


<p style="text-align: center;">Female Power in Amitav Ghosh's <i>The Shadow Lines</i> and Hasan Azizul Huq's <i>Agunpakhhi</i>: A Comparative Study</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">Literature</p> <p>Keywords: <i>Agunpakhhi</i>, <i>The Shadow Lines</i>, Ghosh, Huq, Ila, and Tha'mma, and Anonymous Woman.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p>		
<p>This study aims to foster Hasan Azizul Huq's and Amitav Ghosh's treatment of 20th-century feminism in the Indian Subcontinent. Both Huq and Ghosh have occupied a remarkable place in the history of Bengali and English literature, respectively due to the portrayal of women characters. This study would like to examine the novelists' treatment of feminism in the light of comparative literature. It aims to focus on the powerful female characters, like an anonymous central female character, Tha'mma and Ila of the novels, like Huq's <i>Agunpakhhi</i> and Ghosh' <i>The Shadow Lines</i>, where they are very much devoted to grasping the pure and perfect love and adoration of motherland; even they never hesitate to sacrifice their lives for the greater welfare of the nation and the state. Both Huq and Ghosh want to reflect the role played by women in the patriarchal system and order through stamping female experience in the patriarchal system and order. The fictional portrayal of women has truly realized that patriotism is a noble virtue. Ghosh and Huq have presented the real struggle of women with different social status, portraying an ideal society of dreamers, social workers, traditionalists and economists working together. They would like to immortalize themselves through love and self-sacrifice. Though the homeland is divided into the two separate states, women are adamant to stay at home and family, who have no any sort of fear and hesitation to fight against the enemy. So, both Huq and Ghosh have portrayed such adventurous women as the glaring examples of perfect love and beauty. For this purpose, the study attempts to look at the theoretical investigation of female power made by literary critics and scholars, comparatively.</p>		

Introduction

Both Hasan Azizul Huq and Amitav Ghosh are among the most popular novelists in the 20th-century Indian Subcontinent. Their novels are being taught and investigated in the English and Bengali languages. In this way both Huq and Ghosh have occupied a noticeable place in the history of Bengali and English literature because of the portrayal of women characters, partition, and communal riots. In the light of comparative analysis, this study aims to concentrate on the powerful female characters in Huq's *Agunpakhhi* and Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*. Women dedicate their lives so much to grasping the pure, perfect love of the motherland and adoration of the mothers. Both writers have wanted to present the different outlooks and thoughts of women based on social and cultural circumstances that one may notice in the female art of characterization of the two novels. Their portrayal of women has occupied a revolutionary and protesting sense and demand comparative study to finding out the social and individual role of women amidst the crisis of migration. The image that Ghosh has tried to present in the characters of Ila and Tha'mma, who never support partition and gory war between races and communities. With their fancy and imagination, women have constructed a new socio-economic system and new cultural awareness for mankind. In fact, Huq's and Ghosh's treatment of female characters has become a prime concern for many feminist critics, researchers, and scholars.

Background of the Study

Feminism as a social movement can be defined in a very broad sense as a global, political movement for the liberation of women and society based on equality for all kinds of people. The term means different things to different people, it also freights meaning and it is charged with symbolism, not all of it positive. (Mackay 11) However, radical feminism usually identifies patriarchy as predating capitalism and recognizes women and men as two distinct political classes-ruled and ruling, respectively.

As stereotypically feminine, women have been cited as characteristic of how feminists are encouraged, sensitive; sweet, supportive; gentleness, warmth, passiveness, co-operativity, expressive, modest, humble, empathic and affective; and emotional, kind, useful, devoted and understanding. However, female power is lovely, graceful, nutritious, creative, and warm. Power is in existence. In silence, there is power. Female power concentrates on feelings and emotions. One may have both female and male qualities unless they are truly industrious and protesting. Gender roles in society are acting, speaking, dressing, grooming, and acting based on assigned sex. In general, for example, women should be polite, accommodating, and nurturing in typically feminine ways. Female key role in society has guaranteed stability, progress, and long-term development of nations throughout history. Equality between men and women is intrinsically linked to sustainable development and is vital in the achievement of human rights for everyone. The overall goal of gender equality is a society that offers the same opportunities, rights, and duties for women and men across every sphere of life.

