

Humayun Ahmed's Road to Popularity with *Himu* and *Misir Ali*

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Abstract: In the realm of literary popular culture among the readers of Bangla literature, Himu and Misir Ali by Humayun Ahmed are two hyper-real popular icons. Both the characters enjoy high popularity because of their hyper-real sensitivity and supernatural power. Himu is also popular for his eccentric yet very catchy life style in which he enjoys endless freedom while Misir Ali is famous for his telepathic power through which he can communicate with the ever mysterious inner mechanics of human psyche. Misir Ali is a person of logic and rationality while Himu symbolizes anti-logic and unconventionality. Humayun Ahmed seems to cash in on the popularity of these characters, especially of Himu, though he seems to promote a set of his own ideology through these characters as well. In spite of the accusation of being 'inferior' kind of works, the books of Himu and Misir Ali are highly popular among the readers of Bangla literature. As the postmodern notion rejects the margin between 'high' and 'low' literature, the Himu and Misir Ali books can be evaluated in respect of Humayun Ahmed's popularity and commercial success achieved through them.

Keywords: Humayun Ahmed, Himu, Misir Ali, popular culture, icon, postmodernism.

1. Humayun Ahmed's Road to Popularity with Himu and Misir Ali: An Overture - Humayun Ahmed is a popular writer among the readers of Bangla literature. His road to emerge as a popular writer is heavily merged with the road to popularity of Himu and Misir Ali. The emergence of Himu and Misir Ali as popular figures and their rise to popularity can be traced under the light of some distinct features of the two. Both Himu and Misir Ali are somehow different from the 'traditional' literary protagonists. These two are depicted under the light of some super-natural power and hyper-real sensitivity. They seem to be very familiar yet they are different. Himu, with his distinctly articulated lifestyle, somewhat scrappy personality and whimsical characteristics, forms a strange yet very attractive image of himself that delivers him an edge over Misir Ali in the realm of popularity. Himu becomes an iconic cult from an icon and starts enjoying the pleasure of having a community of followers. Himu becomes the hub of a complete network. Moreover, both Himu and Misir Ali attract the audience as the two successfully provide the readers the points of release against the people's natural longing for freedom; against the habitual desire to dismantle the chain of formality, sociality and civility; and, against the wish to see the future; against the desire to know the mystery of others' psychic realm. Himu and Misir Ali drag the readers into such a realm, in which, so many such things are possible that are impossible in the general course of lives or in reality. Miracles are performed by Himu and Misir Ali in points of anxiety so

artistically that the readers have no choice but to like them. Readers' fascination results in high popularity of the two characters. Now, Humayun Ahmed cashes in on the popularity of Himu and Misir Ali as the two, especially, Himu, become commercial success. It is, however, subjected to further study that what is the driving force behind Humayun Ahmed's venture to produce Himu and Misir Ali books so frequently. Commercialism or Humayun Ahmed wants to create a realm of his ideology through Himu and Misir Ali – is a question yet to get answered. Moreover, the pieces of Humayun Ahmed are often accused of being inferior kinds of work or 'low' literature, even after being highly popular. But, postmodernism denies the margin between 'high' and 'low' literature or 'superior' and 'inferior' kinds of work. Therefore, under the light of postmodern notion, Humayun Ahmed can be called a successful writer through the depiction of Himu, as well as Misir Ali, as far as the response from the readers of Bangla literature is concerned.

2. Key Words: The Connotations Unveiled - Few key words are frequently used in this paper that can have multiple connotations. The following part contains the elaboration of those words or terms along with all their possible connotations and also notes the particular connotations that the words refer to in this paper.

Popular Culture; 'Culture' itself is a word loaded with meanings of different sorts and when it is modified by the word 'popular', the diversity in meaning goes multi-directional ways, concerning various angles and perspectives. For this essay, two of the 'current' meanings of popular culture offered by Raymond Williams in Keywords are taken and those are, (i) “well liked by many people” and (ii) “work deliberately setting out to win favour with the people” (cited in Storey, *Cultural Theory* 5). Another meaning of popular culture offered by Raymond Williams is, “inferior kinds of work” (cited in Storey, *Cultural Theory* 5). This meaning is not fully agreed with in this paper, rather, argued and even challenged to an extent as from the postmodern perspective, popular culture does not connote 'inferior' kinds of work as such. The connotation suggested by John Storey sees popular culture as a postmodern phenomenon and this paper tends to think the same as well.

