

**THE VISUAL INTREPRETATION OF HUMAN
CONSCIOUSNESS AND SEARCHING IDENTITY
THROUGH THE POLITICAL CULTURE IN
BANGLADESH**

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UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

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SEARCHING IDENTITY THROUGH THE POLITICAL CULTURE IN
BANGLADESH**

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to produce visual artwork through identity interpretation and political culture in Bangladesh. This concept manifests a sense of the process of expressing Bangladesh's unique identity by making a subtle difference with India. The main objectives focusing on the Bengal tradition and symbol with artistic practices in pre and post-liberation in Bangladesh and the evolving current scene. The reference artists within this research project are Safiuddin Ahmed, SM Sultan, Zainul Abedin, Maqbool Fida Husain, Melanie Hava, Quamrul Hassan, and Shahabuddin Ahmed. The justification of selected this artist because they are producing the issues of identity interpretation in Bangladesh's political scenery. The reference of artworks carried out a suggestion on how the combined traditional folk art and modern aesthetic framework with specific symbols had been produced. A studio practice method was used through studio experimentation, self-critical reflection, and contextual review approach. The research projects contributed to the field of Fine Art have established the collective issues on exploiting information, portraying social, political and cultural systems, and the interpreting relationship among symbols, tradition, and identity. The research project contributed to the correlating of how traditional artwork has been implemented with symbols becomes a provider of the political and cultural identity of Bangladesh. In conclusion, based on studio practices, a group of artwork has been produced to portray a human consciousness and searching new identity in the political in Bangladesh. The implication of this research explicates the statement of the visual aspect through Bangladesh's political culture can be implemented through the construction of contemporary artworks in painting.





INTERPRETASI VISUAL MENYATAKAN MANUSIA DAN IDENTITI Pencarian Melalui Budaya Politik di Bangladesh

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk menghasilkan karya seni melalui interpretasi identiti dan budaya politik Bangladesh. Konsep ini memperlihatkan proses untuk mengekspresikan identiti unik negara Bangladesh dengan membuat perbandingan dengan negara India. Objektif utama menfokuskan kepada tradisi dan simbol Bengal dalam amalan artistik sebelum dan selepas pembebasan penjajah serta perkembangan semasa di Bangladesh. Artis rujukan dalam penyelidikan ialah Safiuddin Ahmed, SM Sultan, Zainul Abedin, Maqbool Fida Husain, Melanie Hava, Quamrul Hassan, dan Shahabuddin Ahmed. Justifikasi artis rujukan ini dipilih kerana mereka adalah artis yang mengutarakan isu mengenai pernyataan identiti dalam bidang politik di Bangladesh. Karya seni yang dihasilkan ini menjadi rujukan bagi merungkai cadangan untuk menggabungkan seni rakyat tradisional dengan kerangka estetik moden melalui simbol tempatan yang telah dibangunkan. Kaedah penyelidikan praktis studio digunakan menerusi eksperimentasi studio, refleksi diri kritis, dan kajian pendekatan kontekstual. Projek penyelidikan ini telah menyumbang kepada pembangunan bidang Seni Halus yang menghasilkan isu kolektif mengenai eksploitasi maklumat yang menggambarkan sistem sosial, politik dan budaya serta hubungan tafsiran antara simbol, tradisi, dan identiti. Ia menjelaskan bagaimana karya seni tradisional diimplementasikan dengan simbol dan menjadi pernyataan identiti politik dan budaya di Bangladesh. Kesimpulannya, melalui amalan penyelidikan dalam kerja studio, kumpulan karya catan telah dihasilkan untuk menggambarkan kesedaran manusia dan mencari identiti baru dalam perkembangan politik di Bangladesh. Implikasi dari kajian ini menjelaskan pernyataan dari aspek visual terhadap perkembangan budaya politik di Bangladesh dapat dilakukan melalui pembangunan karya seni catan yang bersifat kontemporari.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



This research traverses the past and contemporary visual art of Bangladesh within the different kinds of art forms. It focuses on analysing the current social, political, religious, and cultural reality issues portrayed by the Bengal artists which highlighted the national identity. Most of the artists in Bangladesh partake the same concerns which are the Bengali identity through political culture from different perspectives based on the traditional elements. The traditional Bengal element in the contemporary art of Bangladesh does not specify explicitly the identity of Bangladesh, the reason being both Bangladeshi and Indian (Bengal state) carry almost similar Bengal cultural identity. Culturally, the word “Bengali” is understood by both the regional people of Bangladesh and India (part of India). Politically, Bangladeshi is understood by the citizens of Bangladesh as an independent sovereign state. After achieving independence, a group





of artists uses the symbolism of Bangladesh in a modern format to convey the political identity of Bangladesh, where traditional motif was neglected. As a result, such artworks distribute the political identity of Bangladesh however do not represent its cultural identity. These two types of artwork play an important role in diversifying the art of Bangladesh as well as giving speeches on social and political issues. However, the art of these two genres alone cannot clarify the importance of "Bangladeshi and Bengali". It is necessary because of the consolidated importance of these two words communicates the political and political identity of Bangladesh. The most effective method to combine the two kinds of art to express the identity of Bangladesh is accessible through this examination.