The contemporary situation of the humanities now resembles more and more history. It is not a task that belongs to the world despite the current tendency to see the comparative part of Comparative Literature as if the words “world” and “comparative” were so interchangeable that no real difference can be discerned as one is translated as the other because one is so comparable to the other. (Ferris 36)

The American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) demonstrates the ability and the commitment of students and scholars of Comparative Literature to launch new scholarly projects by way of transforming the intellectual mission of the discipline. (Behdad and Thomas 3) As Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak points out; the fact that “Comparative Literature was founded on inter - European hospitality” has prevented it from engaging “the languages of the Southern Hemisphere as active cultural media” (Spivak8). Recent shifts in the focus of literary and cultural studies away from an exclusive concentration on European literature; and the fact that many students engage in comparative studies that cross chronological, cultural, disciplinary, linguistic, and national boundaries, it is necessary to consider new directions in studying comparative studies. (Behdad and Thomas 7)

Comparative Literature Association defines comparative literature as follows: Comparative Literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country and the study of the relationships between the literature on one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such

as arts, philosophy, history, the social sciences, the sciences, religion, etc. on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression. (Remak, “Comparative Literature” 3)

To study literature is to read texts, to practice “close reading,” to discover an aesthetic unity from the linguistic organization. These texts form part of a system of actions at the heart of society, the most important of these actions being literary creation and reading, but the distinct forms of mediation of literary texts and the derivation of secondary texts from these are of interest. This does not lead to the consideration of other discourses and codes, rather to the consideration of the role that new communication technologies play, not only in the diffusion of literature but also in the transformation of creative practices and their influence on the cultural make-up and “acts of reading” (Iser) of the new generations of “digital natives” (Prensky).

Rethinking Female Power Literally and Theoretically

The concept of women’s empowerment is deeply embedded in our cultural heritage. Women in positions of power are women who hold an occupation that gives them great authority, influence, or responsibility. Historically, power has been distributed among the sexes disparately. Power and powerful positions have most often been associated with men as opposed to women. (Hartsock 162)

The accurate and proportional representation of women in social systems is important to the long-lasting success of the human race. Additionally, a study shows that “absence is not merely a sign of disadvantage and disenfranchisement, but the exclusion of women from positions of power also compounds gender stereotypes and retards the pace of equalization” (Reynolds 547). A British novelist Marie Corelli points out that the object of woman's existence is not to war with man, or allow the man to war with her, but simply to conquer him and hold him in subservience without so much as a threat or a blow. Clever women always do this; clever women have always done it. The term male liberation is derived, from the term women’s liberation and thus insinuates that women have power over men. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (6th edition, 1976) defines a matriarch as a “woman corresponding in status to a patriarch (usually jocular)”. The venerable compilers of that dictionary add that the word is derived "from Latin mater mother on the false analogy of patriarch” (Chinweizu 5).

The empowerment of women entails their visibility and ability to make choices; such choices may challenge the established power hierarchy not only within the home but in society as well (Kabeer 2010). Empowerment leads to a better sense of self-worth, often through collective action that aims at, among other things, economic betterment. While empowerment “may be invoked in virtually any context, be it human rights, basic needs, capacity-building, skill formation or overall economic security” (Beteille 590), the meaning of this term has to be narrowed down.

Female Power in *The Shadow Lines*

Amitav Ghosh is a prominent novelist of contemporary Indian English fiction. Indian English fiction writers depict women and their experiences in patriarchal societies with a deeply sympathetic understanding. Ghosh has portrayed women who are the leading spirits in his fiction. He portrays cultural construction. He never presents women characters as overt radical feminists nor as to the stereotype images of Sita and Savitri. His women's representation is real like and in a realistic manner. Ghosh, through his women representation attempts to explore the emotional world of women that helps the readers understand feminine awareness and feelings. In the novel *The Shadow Lines*, women are represented as courageous since they fight the challenges of widowhood, poverty injustice.

