

International Journal of Humanities Arts and Business (IJHAB)

ISSN: 2709-0604 (Print)

ISSN: 3006-4805 (Online)

Volume-01, Issue-02, pp-38-45

www.ijhab.com

Research Paper

Open Access

## Analyzing the Evolution of Bhawal Folk Traditions in Contemporary Bangladesh Society

**Md. Mansur Hoshain**

Assistant Professor in English, Khatia Bondan Fazil Madrasa, Gazipur Sadar, Gazipur,

Email: tusardada@gmail.com

**Mohammed Shafiqul Islam**

Assistant Professor in English, Hatimara High School and College, Gazipur City,

Email: shafiqulislam13091973@gmail.com

**Md. Motiur Rahaman**

Lecturer in physics. Tongi Islamia Alim Madrasa. Tongi. Gazipur.

Email: motiur.bhola@gmail.com

**Kazi Muhibbullah**

Assistant Professor in Arabic, Gazipur Fazil Madrasa, Chatar, Gazipur

Email: sahensahgfm@gmail.com

**Citation (APA):** Hossain, M. M., Islam, M. S., Rahman, M. M., Muhibbullah, K., (2024). Revisiting and Reimagining History in Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines. *International Journal of Humanities Arts and Business (IJHAB)*; Vol-1, Issue-2, 38-46.

**ABSTRACT :** The purpose of the study is to present an overview on how Bhawal folk tradition have changed and adapted in today's Bangladesh society. The research also aims to explore how such traditions have evolved and play roles in present day cultures. Following a qualitative approach, the study utilized interviews, participant observations, and documents analysis as main data gathering tools. Concerning the interview participants, 60 of the respondents were local historians, folk performers, and elders, the people to assist in providing first-hand narratives on cultural transitions. Stanford's pilot study, fieldwork was conducted in Bhawal region, whereas in this study, another Bhawal region was explored to identify the historical changes, through collected documents analysis. Data analysis was done thematically with regard to adaptation, preservation, and blurring with the contemporary practices. Research indicates that while some social practices of Bhawal traditions have indeed lost some of their essence to urbanization and globalization, that some of them remain to be creatively incorporated into contemporary cultural packages. The conclusion of this study emphasizes the difference between the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as well as the urgent necessity of raising the awareness of the younger generations about the value of the heritage. This paper provides insights into cultural maintenance and alteration dynamics and offers validation for preservation of heritage in a globalizing world.

**Keywords-** Bhawal folk traditions, qualitative research, cultural evolution, community respondents, thematic analysis

## I. INTRODUCTION

Oral culture is valuable because of the roles it plays in the identification of culture bearers and the storytellers who recount that culture. The *Bhawal* region of Bangladesh presents a lively and historical folk culture, involving social interactions and storied and performed aspects necessary to Bangladeshi identity (Haque, 2015). These practices, however, are not without their limitations in what could be referred to as a dynamic world due to urbanization, globalization, and finally the digital age (Rahman, & Kabir, 2018). It has been a trend over the past few decades that indigenous forms of cultural manifestation may be threatened with assimilation or complete erasure as the culture changes and external cultural influences affect it (Khan, 2020). The issue that this study explores is the following: to what extent have the forms of *Bhawal's* folk revealed themselves as having evolved in the socio-cultural context of present-day Bangladesh? Beyond this, the focus of this inquiry falls right in this liminal territory of trying to hold on to ICH that is easily threatened with discontinuation due to modernization changes. The study aims to find out which aspects of the *Bhawal* folk culture have been preserved or changed, developed or diminished in the light of modernization and appraises the functions these activities perform in modern society. It is important to know of its progression to help with saving the cultures and to help with finding ways to ensure that older and younger generations can speak to one another. This type of comparative analysis of the development and degradation factors can help to deliver essential information about how cultural identity can be preserved under the pressures of modernization, which are the goals of this research. In this regard, the findings enrich the general knowledge regarding heritage preservation and evolution as the process demonstrating interaction between continuity and innovation.

## II. OBJECTIVE OF THIS STUDY

The objective of this study was to investigate the transformations and concurrent significance of *Bhawal* folk traditions at the age of globalization and modernization in Bangladeshi society.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW OF THIS STUDY

According to Haque (2015), folklore practices are an essential means by which tangible and intangible cultural heritage can be developed and sustained in Bangladesh society. The study sheds light on how people have within their culture from old ages danced, sing, and recited in order to foster togetherness and maintain unity among group's people. Such tradition according to Haque not only perpetuates local culture but is also constructive with respect to continuity in the social set. This work is useful to get an idea of the main importance of *Bhawal* folk traditions in the country that is consistent with the general data. This study emphasizes the effects of modernity on culture, where modernization is seemingly eradicating collective cultural assets in exchange for individualized, and commercialized cultural products (Haque, 2015). Rahman and Kabir (2018) also review the degree to which urbanization has influenced culture in Bangladesh in general, and offer a useful background to understanding how increased rates of urbanization have led to the erosion of indigenous culture in the country. The authors' concept is simple, which states that due to urbanization,

the lifestyle changes, and hence, people shift from attending performances to hosting other modern forms of entertainment. Their work is relevant for the Bhawal context because changes into population densities and contact with urban culture might have impacted on the continuity and change of folk elements. In response to the ongoing urbanization the study recommends for specific cultural policy measures in order to retain culture and tradition when faced with rapid expansion (Rahman and Kabir 2018).