1.2 Research Background



This research analyses the repetitious readings and roles of 'tradition' in the construction of identity and how 'folk' arts of Bengal have continued to provide a rich source for 'fine' artists to draw upon and to highlight Bengali identity. This research also focuses on the national symbol with the folk motif in the painting which is a helpful medium to develop awareness among people about political, social structural and cultural identity. There are three main events in the political history of Bangladesh that an enormous number of artists have endeavoured to interpret the concept of national identity which is dependent on expressing political, cultural and social structural identity. To present this identity, Bengal tradition has always appeared in various forms of art as a strong tool. These three main events are the country's struggle for independence from Britain, its liberation from Pakistan and the heightened political tension that the country experienced in the present time (Ahmed, 2004).





Throughout history, ideas and identifications of certain elements of culture, as ‘tradition’ has impersonated an important role in the construction of notions of identity in Bangladesh and India (Bengal state), where multiple cultures continue to meet. The celebrated pedagogue, writer and artist K. G. Subramanyan (1987, p. 7) defined ‘tradition’ as the continuity structure into which each man is born. Artists have drawn on different aspects of traditions at different times attempting to reflect and create new identities (Rushdie 1991, p. 67-68).

During the colonial period, Bengal tradition and folk motif created Indian Bengal identity. Later, a part of the Indian Bengal state was separated and formed an independent state named Bangladesh. As a result, the Bengal tradition and folk motif represent the identity of Bangladesh along with India culturally. Artists unveil a new approach in contemporary art using Bangladesh-guided symbols with a modern aesthetic idea to represent the political identity of Bangladesh as a newly independent country. However, because of the absence of folk motif in the stylistic form of this art, it does not create a link with the cultural identity of Bangladesh. Thus, this research deals with the process of identity and its relationship with the traditions in Bangladesh and India (Bengal state). The importance of the traditional motif with Bangladesh indicated symbol in visual art depend on the political, social and cultural contexts will be examined in connection with the development of Bangladesh contemporary art and create a concept that Bengal traditional motif with Bangladesh indicated symbol is appropriate for representing the political and cultural identity of Bangladesh. It will be appropriate at this stage of the research to describe this correlation before the production of the artwork in my studio practice.





As an artist and academician, I preferred tradition and specific symbols in my painting as the perfect medium to highlight the Bangladeshi specific identity which influences the people of Bangladesh for increasing consciousness about their own identity as well as various things. Focusing on identity issues, the study interprets the Indian art culture outside Bangladesh which is deeply related with Bangladeshi traditional elements, to explore the social, political, and cultural representations according to the different political crucial times for highlighting national identity. Kapur (2000) mentioned that “Bangladeshi Bengali and Indian Bengali (West Bengal) have highlighted the identity of the Bengali nation through art and culture.” Culturally, the word “Bengali” is understood by both the regional people of Bangladesh and West Bengal (part of India). Politically, Bangladeshi is comprehended by the citizens of Bangladesh as an independent sovereign state. In the globalization era, the identity crisis is an issue for the community of artists throughout the world. This community is always concerned to remove identity crisis by highlighting the cultural differentiation. Very often, they realized that cultural differences are very difficult to create due to the same culture of various countries (Anisuzzaman, 1993). Consequently, this research attempt to highlight the Bangladeshi identity using traditional elements with the specific symbol through artwork which will be a new approach in the contemporary art of Bangladesh. Hence, creating uniqueness is a significant part of this research through tradition invention and transformation with specific national symbols by the folk stylistic format with the western aesthetic idea.

This research is not to oppose the mainstream values in the Bengali communities but to designate an interest in improving it. The main target of this study is to contribute human consciousness about our own cultural, political, and social





structural identity, wherewith art plays a significant role to improve cultural and social systems toward the political culture. This new approach will expand Bangladeshi contemporary art by investigating local context and inserting what the researcher conceived as traditions and Bangladesh indicated symbol within the aesthetic framework of modern ideas. Furthermore, Lochhead and Auner (2013) debated that one form can be combined with another to create a new form that can be more aesthetic and significant than the previous two forms. A new art form cannot be made without the assistance of another art form.