Here, this study would like to focus on the female power through the art of characterization as reflected in Ghosh's novel *The Shadow Lines* with a view to fostering the real picture of the middle-class society of the Indian Subcontinent. For this purpose, the current researcher would like to discuss on the two powerful women characters, including Tha'mma and Ila, who are the representative of the age.

Tha'mma, who was born in 1902, grows up during the British occupation of India. As a young woman, Tha'mma believes that there is nothing more important than securing power and freedom from British rule by telling her wide-eyed grandson that she is determined to join the terrorists and assassinate British government officials to meet those ends. Despite being intent on power and freedom as a young woman, when Partition takes place in 1947, she busily works and raises a family as a widow so that her duty and responsibility can be attributed on society and family. Her desire for power and freedom and an identity drives her mad, and this nationalism increases until her death.

However, Tha'mma's character is as a great revolutionary and strong nationalist feeling. The concept of inequality presented in Ghosh's novel *The Shadow Lines*, men are superior and women are inferior. The terrain of gender inequality in education has seen much change in recent decades. Ghosh reflects the conditions of women in his novel. He traces the evolution of the feminine world from the stereotypes to feminists. Women are portrayed as a life-giver and are the leading spirits of his fiction. The novelist has portrayed women and their experiences with sympathetic understanding. Ghosh has envisaged a future where women's empowerment leads to emancipation and changes in the larger social issues. He depicts the life of three-generation across cultures and borders. Women are not born with just an umbilical cord tied to her mother. Women begin their life as puppets whose string called culture and tradition are controlled by the patriarchs, and they slowly that they have life and come to being. (Narayan 339)

Ghosh acknowledges that the reformation of the society from evils, like the caste system, discrimination based on gender, ill-treatment of women, child marriages, poverty, exploitations, and demonic tradition is a must. The humanistic approach gives voice to the forgotten and humble women characters. He wants to free the entire world from the commotion of caste, race, gender,

religion, untouchability, and geographical boundaries which are hurdles in the way of human development. (Narayan 344) Ghosh wants to portray women characters as leading spirits. Women neither fight against men with their feminine sensibility nor live as subjugated women in the male-dominated society. But they try to assert their rights as human beings in society with the help of education, employment, and their revolutionary attitudes towards life. Ghosh has explored the emotion of women that helps readers understand feminine sensibility and psychology. Women are unique as they do not come under the term stereotypes. They fight for their various causes and eventually have become revolutionaries. They are portrayed as revolutionaries. Ghosh has portrayed his women sensitively. They are the leading spirits in his maximum fiction. (Narayan 339)

Women are like the phoenix which sprouts wings from the stereotype notion of dependability to an independent life. They fight against the miseries of the world like subjugation, widowhood, loneliness, and injustice. They play a vital role in deciding the movement of other characters. Women not only influence men but also design their destiny. They are not just revolutionaries but also regenerators of life. (Swamy and Youveniya 258)

Ghosh regards women from a different perspective and fits them into a definite framework of liberty and freedom. *The Shadow Lines* is a unique attempt to exemplify the importance of women who occupy a central position in the lives of every male character. He is an anthropologist who has analyzed the importance and role of women in every culture and country. He raises a voice against the mute suppression imposed by their family and male counterparts of the society. The discourse of feminism is subtly implied in the novel as his protagonist is influenced by women at one particular point in his life. The story is rendered in a first-person narrative through the protagonist –the unnamed narrator. His grandmother occupies a dominant position throughout his life. Women are an embodiment of courage and compassion who help to emancipate society for its betterment. (Swamy and Youveniya 258)

Tha'mma as a Traditional Woman

Tha'mma's life enters into a new dimension after her retirement. She who had been careful in not letting her time stink is at loss in the vast space of time where she finds nothing worthy to be engaged with. She is an embodiment of a devoted teacher who pays careful attention to her students. She even after her retirement never stays away from her school but visits her school for a couple of hours every day, until the new headmistress requests her son to keep her at home. She is the exact portrayal of hard workers who never seem to have any intention to rest. She views her retirement as a curse because her time began to stink, the narrator says, "Time – great livid gout of it; I could smell it stinking" (Ghosh 131). She, to escape this deadly disease of boredom and wastage of time and to prevent her time from stinking, takes up a new mission of rescuing her aged uncle, Jethamoshi, from Dhaka. (260)

Here, the novelist would like to present the devotional and loving personality of a woman through her dedication and self-sacrifice.