Icon: The word 'icon' denotes “a person who is very successful and admired” (“Icon”, *Merriam*). Now, this person can also be a hyper-real one who does not exist in real. In this essay, Himu is referred to as an icon in the sense that, he enjoys the devotion from a particular community of readers and he is well liked and loved by this community. As a character, Himu is an admired one to his followers. So, the denotation of the word 'icon' also allows Himu being called an icon.

Cult: The word 'cult' usually denotes a certain class in the realm of religion, but, it has different other connotations as well. 'Cult' refers to “a popular fashion” (“Cult”, *Oxford* 284) as it is originated from 'culture'. As an adjective, the word 'cult' can modify a work of art like a book or a film; can also modify a character or a figure. In this paper, 'cult' is used to modify a popular figure, Himu. A cult figure may represent “a very modest aesthetic achievement” (Eco 394). A cult figure is more than an

icon as a cult figure enjoys the status of a public 'hero' within its own sphere. Himu has been referred to as a cult figure in the current paper in this sense.

Hero: The word 'hero' has mainly two dimensional denotations. One is the association of the word 'hero' with heroic deeds or something courageous, even with something supernatural or godlike. The second denotation associates 'hero' with the idea of protagonist or principal character in a literary piece like novel, play or story. In some cases, especially in film, 'hero' combines the two denotations of being heroic and the principal character at the same time. Now, this paper takes the denotation of 'hero' associated with the idea of protagonist or principal character in a literary piece. Besides, in addition, this paper associates the word 'hero' to a more illustrated and fresher dimension of connotation relating the word to popularity. In this dimension, a hero is people's champion, not necessarily because of something 'heroic' in him, rather, because of his distinct qualities which can be very banal, yet catchy. This hero is a cult figure who enjoys the status of a hero among his community of followers. This hero is a popular icon, an iconic cult.

Mass: The word 'mass' denotes "a large number of people", while 'the masses' means "ordinary people" ("Mass", *Oxford* 720). This paper refers the word 'mass' to the literate class of general people in Bangladesh who read fictions, like to read fictions, talk about fictions, but are not literary critics.

'Low' Literature: 'Low' literature is presumably what Raymond Williams calls "inferior kinds of work" (cited in Storey, *Cultural Theory* 5) while offering the 'current' meaning of popular culture. John Storey defines popular culture associating it with 'low' culture as he states, "Popular culture is...the culture which is left over after we have decided what is high culture" (*Cultural Theory* 6). This definition of 'low' culture can be applicable for 'low' literature as well.

Hyper-real; Hyper-real is such a state in which an object enjoys the status of being real, even seems to be more realistic than real, but the object actually does not exist in reality. Hyper-real figures can be constructed afresh through combining different features of the real sphere and of the supernatural sphere as well. Himu and Misir Ali, the two characters discussed in this essay, are hyper-real ones as both of them enjoy their existence in the real sphere and have their impact on it though they do not exist in reality. Some supernatural powers are incorporated within both of the characters and it becomes possible because both of them are imagined characters, but they are hyper-real characters because people tend to believe both Himu and Misir Ali exist in reality, although people know that the characters are not real.

Magic Realism: Magic realism is a kind of reality that exists within the realm of fictions as reality, but the world out of fiction defines them as something magical that has no logical proof to be real. Matthew Strecher defines magic realism as "what happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something too strange to believe" (cited in "Magic Realism", *Wikipedia*).