My works deal with Bangladeshi identity in terms of the usage of tradition and symbolic element as well as political, cultural, and social issues. In my practice, I propose the question of what constitutes my cultural belonging. The possibilities of understanding traditional Bengal folk motif and symbols easily and acquiring modern approaches have also been explored in the studio. In this regard, two main approaches have been used in this investigation: theoretical analysis and studio practice.

Traditional motifs and Bangladesh indicated symbols are probed in an experimental process by constructing new kinds of artwork. I preferred a traditional motif and specific national symbol, as a medium, in my first production of artwork entitled "the message" and "sleeping conscience" for my second phase of studio practice (see Chapter 3 - Studio Investigation). My research addresses the question of the process of Bangladeshi identity in Bengal art and visual culture by focusing on some of the "indigenous" Bengal traditions in terms of techniques, symbols, and motifs. This study endeavors to highlight the political identity within the cultural identity of Bangladesh by extending a new approach to art production through the investigation of





political, social and cultural context. This studio practice will illustrate the exploration of tradition, folk motif with specific symbols in new artworks, thus verifying the correlation between theory and practice in a Panofsky approach that applies 'seeing and understanding different ways and coming out with reflective thoughts, feelings and awareness' (Holly, 1985).

The amalgamation of cultures that have been taken out to break the hegemony of the so-called 'pure-culture' nowadays is establishing upon how the artist portrays their perception towards the local culture and identity of a new generation. The political issue based on colonialism and the common value from Bangladeshi stratification in society has shaped the production of artworks which is my view towards reconstructing the studio project. Through the sub exhibition and final exhibition of my production of paintings, this can be seen as a critical review of human consciousness focusing on searching new identities in socio-political for the Bangladeshi society.

The conceptual framework of this artwork for this study depends on the political, social and cultural theme through the political culture which has a major magnetism on human consciousness and the imparting of Bangladeshi identification. In the context of contemporary Bangladesh, certain issues of these three topics are highly discussed by the intellectuals and the people. Specific identification of Bangladesh by focusing on these particular issues by the art culture which is a significant part of this study. In addition to that, the three topics are selected mainly about the Rohingya in politics and a new identity, the traditional role of women in society, and Pohela Boishakh (Bangla New Year) in a culture that has narratives that appeared in the artistic representations of my artwork, evoking the concepts of





collective thoughts versus individual thoughts. The individual creativity assesses the common norms of the society, culture, and government when the intellectual person challenges the collective or mainstream thoughts of his community (Hossain & Ali, 2014).

Furthermore, the art does not refer to a certain group of people unless the artist uses some indigenous symbols or national symbols to represent some political, social or cultural issues for increasing human consciousness as well as highlighting a specific nation. In this regard, the researcher chooses an individual or collective thoughts to examine mainstream ideas in a particular community, where the researcher focuses on self-individuality to introduce significant artwork (Danto, 1988).



1.3 Research Objective

- 1.3.1 To investigate Bengal tradition which does not present specific Bangladeshi identity due to the similarity with Indian art and culture.
- 1.3.2 To highlight the power of art language in symbolic ways about the impact of tradition on culture, politics, and social structure in Bangladesh which increases human consciousness and to highlight national identity.
- 1.3.3 To investigate Bangladesh indicated symbols with Bengal's traditional art motif in visual art make a difference with India and present Bangladesh in one way politically and culturally and raise awareness of people about own identity.





1.3.4 To implement the tradition invention, transformation and fragmentation insignificant role through the political culture of Bangladesh (pre and post-liberation) to increase human consciousness.

1.4 Research Question

1.4.1 Why the Bengal tradition does not present specific Bangladeshi identity due to the similarity with Indian art and culture?

1.4.2 In what circumstances the power of art language in symbolic ways give an impact on the culture, politics, and social structure in Bangladesh particularly may increase human consciousness and highlighting the national identity.

1.4.3 How to indicate the Bengal Art Motif compare to India and presenting the

awareness of the identity in Bangladeshi politically and culturally aspects.

1.4.4 How to produce the developments of Artworks that portray the tradition invention, transformation, and fragmentation play an important role in visual art for searching the identity and increase human consciousness through political culture in Bangladesh (pre and post-liberation)?