The character of Tha'mma is a representation of the practical feelings of old age. Though she evolves and matures with time she is no exception entering her second childhood. She desires that her dreams come true by involving in the mission of rescuing her aged uncle Jethamoshai who is living under the care of refugees in her ancestral house in Dhaka. Tha'mma is determined to save her aged uncle from the refugee camp. Therefore, she decides to go home to Dhaka, she says, "There's only one worthwhile thing left for me to do in my life now, she said. And that is to bring the old man home..." (151). She mumbles the address to herself, "1/31 Jindabaha Lane – it's still the same" (150). It is only then she understands how alien she becomes to her place of birth; when she tries to fill in the form to the question of her nativity. She says, "It was not till many years later that I realized it had suddenly occurred to her then that she would have to fill in 'Dhaka' as her place of birth on that form, and at that moment she had not been able to quite understand how her place of birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality" (168). With this feeling of insecurity, she also becomes the victim of guilt that robs all her happiness for the rest of her years. (Swamy and Youveniya 261) Tha'mma has possessed a devotional personality. With the help of power and self-sacrifice, she never hesitates to save the lives of the relatives and other people. Ghosh has wanted to present a powerful aspect of a woman through the pure love towards the motherland.

Ila as a Modern Woman

As far as Tha'mma is concerned, Ila's desire for power and freedom is a direct attack on her own beliefs about freedom. Ila seeks her power and freedom by escaping to England, where she can live as a modern western woman. She wants to travel around the world, and most importantly, she is no longer under the control of her male relatives in India. When Ila refuses to leave her marriage because she loves Nick too much, she chooses to exist in a place where her power and freedom are compromised. As a woman of modern civilization, Ila wants to be free of commitments, relationships, duties, and everything. She is stubborn and lives in her world. She is very positive, firm, and determined to preserve her marital relations. (Vijayalakshmi 234) Ila is the representation of modern women who are obsessed with western ideas. She is willing to lose herself in the uncertainty of western influence in the disguise of modernity. She falls into the category of people who fail to live their lives; instead, she lives to please others. She lives in delusion and wants the narrator to believe and think big of her as she introduces him to her friends from her yearbooks when the truth is different. She shows the pictures where the dresses they wore reminded him of "the costumes at a circus" (Ghosh 24). Ila by doing so triggers his possessiveness and she makes him grow jealous of her. She even senses the narrator's feeling and understands his love for her as a girl, but fails to acknowledge it. She even guides him to playhouses with her under the huge table where she plays the role of a mother, the narrator, the father, and her doll Magda, as their baby which is the replica of her emotional fulfillment. (Swamy and Youveniya 262)

Ila is a victim of an inferiority complex or of fear of racist feeling that is dominant in the western world. She fails to understand her true self rather she forces herself to accept the illusionary world that she creates for herself. She willingly deceives herself in the name of freedom by going against her culture and tradition. She who has been gifted with the opportunity to travel around the world would exhibit the rich cultural heritage of the nation; instead, she has possessed the heart to bury it alive by imitating the western habits, like smoking, drinking, and flirting in the name of freedom but not any of their morals. As Tha'mma says, "It's not freedom she wants... She wants to be left alone to do what she pleases: that's all that any whore would want" (Ghosh 98). She is a woman who lacks the gravity of her roots. Ila is a replica of the reality of modern women. Many who are obsessed with the western ideologies are torn between 'who they are' and 'who they think they are' just like Ila. Such women battle against their identity crises. Ila travels to different places failed to proclaim and exhibit the richness of her culture. If only she does so, she will have been the most striking character. Her character teaches the reality of life –one who misunderstands western ideologies and leads a ruinous and unsatisfactory life. She represents the typical western style woman in the postmodern era. Ghosh through the character Ila brings out the insatiable desire of Indians to ape western culture that begins during postcolonial times and is continued till today. In fact, Ila doesn't possess the sensibility of a struggling migrant who needs to find shelter rather she bears the personality of a person cut off from her roots and one who is carelessly living. She doesn't represent the idea of homelessness and doesn't even want to get into the struggle of finding one for herself. Ila's globe-trotting nature has robbed her off of her own imagination.