3. Himu and Misir Ali: Discourse Analysis - Himu and Misir Ali, the

two target characters in this essay, have their own uniqueness and peculiarity. Both the characters have much to be focused on and to be analysed in their names, lifestyles, appearances, personalities, and so forth. The following words in this chapter are dedicated to figure out the two characters, first Himu and then Misir Ali, along with few words on the thematic features of Himu and Misir Ali books as well. Himu is a young man aged somewhere between twenty and thirty. He loses his mother at the time around his birth. He does not even know how his mother was. He does not have any photograph of her either. He also loses his father at the age of nine. Therefore, he can not remember many things about his father as well. After his father's death, he is taken to his grandfather's house and is admitted in an English medium school. But, soon after, Himu's maternal uncle comes to Himu's grandfather's house to take Himu with him. Himu's father, before his death, has given the responsibility of Himu on Himu's maternal uncle through a letter. Himu's father, before his death, tells Himu as well to live with Himu's maternal relatives. Therefore, Himu is taken to his maternal uncle's village home at Hiranpur in Mymensing. In that village, Himu lives in a huge joint family with a large number of children. He lives a free life there enjoying endless freedom, as the elders of the family have had hardly any concern about what the children are doing all day. Himu lives there till his SSC examination. In the same year, the eldest of Himu's maternal uncles dies and Himu returns to Dhaka to live in the house of his father's eldest sister. (Ahmed 33-41) The very name of Himu is the shorter version of Himalaya. Himu is named after Himalaya by his father. His father has given him this name as his father wants him become a great-hearted (noble-hearted) man, and the word 'Himalaya' symbolizes greatness. Once Himu's father is asked why he has not named his son 'Akash' (the sky), which also stands for greatness. Himu's father replies, "Though the sky is great, it is out of our reach unlike the Himalaya, which is touchable" (Ahmed 34). The very word 'Himalaya' also stands for freedom, highness, and nobleness – the virtues that Himu's father wants to see in his son's personality. After Himu's father's death, Himu's grandfather tries to impose on Himu a name, Imtiaz Chowdhury, and a nick name, Tutul, as well. But, this attempt by Himu's grandfather goes in vain. Himu can be a derived name from the author, Humayun Ahmed's name itself, though it is stated in the novels that the name, 'Himu' is the shorter version 'Himalaya' (Ahmed 159). Perhaps, Humayun Ahmed himself has an internal longing to be like the Himalaya and Himu can be the alter ego of Humayun Ahmed himself as "in the foreword to one of his books, he mentioned that while writing stories about Himu, he feels that he himself is Himu and this feeling isn't there when he is writing any other book" ("Himu", *Wikipedia*). As the name 'Himu' is stated to be the shorter version of 'Himalaya', likewise, 'Himu' can also be the shorter version of 'Humayun', as long as the phonetic resemblance is concerned. Himu's father wants his son be a great man (mahapurush). He continues to experiment with his son following his own way. Himu gets his lessons from his father about Bangla, English, Mathematics, Geography, and 'Ethics'. This 'Ethics' is the philosophy of Himu's father regarding life that he conveys to his son. Himu does not go to school until his father dies, yet he gets fairly literate

as the student of his father. Himu's father teaches Himu various things about life. Himu's father, before his death, tells Himu not to be over ambitious in life. Himu's father believes that, high expectation results in despair and sorrow, and the person who can put down high expectation and desire, remains happy. According to him, to be happy is the ultimate word. He tells his son to be happy always. (Ahmed 36-37)

Moreover, Himu's father leaves a personal diary for Himu, which is a kind of anthology of advices about different philosophy of life. Various pieces of advice are arranged in there under different titles like "Nirliptota" (apathy or indifference) (Ahmed 47) and "Srishtikortar Onushondhan" (search for the God) (Ahmed 55). Himu's father also kills Himu's mother so that she cannot interfere into Himu's father's experiments with Himu to develop Himu as a mahapurush. At times, Himu's father seems to be very harsh and rude, stripped of all kinds of kindness. Himu's father behaves so in order to teach his son to ignore the illusive affection for the world that, Himu's father believes, affects the way to become a mahapurush. Himu is not a mahapurush though, but he likes to act like a mahapurush at times. In few cases, he is represented with such features that go with the image of a mahapurush. Himu tells about himself, "I am not a mahapurush. But, I like to act in this role and I think, I can do this fairly well, perhaps, better than a mahapurush." He further says, "In my opinion, a mahapurush is such a person who remains untouched by all sorts of impurity or darkness of the world" (Ahmed 33). Himu seems to have supernatural powers of some sort. The inside characters tend to believe that, Himu has supernatural power. This is the magical reality, under the light of which, Himu has been depicted. There are many such incidents that prove Himu's prophetic power though he always claims that, those incidents are mere coincidences. Though in the recent stories, the supernatural powers of Himu seem to increase. Moreover, Himu seems to be a wise person, not in conventional sense though. He can handle any situation with a surprising ease, can handle the turmoil of human mind. Sometimes, he seems to read the inner realm of human psyche as well. Himu has a typical dress code of a yellow punjabi. Another typical notion about Himu is that, he walks along the road barefooted. But, it is not the case always. In few books, there is no clear statement whether he walks barefooted or not. But, but there is a direct statement that, Himu walks wearing sandals. (Ahmed 80) Himu lives a gypsy life. He has no permanent address. He does not have any job or any stable status in life. But, he enjoys his life as he permits himself enjoy endless freedom, because, he does not chain himself within any kind of social bond. Formality, sociality or civility is not the concern in Himu's life. As he is asked whether he is happy in such a scrappy and whimsical life, Himu replies that, this is the ultimate joy of his life that he can do whatever he likes. (Ahmed 25) Himu is a purely eccentric figure. His life seems to be a complete package of what are usually regarded as unconventional. Yet, whatever he does, cannot be called something negative or unethical. He does strange things in even more strange manner that sometimes seem to be something beyond any kind of rationality. He has unusual imaginations as well. Sometimes he does something utterly unexpected. On the other hand, sometimes he makes people expect, then shatters the expectation, that makes him even