1.5 Problem Statement

Once upon a time India and Bangladesh were the United States. During the 15th century, European traders arrived in the United States of India. Britain triumphed in gaining economic influence and political rule (by the mid-1700s), reigning over West Bengal for almost 200 years (“Bangladesh — History and Culture”, nd). Mainly from this time, the advent of British culture appeared in Bengal’s traditional art culture. By the time the subcontinent became part of the British Empire, traditional arts had lost the appreciation of the local intelligentsia (Guha-Thakurta 2007, p 147-153). Otherwise, clever and visionary, the British were appeased to present the British identity through the Bengal art culture. However, they believe that the Bengal region was not beyond the British Empire. In order of that, they established authority over the Bengal art patronizer and established some art schools in the Bengal state of India. As a result, Western identity became clear instead of Bengal identity through visual art as it was the political master plan. They (British) knew the traditional art form is a strong symbol to highlight any nation's identity (Mitter, 1994).

The rise of nationalism in Bengal was superseded by an assertion of ownership and authority over Indian art in opposition to the construction of Western scholars. This authority guaranteed that Indian traditions could be best comprehended by Indians. Artists, politicians and intelligentsia community realized that national identity is formed through the selection and invention of tradition (Kapur, 2000). Bengal (state of India) art school ran under the Indian authority. Due to nationalist consciousness, a new revolution was started in the art of the Bengal state of India. Combining Indian Bengal





traditional motif with modern art creates a unique stylistic pattern which later became known as Indian art Style or Bengal art style.

The autonomy of the subcontinent from British principle in 1947 was trailed by the division of the nation into two separate states, India and Pakistan, in light of the Two-Nation Theory (Rashid 2007, p 76). The Indian province of Bengal was partitioned into two sections and its eastern part turned out to be East Pakistan which is a significant part of Pakistan, West Bengal became a state of the Indian federation. The oppressive and unjust mentality of the Pakistani rulers prompted the start of the battle for political and cultural rights almost simultaneously with the introduction of Pakistan. East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) artists realized that they all Bengal artists (Indian and Bangladeshi) set up Indian/Bengal identity during the colonial period due to the nationalist sentiment through tradition, art, and culture. This tradition and art culture reveal the national identity of East Bengal (now Bangladesh) which is different from Pakistan. Thus, to isolate this part from Pakistan, and assemble a free nation, artists highlighted the political discourse through the simplification of forms, primary colours, and ornamental lines of folk art. Its continuation was far-reaching until after the independence of Bangladesh. Thus, no new highlights were found in the artwork of Bangladesh as a new country, however, the Indian Bengal tradition was lit up through Bangladeshi artwork (Islam, 1999). Mansur (2007) argued that the traditional motif in the visual art of Bangladesh communicates its identity in cultural and ethnic similarity with India (Bengal stat) yet failed to give the political identity as an autonomous sovereign country.





A group of artists realized in the mid-70s that the traditional motif in modern art shapes a link to present Bengal (India and Bangladesh) cultural identity but it unable to represent a political identity of Bangladesh as an independent sovereign state. The realization renewed in artists the search for inspiration from Bangladeshi symbol, a new urge to present political identity and efforts to incorporate social and political comments in their work (Mansur, 2007). They started to expend Bangladesh proposed symbol in the modern aesthetic art form which was the new approach in the contemporary art of Bangladesh. According to Mansur (2007), the new approach of art represents Bangladeshi political identity as an independent country but its stylistic modern form does not represent the cultural identity. At present, this pattern is being followed in the contemporary art of Bangladesh by keeping it practically unaltered (Mansur 2007, p. 60).



Depend upon artistic practices in pre and post-liberation Bangladesh and the evolving current scene, this research highlight two genre art form, one of which is a traditional motif in modern art and the other is a Bangladesh indicated symbol in modern art. None of these two genres of art individually can represent both the cultural and political identity of Bangladesh which represents the limitation of the art of Bangladesh. As an artist and academician, I believe that simply the combination of the two sections of art able to completely express the identity of Bangladesh culturally and politically through the single painting. In short, if Bangladeshi symbols transformed into a Bengal folk style with the western aesthetic framework, it will represent the political and cultural identity of Bangladesh (Abdalla *et al.*, 2004).





1.6 Research Significance

The significance of this research is established on the aspects of the national identity of Bangladesh politically and culturally which mixes with the role of tradition and specific symbol in contemporary art. It will contribute to knowledge and experience in the new mood of art and culture. The traditional motif as a symbol and specific national symbol through artwork increases the human consciousness about own culture and nation. This is a new thing to be looked upon by expressing the idea of a specific identity as well as highlighting contemporary things that have not been seen before in Bangladeshi contemporary art.

This research project is to ascertain the presence of informative space in contemporary art in the social and cultural issues of importance on the tradition which plays a significant role to present national identity. With uninterrupted, customized and past rooted identity in the process of forming the society, politics, and culture, it shows the passion of the present subtle relationship.