Grandmother and Ila's relationship is an emblem of the conflict between native nationalism and migrant tendency. Ila takes the responsibility of representing the postmodern woman who lives an independent life in London. She is away from every kind of conservative approach, patriarchal norms and restrictions of the society of Calcutta. She rejects her native culture, and in return the migrant culture rejects her, this rejection of both ends traps her in a never-ending battle of finding her true identity and power. Ila doesn't want her past to keep lingering behind her. But for the grandmother Tha'mma, this bond that Ila shows towards the western culture is annoying. Tha'mma disapproves of Ila's disgust towards her native culture and compares her a street whore whose short hair look like bristles of a toothbrush. Ila and grandmother are two strikingly different diasporic characters; Ila being a cosmopolitan migrant and grandmother, a refugee.

Female Power in *Agunpakhi*

In this study, the researcher would like to focus on Huq's portrayal of a middle-aged woman, who is devoted to sacrificing her life for the freedom of the country, while the nation is on the verge of partition.

Hasan Azizul Huq is a glorious name in Bengali fiction. This novelist is famous for his eloquent prose and touching narrative style. From the beginning of his literary career in the 1960s,

he has given us a lot of thoughtful short stories. In the case of the fiction writer, storyteller, and novelist - these two terms are usually held by a writer at the same time, at least in the context of Bengali literature. Huq was an exception for some mysterious reasons. Anyone may hear him repeatedly in numerous interviews and conversations about why he is not writing novels. The eager wait of the readers seems to have ended in 2006. After five and a half decades of writing, his energetic answer *Agunpakhi* appears as a milestone of the age.

If any reader knows the biography of the novelist Hasan Azizul Huq, he may be able to guess that the intended woman is very close to the writer, even the mother. Huq was born in the village of Jabgram under the Burdwan district of West Bengal. Huq's father had five brothers, a joint family had with a wife and children. He is a victim of partition. He had to move to Epar-Bangla from his village to attend school barefoot. The novelist has also admitted that in a few interviews that he has collected the juice of life from his personal life, and listened to the statements of rural women throughout the novel - inflow, honesty, absolute purity, in the art of characterization; it has become an incomparable human document in the whole Indian Subcontinent.

The entire novel *Agunpakhi* has been written based on a female character, in whose statement one may understand the facts of the tale; she is no other than a rural woman. She is the narrator of the novel. The novelist has portrayed this woman as an anonymous fictional character. Like other rural women, her life is confined within four walls of domestic imprisonment. She is the daughter of a conservative Muslim family, and again the housewife of a large isolated family. Her husband has five brothers, their wives-sons-daughters, and a widowed sister-in-law. There is no end to the fascination of the young girl with her new husband, just as she is fascinated by her mother-in-law's personality and natural ability to lead any impending situation.

Worldly irritation and familial burden never afflict the woman; she never feels lacking familial care and domestic duty. From a very close distance, she sees the gradual progress of worldly affairs, the gradual growth of the family in wealth, property, and finance. Amid bliss, one can suddenly hear the war cry of the world war. There is tension in the supply of daily necessities. Outbreaks of cholera and smallpox occur at one time. Crops are lost for two consecutive years- once in drought, then again in heavy rainfalls. In the coral grass of destiny, that one-sided family is shattered, the relationship of mutual harmony and friendship is quickly ended by the onslaught of famine, and the naked-form of interest is revealed.

New misfortune comes whether famine is over or not. Forgetting the role of independence and forgetting the history of centuries of harmony and coexistence, the devout Hindus and Muslims get involved in the fratricidal conflict. The narrator-cum-the woman witnesses the Hindu-Muslim neighbors, who have always stood by each other for so long, have been companions of happiness and sorrow- how both communities are fighting with knives and weapons. Bond of brotherhood bows down and it slowly gets segregated, communalism wins at one stage. India is divided into two states. At the end of the novel, the decision-maker of the

family sets out for Pakistan with his family members leaving his wife alone. She wants to stay at his father-in-law's house. Husband's bloodshot eyes, son daughter's emotional tears - nothing can stop her. She unknowingly becomes a defendant and revolutionary figure against the erroneous politics of partition. This protest is only for oneself, for one's existence. In this way, the fiction writer has presented a picture of the rise and fall of the whole society through the ups and downs of a family.