more expected. Himu, as a protagonist, can be called a silent, yet powerful protest against the conventional notion of civilized life. With his self-assured personality that has nothing ethically negative in it, Himu is a protest against ambition, hypocrisy, greed, materialism, opportunism, fear of the state and the police, and so forth. He does not suffer from any sense of guilt which is a common feature of human psychology. He is smart because he can stand up to any situation but he does not try to be smart by conventional norms. He lives in the present and is not obsessed with the thought of future. ("Himu", *Wikipedia*) Now, the books of Himu have some noticeable features. As far as the theme is concerned, these books deal with very commonplace or trivial issues. There is nothing serious as an issue. The plot is not a compact one with some kind of compact story; rather, loosely flowing factors are presented in an apparently lazy manner. The Himu books seem to contain bits of life collected from here and there. These are sorts of incomplete art that always trigger the longing for a complete narrative but never provide it. Therefore, these books ultimately have no compact story as such to share. But, there are something in these books that a reader from any class can find her/his share in them if s/he likes to. The Himu books are not loaded with conventional love stories or life crises. Rather, there is some unusual newness in the depiction of such things which are actually the particles of everyday life but usually not found in literary fictions in the manner same as the Himu books present them through. The Himu books are like free flowing rivers, from which, no part is separately attractive but the appeal remains in the whole entity.

Misir Ali, on the other hand, is a bit different from Himu from many perspectives. Misir Ali is a middle aged person. The appearance of Misir Ali is not fully described anywhere in the books. It is stated that he is tall, thin, and wears thick powerful glasses. It has been stated multiple times in the stories that he has strangely intelligent eyes. He is an extra ordinary rational psychologist committed to unravel the mysteries around him. The very name 'Misir Ali' has a phonological orientation with mystery. Likewise, he loves to deal with mysteries, especially with those of human minds. It is interesting that in a series where Misir Ali is the main and, essentially, only recurring character and looks intimately at other peoples' lives, not much is revealed about Misir Ali's own personal life. In *Misir Ali Unsolved*, his father is mentioned to be a teacher in a Madrasa and is portrayed to be a very superstitious and slightly eccentric man. Other than his father, not much about his mother or siblings, or their existence, has been discussed. He also tends to avoid questions regarding his personal life. In *Debi*, the first Misir Ali book, a younger brother of him is mentioned as dying. Misir Ali is an unmarried person. Some of his female students, in particular, one by the name of Nilu, have expressed their interest to marry him but Misir Ali has never showed any interest. Misir Ali is shown married to Nilu at the end of *Onno Bhubon*. However the author regrets what he has done and later, shows that they have never married. Misir Ali lives a very simple life, yet there are some peculiarities in the way he lives. In most of the books he is found in a newly rented house, with one or no servant to help him with the household works. Although Misir Ali often rents a new house, the reasons have never been

disclosed. Misir Ali is a very intelligent part time professor of Psychology at the University of Dhaka. Though he is not a professional psychiatrist, because of his special interest in paranormal activities of the human psyche, people suffering from such problems come to him in search of satisfactory solutions. He is a logical person. He believes that nothing can happen without reason. To him, there is a rational explanation behind everything. Being a professor of a subject that deals with the human mind, he is interested in the way that mind works through. He tries to explain every unusual thing that he confronts with his wisdom and logic. In each book, a new mystery finds Misir Ali, though he is reluctant to take cases. But, eventually he gets himself involved in the mystery. And once he gets involved in an apparently paranormal event, he takes steps to investigate the matters until they are resolved. ("Misir Ali", *Wikipedia*)