This project envisions a strong conformation as an important tool for solving the cultural and political identity crisis with the effect of globalization in the current life cycle. This concept reveals the uniqueness of a nation and culture by distinguishing it from others, and uniqueness is, therefore, a country's identity. Inac & Ünal (2013) emphasized that unique culture, fashion, social construction, politics, in fact, any unique things of a group of people can be his/groups identity. Most familiar and used unique things are not used in spite of the relevant use of cultural events. However, the practice of these things removes the similarity between Bangladeshi and Indian culture,





and to create a unique culture of Bangladesh. This concept is established by this research project. In short, one important thing in this research is the disclosure of identity through traditional invention, modification, addition, transformation, and the use of the country betokened symbol. Besides, GI (Geographical Indication) products appear as a national identity, as well as, GI products as a new type of item on the contemporary art of Bangladesh through this research (Rutten *et al.*, 2013).

This research has established new perspectives by investigating Bengal (India and Bangladesh) stylistic art language in the contemporary artworks of Bangladesh. These perspectives focused on the artworks from several viewpoints, namely the social, cultural and political studies as well as fine art studies. This research is important in the fine art studio because it explains how the West Bengal (India) and Bangladeshi artists have developed the social and cultural identity based on a folk motif with the modern aesthetic idea. However, the use of the Bengal folk motif as a symbol in contemporary Bangladeshi art does not publish the specific Bangladeshi identity due to similarity with India. Nevertheless, the combination of the Bengal folk motif with specific symbols has expressed the identity of specific Bangladesh politically and culturally which is established by this research project. Therefore this study presents new creativity in the field of visual arts.

Furthermore, this research project furnishes a message of awareness to raise the consciousness of contemporary incompatible issues which are useful for the nation.





1.7 Study Limitations

The scope of this research is to scrutinize the culture and social structure which represents the specific country's national identity as well as increase human consciousness about various things within the tradition and symbol. Tradition and symbol in contemporary art contribute to portray the identity through the political culture in Bangladesh. The dimension of this investigation will be limited to Bangladesh's identity issues represented in my artworks itself.

While there are many issues in political and cultural contexts, this research did reveal certain topics. Tradition and specific symbols are strong ideas to present Bangladesh's own identities as an independent nation. Some well-known and viable selection of symbols from a large number of Bangladesh indicated symbols were the remarkable



Moreover, depending on the specific feature of the social, political, and cultural issues, some pictures taken from various reliable sources were transformed and diversified in harmony with the national symbol through my artwork. Besides, the selected pictures work documentation of the real scenario of Bangladesh. These pictures were selected based on the true face of Bangladesh which does not wreck the good reputation of Bangladesh. Even though picture selection is an important part of my research, the selection process has not overcome all limitations for keeping the reputation of Bangladesh as a citizen.





Due to living outside Bangladesh, it was impractical for me to paste 2 dimensional and also 3 dimensional Bangladeshi traditional unique elements in harmony with the painting theme on the canvas. I believe expenditure of these elements could help to strengthen this research field.