In the novel *Agunpakhi*, the woman wants to be faithful to family and society, religion, and country. But even the family and society, religion, and country of the novel break down; instead, one may get a glimpse of the opening of a woman, her gradual development of psychology. Not in the rivalry of the woman with other individuals, not in denying or diminishing her personality, but in denying and rejecting the truth of her family, religion, and state, one may see her rise in the novel. The woman does not have any idea of her outer world although she tries to gather new experiences with very little whether or not she is satisfied with very little, nor ambitious at all. She is not happy alone, but she sees her relatives and family and makes herself her own. "Let my child be in milk and rice" (Avgvimš'Ívb †h†bv _v†K `y†a-fv†Z), despite hundreds of asceticism-isolation-despairs, in this persecution that she works as a sugar bull in the world. She feels heavenly bliss when she eats together with all the people of the family, and when the walls of her family break down and brotherly bonds are separated, she hears Sahara's screams inside her chest. At the beginning of the novel, one finds her in the role of an ordinary girl who gets married at a young age and in the character of a very ordinary rural woman with a combination of hope-aspiration, value-pride, and dream-happiness. "In my lifetime I did not do any task alone; even I don't know how to impose own will. Am I a being, or human touch? Is that my own touch?"

(†Re†bKz†bvKvRvwb†Rwb†RKwibvB, wb†Ri B†"Q †KgbK†iLvUv†Z nq Kz†bvwbRvwbvB| AvwgvKgvbyl, bvgvby†li †Quvqv? Zv-I wKAvgviwb†Ri †Quvqv?)

She never wants to be the kind of woman who would do whatever she wants. But it is through this self-reflection of reassurance that one may see the woman as a unique figure. The influence of the communalism around her disturbs her, depresses her over and over again, the woman who is in favor of peace and stability in the family secretly tells her husband about her hesitation, wants to understand and questioned, this woman has become a politically patriotic conscious woman. In the climax of the novel, a woman living on the ground refuses to leave the country.

According to Mondol (2020), the woman is left alone. Everybody departs for Pakistan. She is alone in the house and she sits to evaluate her position and decision if she has done right or not. She cannot make the argument that, because she is a Muslim, Pakistan is her own country, and India is not. She cannot take it as both the communities are still living in both countries. She is again not convinced of the argument that she has to go to the new country because her husband and children have gone there. After all, she comes to the realization, she and her husband are not the same people, rather they are different though they are very dear to each other. Regarding her

decision and strict stand, she comes to the realization, “Finally it has come to my mind, I have done everything only to get myself. I have not been obstinate. I did not disregard anyone. I have only wanted to understand everything myself” (Huq224).

Through Huq’s creation of a powerful woman, one can understand the fact that a woman can sacrifice her lives the greater welfare of a country. Love and affection are deeply rooted in her mind for which she can sacrifice her life. This woman as a real patriot has shown her heroic personality in a true sense. This practical truth is purely presented in Huq’s time-winning novel, *Agunpakhi*.

Ghosh’s and Huq’s Treatment of Women

From the comparative point of view, it can be stated here that discourse analysis is unveiled based on comparison and contrast socially, politically, economically, and culturally. In this study, the current researcher has tried her utmost to show a comparative study of the two different novelists from different angles. Both writers have wanted to present the 20th-century socio-cultural trends of India and Bangladesh in their respective writings. It is important to mention the fact that both novelists have written their novels in different languages: One has written in the form of Bengali literature; and another in the form of Indian literature in English. Their writing style and diction are different from each other that one may see in their fictions. Both Huq and Ghosh have applied their personal opinions, thoughts, imagination, ideology, and philosophy in their genres. For example, one may ponder over the deeper meaning of their discourse analysis in this sense that Huq has portrayed such an anonymous female protagonist, who is very adamant to stay in her birth land though her husband and children have already left her and the country in fear of communal routs and political crisis between the two communities, like the Muslim and the Hindus. Finally, the middle-aged woman hits upon a plan to stay at home without any fear and hesitation. On the other hand, Ghosh has portrayed powerful women characters, like Tha’mma and Ila who have different features in age and physical vigor: Tha’mma is a traditional woman; and Ila is a modern woman. But both women have one definite mission to save the country from the enemy. In fact, Ghosh tries to meet up the demand of the age through portraying these women.