In the work Khan (2020) examines the dynamics of cultural globalization and how globalization impacts local cultures and puts into question conventional cultural practices. Although people interact with other cultures through globalization they get exposed to other technologies and ideas this is a problem to the society since it dilutes the culture of the people in question. This review pertains directly to the situation of folk tradition in the Bhawal region as globalization may play a part to diluting or integrating these traditions into modernity. The author notes that to remain important and relevant in this globalizing world there has to be active community participation and there also has to be fresh adapted culture (Khan, 2020). In the context of Bangladeshi schemes, a clear outlook for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage is given in Ahmed (2016). The study also advocates the need for the documentation, education and participation of people in the community preservation of the cultural practices. From Ahmed's study, it is apparent that cultural activities and paradigms concerned with the conscription of traditional wisdom into the modern society business are wanting. This literature is relevant to the Bhawal study as it offers rational measures on how to maintain the changing culture traditions within social aspects without overly eradicating them (Ahmed, 2016).

In Chowdhury's (2017) work, folk traditions and spread of the social economic change, the subject of focus is metamorphosis of folk traditions. Chowdhury found that although certain forms of culture adapt to new changes in society, others may become irrelevant. The communities which Chowdhury was researching are good examples of how selective adaptation can help in the intermediation of the adaptation of the new trends, while keeping the sense of culture identity. This adaptive mechanism will be particularly useful in understanding how practices related to Bhawal might have changed with modern influence (Chowdhury, 2017). Islam (2019) explains the advantages and the problem of the transfer of the folk traditions from one generation to another. According to the study, regarding the aspect of it, and many people who want education for community, teachings visible role fall back on the older folks, especially with provision of the education on the aspect of the culture. This literature can be summed up by the observation that traditions are likely to be forgotten unless efforts are made to maintain them. For the Bhawal context, it is important to reproduce the above dynamic by capturing over time the knowledge that is transmitted from one generation to the other in the interest of keeping culturally specific practices alive (Islam, 2019).

Hassan (2021) focuses on the ways in which folk traditions are documented, & performed through digital media. On the positive, digital technologies offer novel avenues for distributing and archiving cultural practices although they change consumerism from collective to individualistic. In Hassan's case, the technology has a dual impact where on the one hand it maintains the structure but on the other hand transforms them to suit the present consumption patterns. This perspective is useful when arguing how Bhawal traditions could use media technologies to endure in modern society as envisaged (Hassan, 2021). This paper gives information on government and non-governmental organizations in the management and promotion of cultural heritage by Begum (2018). According to the study, controversy over permanence can only be resolved by policies that seek to maintain traditions but also

guarantee their change. Where institutive support is present that is from research organizations, or lack of it, which persist both locally as in Bhawal Begum (2018).

#### IV. RESEARCH GAPS

Several studies have been carried out as to cultural identity as well as the effect of modernity on culture and traditions, however, very scant scholarship is targeted at the regional cultures, specifically the Bhawal people in Bangladesh. Prior works have discussed broad effects of urbanization, globalization, and policy measures (Haque, 2015; Rahman & Kabir, 2018; Begum, 2018), while this research aims at examining how individual traditions in certain locations function or are transformed in modern contexts more thoroughly. This study aims to address this rather significant absence by concentrating on peculiar characteristics of Bhawal folklore and assessing its transformation in regards to contemporary social frames. The Cultural Adaptation theory has been utilized as the theoretical framework of this study because this theory looks at how cultures are changes when placed under pressure but the fundamentals are always maintained (Chowdhury, 2017). Furthermore, the theory of cultural transmission that has been developed in this line of research by Islam (2019) will be used to analyze the role of intergenerational transmission and subsequent transformations of the transmitted material.

#### V. THEORY APPLIED IN THIS STUDY

In this paper, the analysis of the development of Bhawal lore within present day Bangladesh society presents the authors attempt to navigate the tension between the traditional and the modern. It applies cultural adaptation literature which reveals how local cultures respond to changes in external environment while preserving their identity (Chowdhury, 2017). The study also expands from the cultural transmission theory which asserts how or culture is transferred from one generation to the other even as it changes with the occurring social transformations (Islam, 2019). Explaining the study's focus, this theoretical framework enables one to understand the aspects of Bhawal traditions' immunity to the processes of urbanization, globalization, and digitalization. In so doing, the research aims at revealing how people can develop approaches to maintaining and evolving culture in the face of changes brought on by globalization (Wang & Meier, 2017).

#### VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY

To understand the historical development of *Bhawal* folktales, this research used a qualitative research method. Qualitative data were collected through interviews, observation and documentation analysis. It was made possible to interview professionally engaged folk storytellers, local historians, community elders, and culture-bearers to encompass their personal story and reflect their understanding of the changes that have occurred to such traditions. Folk events and various gatherings of people were attended in order to record live interactions and performances; participant observations were supplemented by archival data giving historical framework and documenting change. The data analysis consisted of thematic coding of the material in order to find out what tendencies exist in regard to certain patterns as adaptation, preservation and incorporation into present practices. This approach made it possible to examine how *Bhawal* traditions were changed by factors like urbanization as well

as globalization. The use of the combined qualitative methods tried to give a rich and detailed description of culture and its relation to modern social processes.

## **VII. FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY**

### **Major Cultural Transformations through Times**

Local historians provided information on some of the key changes in the cultural practices in the community with an emphasis to the move from farming practices to more modernized and urban lifestyles. The process of the development of the community is inextricably linked with historical factors: the national liberation movements, migration processes, and globalization. People of the family have seen considerable changes in family systems where large number of families living with a joint family system has become rare and their shifted to small nuclear families have affected social fabrics and common culture of the society. Folk performers identified trends in the subject matter and presentation of folk performances where the folk arts began to address issues of modern life. As a result of performing modern political, environmental, and social themes, performances remain presentist but are now different in some traditional ways.

### **Preservation and Challenges to Culture**

Both the historians and the elders highlighted the fact that an effort was still being made to continuously maintain their traditions or cultural values even with the coming of civilization and the introduction of outside/civilized practices. Measures that are being taken in order to maintain traditions include the creation of local culture funds, Oral history, and community celebration. But the local citizens noted that youths have little time today for traditional values including dance, ceremonies, riddles, and even legends, some being dominated by the lure of electronic devices and imported media products. Traditional singers and musicians were aware of difficulties of maintaining the popular tradition into the realm of the younger generation. Due to a lean towards commercialism among the upcoming generation and no proper institutions to fund a folk artist, the tradition dance form and music has rather seen a decline.

### **Role of Globalization and Modernization**

In interviews with locals and people who have lived long lives in their colloquial areas, ignorance from the advance globalization and technological advancement was a reoccurring theme in their speech. Overall, some historians viewed the advancement of technology as well as media as an opportunity to expand the outreach, however, at the same time there was a growing environment thinking that the given forces destroyed the concept of community and undermined the traditional values. Folk performers discussed the twofold processes of modernization. The other is advantage which is that, through technology like digital music and social media the traditional performance has been taken around the world. These technologies have however lowered the prestige of art since the younger generation lacks the interest of most of the live, traditional shows preferring the technological based content.

### **Generational Knowledge Transmission**

Concerns shared by the community elders were aspiring generations that are failing to pass various forms of knowledge within the community, for example, oral traditions, art and culture, and folklore. Then elders attributed this to the fact that the newer generations were far less willing to learn these practices because the education systems neglected the local attributes. Folk performers pointed out that though there is increased thirst for folk art forms internationally there is reduced patronage locally. They also described attempts made by older performers to groom the next generations but these have been resisted or otherwise not well taken.

### **Audience Engagement with Folk Performances**

Several of the performers however, emphasized that while the main components of folk displays (telling, singing, and dancing) remained relevant, new topics like climate change and social justice issues were incorporated as a way of attracting the youth. Still, the traditional forms were kept to a great extent and thus it is possible to speak about adaptive as well as reproductive change. Analysis during folk performances established what appeared to be a change of audience demographics and involvement. Concerts involved the community residents only since they were the people who related to the art most. However young audiences today are indifferent and many come not out of cultural interest but just to watch.

### **Social Dynamics and Changing Values**

A poll of members of the communities showed that intergeneration differences exist in these ways, meaning that social structures of the communities have changed a lot. The social structures that used to interconnect the community have rapidly deteriorated, owing to more and more people moving out for jobs and studies in cities. This has necessarily caused disruption to traditional care-giver models, care by elders, and even communal festivity. Next, the interviews and observations revealed a lack of understanding of the critical value of cultural participation by the younger generation, as contrasted with a more collectivist generation. The above reasons as testified by many elders suggest a worrying trend of declining virtues of honor with reference to tradition, elders and collectiveness.