1.8 Conceptual Framework

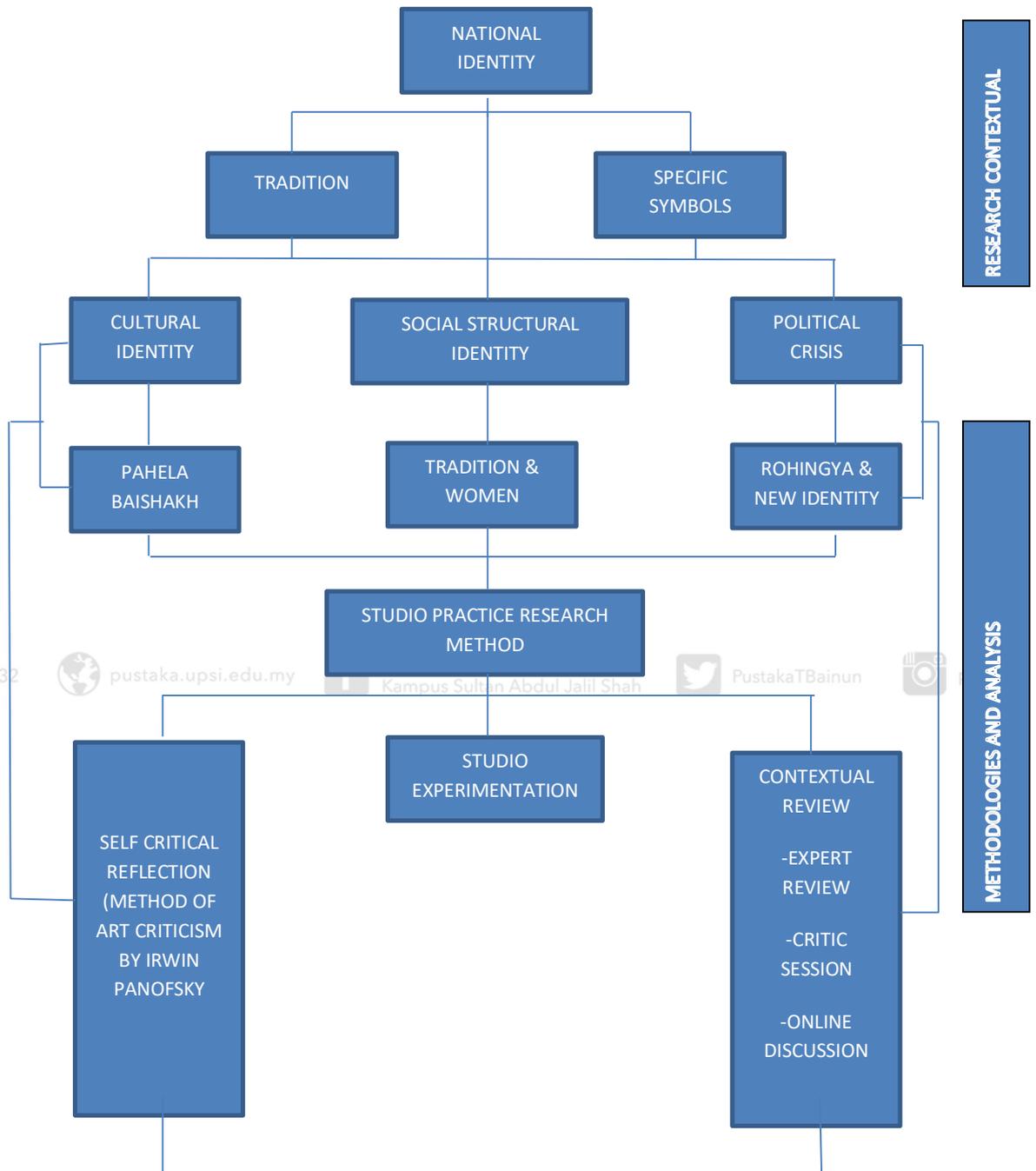


Figure 1.1. Research Framework- the Visual Interpretation of Human Consciousness and Searching Identity through Studio Practice



The conceptual framework of this research has been developed by combining both research and studio practice. As mentioned earlier, it will cover up the essential issues on Bangladeshi political scenarios with the interpretation of human consciousness and to look at the local identity. The investigation on research and studio practice will allow the audiences to experience the meaning, concept and understand the visual context of this research.

The format of research that defines methodology and analysis refers to the form of the process through the dominant compartment of studio research practice. The progressive operation of this relies on the analysis based on three aspects of elements. The basis is about visual culture, social structure and political. These three things refer to three specific topics which are Rohingya in politics, the role of women in social structure, and secular cultural festivals. Furthermore, the anticipated performance of tradition and symbol is so much blessed from the identification of the significant component of contemporary art. The traditional motif folk and specific symbols are the main tools to be used to highlight the specific nation's identity through art.

This is where the meeting point of studio experimentation has yet to be evaluated, and to discuss the process to be analyzed through data interpretation provided by contextual review. Subsequently, the result of the structural development of the conceptual framework has indicated the visual interpretation of human consciousness and the search for identity through the political culture in Bangladesh.





1.9 Researchers Previous Artworks

1.9.1 Introduction

This section only highlights my endeavour to convey an important message and to introduce diversity to contemporary art in Bangladesh through my previous artworks. Political, social, traditional things and personal feelings have been expressed through symbols, texture, different 3-dimensional materials in my artworks as an experiment. My first acquaintance with the allegorical symbol was through my postgraduate study in the United Kingdom. I realized the symbol was a strong device that is used to explain the sensitive topic. Furthermore, I utilized various symbols in my painting, and I exhibited in two national and international exhibitions. I have undertaken many times to manifest my new works by reviewing the old works by giving priority to the opinion of viewers. The following is a brief discourse of some of my paintings.