Ghosh has portrayed women who are the leading spirits in his fiction. He never presents women characters as overt fundamental feminists nor as to the stereotype. His women’s representation is real life and in a realistic manner. On the other hand, Huq has portrayed a female protagonist based on rural culture and setting. She is the narrator of the novel, whom one may call the main protagonist in the literary judgment. He has portrayed this woman as an anonymous fictional character. Her life is confined within four walls of domestic imprisonment. She is the daughter of a conservative Muslim family. There is no end to the fascination of the young girl with her new husband, as she is fascinated by her mother-in-law’s personality and natural ability to lead any impending situation. However, Huq’s and Ghosh’s women are devoted to being faithful to family and society, religion, and the country as real patriots. Their women never

hesitate to sacrifice their lives for the greater welfare of the country. They have a protesting personality; they never surrender to injustice and oppression in the patriarchal order and system. Women want to struggle and protest against the oppressive political rule and system. The ruled and the rulers are the cardinal concerns of Huq's and Ghosh's novels that one may see in the female art of characterization.

The main events in history have changed women's perspective from time to time. Women's role is different from that of other countries in India and Bangladesh. Women are playing different roles, including mother, wife, daughter, and even family winner. In the midst of that, they have to face difficulty maintaining their identity. They strive to be independent, though bound by affection. Both Huq and Ghosh have reflected the role played by women in the patriarchal system and order. They have stamped their experience in patriarchal societies. The preservation of homes and the culture of women are portrayed, but at the same time, they are suffering and struggling, rebelling, and accepting reality. In the works of Ghosh and Huq women are the leading spirits. The cultural structure of society is represented by their female characters. Ghosh and Huq have presented the real struggle of women with different social status, they have portrayed an ideal society of dreamers, social workers, traditionalists, and economists working together. They build a new socio-economic system and new cultural awareness with their imaginary view. Their women characters have served the purpose of the female protagonists. Ghosh and Huq have demonstrated that, despite all odds, women find themselves in the form of the male sex; they are determined to achieve their desired goals. (Sarathamani 48)

Both Huq and Ghosh have wanted to present the different outlooks and thoughts of women based on their social and cultural circumstances very perfectly that one notices in the art of characterization of *The Shadow Lines* and *Agunpakhi*. Their portrayal of women has possessed the revolutionary and protesting mentality and sensibility towards their nation and states. Ila and Tha'mma never support partition and gory wars between the race and nation. Moreover, Huq's portrayal of a protesting woman is a representative of the age who can sacrifice her own life for the greater welfare of the countrymen. Both writers have traced the evolution of women's realm from the stereotypes of feminist scholars and practitioners. Women are like the phoenix which has sprouted from the stereotype's notion of reliance on an independent state of life. They fight against the miseries and complexities of their lives being confined into the four walls of domestic imprisonment. As in the case of Ibsen's portrayal of Nora in *A Doll's House*, one notices the fact that Ibsen has wanted to set the woman free from the traditional rule of 19th-century Scandinavia so that she can invent her self-freedom and self-existence in a free and fair realm where nobody can snatch her freedom of speech. Similarly, both Huq and Ghosh have tried to show the pragmatic picture of the 20th-century feminism of the Indian Subcontinent.

