Although the speaker dreams of a happy life at the same time he seems to suffer through gloominess and melancholy which ultimately drives him to abandon the chaos of the wretched society. Hence, he remains whimsical and does not take any action to stop anarchy that happens in front of him. Therefore, he admits that he avoids CNN, BBC, BTV as “all full of pathetic news” (Haq, line 28). An ordinary man thinks that he is not capable of changing the society and does not retain hope inside as generally the upper class are only considered as the change makers of the society. Finally, he hides himself from the world and somehow tries to run away from the challenges of life. He thinks of himself as just a mere puppet of the system which has no ability to bring any change in the chain. So, he leaves everything to destiny and says-"God willing, after trial and error/ wedding will take place/ may be luck will fall on you at same time,/ may be we will have wedding on same date-"(Haq, line 32-34). Then with the dream of obtaining a motor vehicle decorated by flowers along with a band party to receive the hands of the bride he adieus the gossip partner saying "But Brother, such sweet thoughts are too much,/ they give me pain. O Brother,/ what is life without wife?/ Sahara Desert. Now is time for farewell." (Haq, lines 45-48). Here the repetition of the word ‘Brother’ mirrors the depth of the speaker's feelings and also portrays the very common way of addressing strangers in the city as ‘bhai’ but the imaginary bond that they forge through the address may also mirror the lack of it in reality. Thus, the poem creates an imagery of the ordinary life in the

city both having the sufferings of existential crisis and the joy of dreaming, the dreams which are ornamented with the ordinary but beautiful artifacts of Bangladeshi culture such as Band party, decorated motor vehicle etc.

While creating the imagery of usual life in the poetry, how could Haq stop himself creating an imagery of the street tea stall? As Raymond Williams considers the ordinary tea stall or temple as a cultural artifact too as like Cambridge University in his essay “Culture is Ordinary ", Haq's poem "As Usual" comes up with the story of a tea stall considering the *adda* on tea stall as a cultural action in Bangladesh. The principles of Imagism allows the absolute freedom of the poet in the selection of subject and Haq chooses the street tea stall and gives a glimpse of the events that happen there. The poem is structured in a way as if the conversation between the speakers on the poem becomes serious gradually as the blood becomes warm with the "sips of semi-viscous tea" (Haq, line 5). The speaker of the poem introduces an old friend sitting with him- "As usual/ My old friend/ The Sage of the Roadside Tea-stall/ Casually solves a problem or two/…/…As usual, he is out of pocket" (Haq, lines 1-7)

So the friend is an old man and a very knowledgeable person who can solve any problem while having tea even though he is out of money! In Bangladeshi perspective that knowledge is not a bookish one but it is obtained by experience of life and Haq in a sense makes an irony of the capitalist society in this stanza by indicating that though recent consumerism considers money as the ultimate source of everything, in reality to have knowledge and solve others problems one doesn’t always need money. In Bangladesh tea stalls are a meeting place for every age and every kind of tea loving people. For example, from the educated gentleman to the uneducated rickshaw pullers meet there. After prayer in the Mosque, people gather at the nearby

tea stall; after class or exams students gather at the nearby tea stall of the university; after office people gather at the tea stall near to the home. To have a cup of tea one doesn't always need to pay because if one is out of money s/he will always get someone to treat him/her a cup of tea. Even to have a cup of tea is not the most important fact but to see the known faces, to have the update of the society, politics and economy of the country, to discuss about the burning issues and to gossip about life is the main reason for meeting at the tea stall. In almost every area there is a tea stall which remains crowded all the time as a communication hub and that is an inseparable part of Bangladeshi culture. One doesn't even need to know others sitting in the tea stall because tea stalls are a place for making new connections and increasing network. However, we usually never think of seeing the nearby tea stall as a subject of a poem but Haq brings that ever known tea stall in literature and gives it a status of cultural artifact recognizing a tea stall *adda* as a cultural action of everyday life. In the tea stall people talk about every sector of the society so it can give anyone an idea about the whole country and its people. Hence, the speaker of the poem says- "The talk, as usual,is of money-/ Ministers and their multi-millions" (Haq, lines 8-9). Here the conversation revolves on politics and economics of the country. Then fluently the conversation turns on to corruption as well as greediness of people and the Sage of the tea stall appeals to "Ban money" and adds "Abolish currency, and peace/ Will reign on earth." (Haq, lines 12-14)