1.9.2 Old Woman

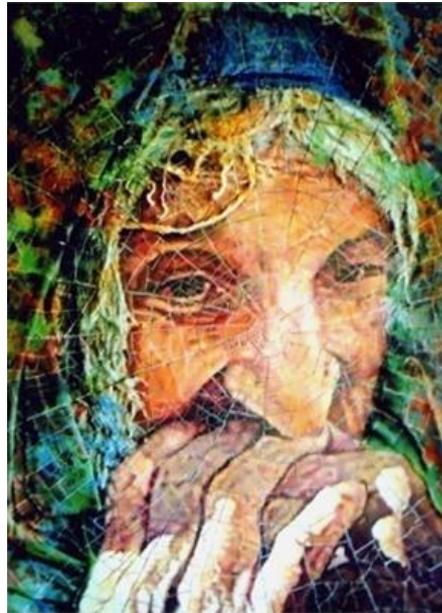


Figure 1.2. Abul Hasnat, Old Woman, 2009, Mixed Media on Canvas, 60 × 44 Inches

This artwork entitled “Old Woman” is one of my experimental works. Sackcloth, normal cloth, sand and yarn, and oil color are used on canvas to explore different flavors and dimensions. In this process, many works were done in series for this artwork named ‘Old Woman’. All elements and the theme in this painting have emphasized the technique concerning the subject matter in the search for its style. No paintings in this series have so far expressed its full meaning apart from having a meaningful relationship with each other. Through the memories of the old woman’s experience, it is evident that the glorious independence history of Bengal is being destroyed by political interest. Based on this topic, these experimental series of works were completed. I have seen deep spider spots in several old and abandoned places. In this painting, the spider net on the face of this old woman symbolizes worthlessness as a symbol. The red and green color of her dress indicates the flag of Bangladesh which



was achieved through independence. The use of green and red colors in this painting is presented in the shape of the floor tiles. A floor is filled by the many pieces of tile, likewise, a human's life has achieved perfection through a lot of fragmented feelings and experimentation. Here a message is provided by comparing human life with the complete floor. The life process of the old woman is not beyond this. Today's old woman is young during the liberation war. Even though the old woman is worthless today, she has a true story of freedom in her fragmented feelings and experiences. Eyewitnesses to the history of the country's identity are Bangladeshis, as these types of old people are still neglected. Blooming our responsibility towards the living witnesses of the glorious history of Bangladesh is a key element in this painting.



1.9.3 Arbitration



Figure 1.3. Abul Hasnat, Arbitration, 2009, Mixed Media on Canvas, 60 × 44 Inches
“Arbitration”

Figure 1.3. depict the system of village arbitration in Bangladesh. Village arbitration is one kind of characteristic of the Bengal social structure. Typically, arbitration is called for solving the problems of the village people. The privileged social leader handles the arbitration and makes any decision for taking advantage without ethics as a judgment. In this painting, a young man is seen seated on the ground and his mother counting the rosary behind him. The counting of the rosary signifies the lack of confidence in this judgment and the faith of God as a symbol. The eye expression of the young man whispers to the viewer that justice is dissatisfaction. Even though a social leader is not present in this painting, but strategic painting composition and environment indicate his presence. In this painting, this young man represents that all Bangladeshis are helpless people, and the symbolic narrative hints not only at the village judicial system but also denotes the country’s overall judicial system. This painting highlights the consistent combination of 2d oil color image and varieties of 3D material which makes the scenario even more vivid through experimental practice.

1.9.4 Foolish Man

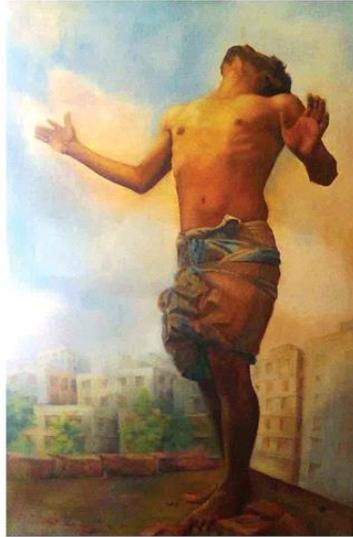


Figure 1.4, Abul Hasnat, Foolish Man, 2010, Oil on Canvas, 72 × 45 Inches

If you spit on the sky, it will hit you back' which is a prevalent proverb of Bangladesh.

In my eyes, this is the perfect topic to signify the stupidity of my countrymen. The painting explicates a laborer who is spitting on the sky portrayed in Figure 1.4. It will return to his face like a boomerang, knowing this very fact, he still commits such an act. His face is drawn to the sky, and he is standing on a very dangerous high roof. One shaky movement he will fall. A dangerous place for him to risk his life and everything by not being careful. A greater portion of the people in Bangladesh is labourers. The figure in this painting represents the general people of Bangladesh. The corner of the top roof represents the dangerous situation of Bangladesh, where generally people live in. This painting imparts to the people not to make a mistake after knowing the facts.