Huq's and Ghosh's aim is to present feminist concerns with a sympathetic outlook and attitudes. In this case, one may sense very profoundly of comparative study while the basic features of literary genres would be projected in a similar knot. The fact is that themes, styles,

writers' attitudes, philosophy, diction, rhetorical terms, and literary terms, and above all, writing forms would be well-matched. Nowadays many literary scholars and researches are devoted to carrying out their scientific research project through the comparative discussion; here one may take an instance of the two different languages, like Bengali and English: While a writer's idea, style, forms, themes, setting, sights, and diction would be copied with another writer, then the practitioners would take their decision to investigate the similar and different aspects of the two writers. Such a projection between Huq's and Ghosh's treatment of the social position of their women has been presented in this study.

In the novel, *Agunpakhi*, the woman's final resistance to persuasion, threats, and demands of her family-members tells of a different kind of survival, which is not achieved through the dynamics of accommodation, adjustment, and adaptation, but gained under her rootedness. She compares herself to a mature tree that cannot survive without its native soil. Her husband, surprised to see her so determined, asks: "When have you learned so much to say?" Her reply is: "All my life you have taught me things and had my say whatever you want. Now perhaps, I have learned one or two words on my own" (Huq 245). Contemplating on her choice, her words, rich in their rustic simplicity and faith in newly-awakened selfhood, come out as a voice of an indomitable spirit of an ordinary Bengali woman which no threats, any social-political or historical pressure can destroy. (Kundu and Chakraborty)

The woman finds her individuality in the process of losing her husband and children who have been dear to her. She has her voice but remains nameless throughout the story. The novel thus shows how such nameless individuals suffer under the forces of history, but at the same time, they can identify themselves with a symbolic name such as the "Phoenix"- the mythical idea behind the title of the novel. The ordinary Bengali woman suffers under patriarchy, society, and a traumatic history by burning herself in the fire of oppression, like a firebird, and from the burnt-up residue of her being; and she can reconstruct herself and live it anew with a certain agency, with her voice, her rootedness. Being alienated from her family, she is not left alone, rather her sense of being in perfect harmony with her loving home, and the countrymen she has known to be her own gives her a powerful inner sense of integrity, which can never be demolished. (Kundu and Chakraborty)

However, as social critics and reformers of the age, both Huq and Ghosh have wanted to present the important role of women in the patriarchy in front of their readers. Thus, their women have occupied a dominant position throughout their novels. It needs no telling the fact that they are the new women categories of the postmodern era. From the above discussion of comparative literature, it can be mentioned here that the researcher has tried to compare Amitav Ghosh's portrayal of women with Hasan Azizul Huq's a middle-aged woman in the light of female power made by critics and scholars.

In this way both Huq and Ghosh have tried to foster the radical mentality of their women. They want to see the unseen and to know the unknown through their own eyes, but not through the male gaze. They want to live in such a free world, where they are determined to protest the male domination and rule. They never support the traditionally social system and order. With power and protest, they expect to come out from the cocoon. Ghosh's and Huq's real motto are to expose the 20th-century social position of women through the portrayal of the powerful women, like Tha'mma, Ila, and an anonymous woman. The novelists have presented them as a symbol of feminism. In the male-dominated society women are considered to be subservient to the male eyes. But in the two novels, *The Shadow Lines* and *Agunpakhi*, Ghosh and Huq have presented the inner power of women.

Conclusion

This current study has focused on Hasan Azizul Huq's and Amitav Ghosh's portrayal of women as reflected in the popular novels, *The Shadow Lines* and *Agunpakhi* in the light of feminism. Both novelists have wanted to present the social position of women of the 20th-century Indian Subcontinent. What role of women is needed in the male-dominated society is the prime focus of the study. However, Ghosh's women struggle to explore their emotional world that helps modern readers understand feminist outlooks. In the novel *The Shadow Lines*, women are represented as courageous as men since they fight the challenges of widowhood and poverty injustice. On the other hand, as a minute observer of society and politics, he has practically shed new light on different issues of human character. His superb making creation of an anonymous female protagonist feels the necessity of freedom and the existence of her birth land, for which she goes beyond the decision of the patriarchal rule and order. (Ishrat 467) In this way, Huq's and Ghosh's superb making creation of female protagonists adore and respect the freedom and existence of their homelands. Both novelists have wanted to discover the self-existence and power of 20th-century women belonging to the patriarchal structure and life form.

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