Then the folks of the tea stall hope for "No bribes, no violence;" (Haq, line 20). Unfortunately, bribes have become very common in the government sector of the country. To accomplish a simple work of five minutes, people have to pay some bribe to the government officers and the most unfortunate thing is that even the highly educated government officers do

not hesitate to take bribes. Then the conversation turns on to power and the use of alliteration makes it serious with a strong musical tone. The Sage says- "Abolish power as well/ No more power play/ Between politicians and people/ Between teachers and taught," (Haq, lines 39-41)

Thus, the Sage appeals to stop the abuse of power and power culture of the society where the superior dominates the inferior. So, he is kind of spreading Buddhist philosophy which doesn't appreciate the existence of any superior being and believes in peaceful coexistence. Unfortunately, in our country we always experience the abuse of power by the political parties, no matter which party is on the position. If one belongs to the supporters of the opposing party his/her life will be a worse struggle. So, refusing money and power the Sage hopes for "Only peace, peace, peace,/ Shantih, Shantih, Shantih!" (Haq, lines 45-46). Here again Haq creates a rhythmic repetition of the same word to reflect intensity of wish for having serenity and "Shantih, Shantih, Shantih"(Haq, line 46) is also used in mantra for evocation of peace in Hinduism and Buddhism.

Finally, the speaker mutters to the ear of the Sage, "What about sex?" (Haq, line 51) and the Sage replies-"Don't add unnecessary complications," (Haq, line 52). Thus, again it is seen where every sector of the society and the country gets place on the conversation in a tea stall in the public place the sexual discourse doesn't get any importance. The word "sex" is uttered silently on the ear and that is considered as unnecessary complication though it is a very common human need which should be discussed openly. However, in the tradition of Bangladeshi culture pronouncing the word "sex" is considered indecent and vulgar, which may often be considered as more serious an offense than taking bribe. So, that's how Haq again creates a sarcasm of the contemporary society. Bribe, violence, trickery all these are not the pride of any culture and these

are not anything to celebrate but yet the poet makes space for everything that comprises and represents life in the poem. Showing these aspects of the society Haq satirizes the society for its drawbacks. Since, according to Williams, culture is not only the beautiful aspects of the society but each and every aspect of it.

Haq creates another image of that city life in the dramatic monologue "Growing Up or Softly Falling". It seems as if the form of the poem also portrays the loneliness and scattered state of a city man because some lines in the poem have a lone word and some lines have nearly seven words. For example there is a long line in the poem- “with cramped back sleeping legs and stiffening neck” (Haq line 28) and a small line- “split” (Haq line 63). As if the speaker often talks too fluently and often takes too pause for a deep breath. Besides, the use of alliteration makes a strong rhythmic tone in this poem too which also creates a musical structure. For example- "between this and that,/ between my western know-how/ and eastern wisdom/ between that and this," (Haq, lines 64-67). Here repetition of the same word with stress creates a rhythmic tone.

In that poem Haq compares Dhaka city with other developed cities and nicely shows the readers that the anxiety of a modern man, emotions of human beings, sufferings and struggle are same in every developed or developing cities but the dress up, lifestyle and way of life is different in different places which are fabricated by culture or which fabricates culture. In the dramatic monologue "Growing Up or Softly Falling", the speaker says “Loneliness is the same/ in Frisco or Soho/ Timbuctoo or Tokyo/ Delhi or Dhaka,” (Haq, lines 54-57). The speaker also says that not only loneliness but also love and the enemies of love are the same in Frisco, Soho, Timbuktu, Tokyo as well as Delhi and Dhaka city. Frisco city, a commercial hub of the region, is

situated in Texas and part of Dallas. During the last fifteen years or so a large number of people are moving to Frisco as people from different places in Bangladesh are moving to Dhaka. So, the speaker finds the lonely unstable mindset of people in commercial capital Dhaka similar to people in Frisco. Soho, situated in London is a great place to find live pulsing nightlife and is also known for its risque vibe and few sex industry venues. Perhaps, loneliness in Dhaka city is ultimately making it the city of sexual suggestiveness like Soho city. Timbuktu is a city in Mali and famous for its renowned Djinguereber Mosque amusements like Dhaka is famous for its historical mosques. However, here the speaker compares Dhaka with Timbuktu perhaps not only for mosques but also because of its being ‘mysterious’ and ‘unfathomable’ as Alfred Tennyson described in his poem named "Timbuctoo". Japan’s busy capital Tokyo mixes the ultramodern and the traditional lifestyle as same as nowadays lifestyle in Dhaka city follows the combined mixture of modernity and tradition. Here an individual is neither capable of accepting the modernity too easily leaving the tradition nor able to avoid modernity holding the tradition strictly.