1.9.5 Jesus

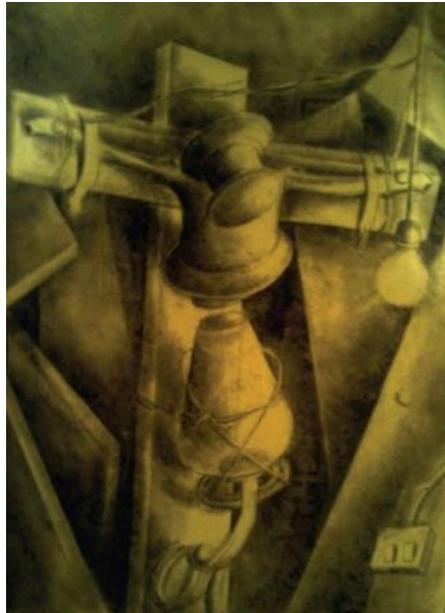


Figure 1.5. Abul Hasnat, Jesus, 2010, Oil on canvas, 72 × 45 Inches

This painting depicted in Figure 1.5. certainly expressive. I wanted to express a somewhat complex thought in this painting. The painting is of a Bangladeshi traditional lamp being crucified. Jesus is made out of parts from this lamp. However, in front of this crucified lamp, there is an electric valve. The lamp was invented long ago. Humanity has used different kinds of lamps and torches throughout the history of civilization. The lamp I used belongs to my own country. It was popular during the 70s, 80s and even in the 90s. This lamp was the very source of light in most parts of my country. However, with the invention of electricity and due to its fast wide-spreading, the lamp had diminished. This type of lamps is now almost extinct. However, this fact conveyed a crucial matter to me. Jesus was the source of light a long time ago. Although he was the primary source of enlightenment and peace, his effect is now not as strong as before. He has not vanished from people's mind though. He is there, like the old



lamp, but not as strong as before. The new world has taken away his place. The new ways of life, the new technology, the new millennium have replaced him, but not totally. This painting recommends that the tradition will survive with modernity, just like Jesus.

The crucified lamp also uses allegory extensively. Besides, Jesus is the topic expressed and the crucified lamp being the allegorical device, the painting reeks an aura of clever symbolism. The old wisdom is now being sacrificed to the new wave of thoughts. New philosophies are inevitably replacing the ones hailed as the code of life. I have always assayed to bring innovation in my artwork through experiments. In this painting, I used printing ink and thick texture paper which is not seen in Bangladeshi contemporary art. Mainly, this type of paper is used for making packets and cartons.

Although it is difficult to work on this paper. Nevertheless, it was mastered through experiments.



1.9.6 Humanity



Figure 1.6. Abul Hasnat, *Humanity*, 2010, Oil on Canvas, 25.5 × 35 Inches

I profoundly watched all religious individuals battle and overlook one another. People are covered with superstitions due to religion. Individuals cannot comprehend religion which is only a name, it is made by humans. Humanity is the principle for a person. This subject is chosen from numerous specialist acknowledgments.

The painting manifests an old printing press room. A couple of old books with thick bindings lying on an old table which is partially viewable. Printed papers are lying around on the floor without any formal coordination. The main item comprises one garlic with one clove going into the printer and various printed pages coming out with the names of various religions printed on them. The four religions, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism are written on the four pages hanging from the wire. Every element of this painting expresses an allegorical symbol. The old printing press room signifies the world. Whole garlic represents one thing or one religion or just humanity which is created by God or nature. Every clove represents groups of humans or a nation



as a symbol which is also made by God but the printing machine represents human creation as a symbol. This creation of God going into human creation and as a result various religions are introduced. This painting clearly highlights that God is not the maker of various religions. God just has created one religion which is called humanity which has been divided by humans under various names the brutal acts of the world's political arena are committed due to the split of religion which is absolutely anti-human. The moral value of this painting pointed out that by using a combination of text and symbolic images, it symbolizes that "humanity is the main religion of every group of people and religion is created by humans, which makes the deviation within the human.





1.9.7 Ideas of Development

I realized that by using symbols and its symbolic meaning in my artworks, I have received feedback on my previous international exhibitions from different cultural viewers and art critics. As a lecturer, I have also received favourable criticism from my fine art teachers and my students of Bangladesh which have motivated me for doing something unique by using Bangladeshi symbols for viewers to recognize well.

In the first year of my Doctor of Philosophy studies, I interpreted all my old works, library studies, studio works and discussions with my supervisor. Assuredly, I picked the Bengal tradition and specific Bangladeshi symbol which will be appropriate for viewers to understand efficiently as it will increase human consciousness about national identity. As a result, the audience will feel motivated to increase their consciousness on political, cultural, and social culture in Bangladesh as this will be a new approach in contemporary art in Bangladesh. Traditional elements and national symbol combination are the main targets of my practice-based research which is technically somewhat different from old works. However, the experiences of my previous artworks have encouraged and help my research to reach its goal.