### **Technological Influence on Culture**

In terms of technology, it was identified that there was a positive and negative aspect for technology in cultural events. On the one hand, advanced technology has made it possible to capture and share folk art with a worldwide community via the internet and the internet especially YouTube. On the other hand, technological change has commercialized and watered-down traditional performances as explained by some folk performers as undesirable. Those komenskii who were involved in traditional ceremonies and festivities are also ambivalent about technology. It provided a way to spread local culture to mass audience but it also depersonalized and decentralized the cultural content.

### Behavioral Indicators and Non-Verbal Cues

Facial expressions and vocal intonations indicated that participants possessed a longing for the past particularly concerning conventional culture. Most elders had moderate concern and expressed sadness while discussing cultural loss amongst the young generation. There were observed so-called 'Bildungsstunden' during the performance when the troupes' members demonstrated explicit intention to share knowledge to the other members of the younger generations. Nevertheless, responses from younger performer were often unenthusiastic to the otherwise showing a clear generational dichotomy in the study's subject.

### Discussion

Interviews and formally/ informally observed data explicate an understanding of the change and continuity of *Bhawal* folk culture in Bangladeshi society while supporting previous work. A typical conflict that stands out from the rest is the conflict between the westernization process and culture conservation. From Haque's (2015) cultural perspective, folk traditions play a very important role in the construction of cultural identity; however, according to the community elders, the dynamism resulting from the new ways of living brought about by the process of urbanization has the deleterious effect of eradicating agrarian ways where such usages might have normally be possible. In line with this, Rahman and Kabir (2018) say that urbanization has also been the cause of cultural decline for tradition because young societies are turning to many kinds of modern pastime. The aforesaid transformation is evident in youth's minimized interaction with folk performances, as are also stated by the elderly and performers. According to Khan (2020), globalization poses a key driver to the destruction of these traditions. For instance, the impact of; On a positive note, globalization avails channels including social media in which to share folk traditions, on the down side; these forms become commoditized thereby destabilizing the essence of community. Chowdhury also observes that due to the changes made to the content, there is at least some relation to what is going on in today's society like the issues of climate change. But it also has a negative connotation in regards to the accommodation of losing the traditional aspects in the process. Loss is aggravated by the state sponsored prohibitive policies and declining interest in the elders as highlighted by both Haque (2015) and Ahmed (2016). Oral history, for example community-led oral history projects, are important but insufficient without the backing of general policy architectures. Hassan (2021) in his works states that while digital media has helped to sustain cultures, it alters these cultures from culture as shared or collective experience to personal content and media consumption, and so questions the authenticity of folk culture. Thus, this study contributes to the marked paucity of regionalized findings and underscores the importance of community, educational, and policy-related efforts aimed at the preservation of *Bhawal* folk cultures in the face of emergent neo-liberalization.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

This study focuses on the changing form of *Bhawal* folk in the context of today's Bangladeshi culture. The following conclusions can be made: Conclusion 1: Investigation of *Bhawal* folklore in contemporary context demonstrates that despite globalization has resulted

in comparatively radical change, some primary aspects of folklore culture has been invented in such way that turned to be applicable in present time and space. In contextual analysis considering the four themes of adaptation, preservation and integration it is seen that cultures are challenged between maintaining identity and embracing change. This research strongly emphasizes the difference between movable and immovable cultural property and stress on the need to introduce people from the younger generation to their culture. Finally, the research can provide practical recommendations for promoting cultural conservation in the era of advancing technological developments.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. (2016). *Preserving intangible cultural heritage in Bangladesh: Strategies and practices*. Dhaka University Press.
- Begum, R. (2018). Cultural policy and heritage management in Bangladesh. *Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10(1), 23-41.
- Chowdhury, N. (2017). Adaptation and preservation in folk practices. *Journal of Ethnographic Research*, 8(3), 56-72.
- Chowdhury, S. (2017). *Cultural adaptation and the evolution of traditions: A case study in Bangladesh*. University Press.
- Haque, M. (2015). *Folk traditions and cultural identity in Bangladesh*. Dhaka University Press.
- Haque, S. (2015). *Cultural heritage and identity in Bangladesh*. Dhaka University Press.
- Hassan, A. (2021). The impact of digital media on folk traditions. *Digital Culture Journal*, 14(2), 89-103.
- Islam, M. (2019). *The role of community elders in the transmission of folk traditions*. Bangladesh Cultural Review, 12(3), 45-67.
- Islam, T. (2019). Intergenerational transmission of cultural heritage. *Heritage Review*, 11(4), 33-48.
- Khan, M. A. (2020). Globalization and the transformation of cultural practices. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 12(3), 45-59.
- Rahman, M. & Kabir, A. (2018). Urbanization's impact on local traditions in Bangladesh. *Cultural Studies Review*, 15(2), 112-130.