The speaker of the poem also mentions about cultural behavior in different places and reminisces about past life when the people of this sub-continent used to sit cross-legged with ease but occidentals could only painfully acquire it. Here people would sit "On riverbank, backyards, rice fields,/ cross-legged on cinema seats, football fields," (Haq, lines 10-11). Also on the grass and see the stars as the coins in the pocket of the shirt (sky) of God, a benign giant. Here we can see a representation of much known everyday life in Bengal where the people were yet out of touch of the westernized tradition. However, the speaker again says that he has learnt to sit at the desk with cramped back, sleeping legs, stiffening neck and sniffed civilization

between two covers as well as become a citizen of the world. As if he leads two lives at a time, one is westernized and another is deeply rooted in the traditional Bengal. Thus, he says, "Marking time in this unquiet corner/ I too scatter;/ Schizoid,/ Split/ between this and that," (Haq, lines 60-64)

Hence, he feels to become a scattered, schizoid and split man between his Western knowledge and Eastern wisdom. The two covered books of civilization, the collection of facts and data acquired through study, research, observation, investigation can only give him knowledge. However, not wisdom, the ability to use knowledge in life and the ability to judge the lucidity of acquired knowledge as like the everyday life experience from his Eastern life can offer him. Therefore, the speaker thinks that he is forever falling between the ambivalent thought of being nothing and becoming something. His ambivalent mind once wants to turn away from the city to squat on grass but then he finds himself differently and says- "but I am singular in American jeans/ smoking on English briar." (Haq, lines 83-84)

Thus, the influence of Western and European culture has created indecisiveness, inner conflict or inner anxiety in the mind of that speaker. Hence, the representation of age old Bangladeshi culture is seen in the poem along with the changing picture of it with the change of the world through the very personal experience of a native speaker. As Raymond Williams considers the industrialization, development process and newness too as a part of culture it is seen in the poem that how development, civilization process and globalization has changed the culture of Bangladesh. However, the strong message that the poem gives to the readers is that, the change of any culture is always pleasing if only the good aspects of others culture are taken or if the focus is given only on the progressive aspects of others culture. But a puppet like

imitation of the fickle cultural habits and actions of others culture can never enrich any culture rather it hybridizes the original one which is a threat to the mental peace of the people who practices that culture. Because by changing traditional common habits and beliefs, it ultimately invites a crisis on the traditional everyday culture.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The poems of Kaiser Haq offer a glimpse of the contemporary everyday culture of Bangladesh with all its beauty and issues which reflect the poet's expertise. The poet's artistic exhibition of ordinary life traces the supreme legacy of Mughal Empire and the colonial inheritance in the culture of the country. In addition, the recent notion of hybridity, alienation, corruption, political absurdity, uprootedness present in everyday culture which decay the mental peace of the inhabitants gets significance in Haq's depiction. In Bangladeshi perspective the traditional values and family bonding are getting noticeably loosened day by day. Western culture largely contributes to human isolation from root. Hence, they neither find fondness in foreign culture nor can hold the tradition strictly and becoming alienated from their track ends up as the sufferer of an identity crisis in modern lifestyle.

However, Haq shows his own culture in all its splendors as well as bleakness, leaving nothing as unsuitable. In addition, Haq is not pessimistic towards the cultural change or newness. His poems rather appeals for a mutual cultural exchange free from any force or dominative motive. In addition, these poems urge for the removal of falsified representation and unequal treatment in the cultural territory. Therefore, in a sense Haq's poetry are a voice for the mental decolonization for the sake of ensuring mental peace and stability in everyday attitude.

Besides, the surge of capitalism and consumerism practiced in the everyday life of this developing country creates a noticeable binary division in the society in which one side of the edge gets to flaunt the prosperous and affluent lifestyle whereas another edge gets continuously mired in all kinds of adversities. All these issues of everyday life in contemporary Bangladesh echoes in Haq's poetry as a part of culture. Thus, in his masterful portrayal of his native land and

its people, with a mixture of dark humor and irony the poems both scrutinize and help uncover the uniqueness that is at the core of human life and everyday culture of Bangladesh in the contemporary time.

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