Like Himu, Misir Ali is also believed by the inside characters of the fictions to have some sort of supernatural power to read the human mind, though he himself does not believe in something supernatural. Misir Ali's ability to connect himself with the inner mechanics of human psychology is a kind of telepathic power that, he believes, can be attained through earnest effort. Lose your eyes and learn to see – these words can, perhaps, explain the approach of Misir Ali to see the inner psyche. "He can literally close his eyes and see what's inside our minds and on the way solve incredible mysteries" (Hafiz). Misir Ali is a more composed and calm figure than Himu. If Himu stands for anti-logic, Misir Ali is on the opposite pole of firm logic. "Logic is always in the centrefold of all his theories" (Hafiz). Himu is more imaginative than Misir Ali as Misir Ali lives closer to reality. Misir Ali has a simple wish to have such a house, from whose balcony, the sky is clearly visible. Now, the books of Misir Ali have little more compact plots and stories than those of Himu. The Misir Ali series is a kind of detective one that deals with mysterious cases related to human psyche. In this series, everything is attempted to be explained by logic and rationality unlike it is done in the Himu series. But, the author tries to give some scientific evidences in some cases, few of which are not the correct scientific features; rather, few unscientific factors are presented through scientific terms, which can actually be called pseudo scientific. Then, Humayun Ahmed's language, in both the Himu and Misir Ali books, is very fluid and reader friendly. Though, because of the thematic issues, the Himu books seem to offer a bit more reader friendly language than the Misir Ali books do. This language is the language of the masses that some people think, does not suit the purpose of literature.

4. The Readers and Humayun Ahmed: The Interplay of Reciprocity - For the characters of Himu and Misir Ali, Humayun Ahmed has a particular class of audience. Each of the characters enjoys a community of followers. But, Himu certainly has an edge over Misir Ali as far as the community of followers and the popularity are concerned. Himu, as a cult figure and as a public hero, has a fairly big number of fans, some of which are really crazy about him. The majority of the Himu fans are aged between fifteen and thirty. From gender's perspective, both male and female readers are equally interested in Himu. From the perspective of social class, the majority of Himu fans are from middle to lower middle

class of society. For Misir Ali, the number of fans and the popularity are less than that of Himu. The average age of Misir Ali's fans seems to be a little more than that of Himu's fans. But, the gender and the social class of Misir Ali's fans are almost the same as Himu's fans. Now, Humayun Ahmed, as a writer, enjoys the popularity of Himu and Misir Ali among the masses. In fact, the popularity of Himu and Misir Ali is identical to the popularity of Humayun Ahmed himself. Moreover, Himu and Misir Ali not only contribute to the popularity of Humayun Ahmed, but also provide him financial benefit or commercial success. So, there is the interplay of reciprocity between Humayun Ahmed and his readers. Humayun Ahmed produces more and more Himu and Misir Ali books that provide the readers the taste of literature that they want; and in response, the readers also contribute to the commercial success of Humayun Ahmed through consuming more and more Himu and Misir Ali books and by the same ratio, the popularity of Humayun Ahmed increases. In this reciprocal relationship, both the parties get what they look for.

5. Popularity and Commercialism: Why and How - This paper aims at finding out the road to popularity of Himu and Misir Ali alongside focusing on the way to commercial success of Humayun Ahmed. Now, the distinct features of Himu are already mentioned in the third chapter. Therefore, the following words are going to set forth the logical explanation of how Himu gets his high popularity and becomes a cult figure with a community of fans. Himu is a scrappy type of person who is purely eccentric. He is a peculiar figure against the established notions of society and civilized life. So, firstly, the readers get a touch of newness in Himu which is utterly unconventional. Secondly, civilization is a kind of chain that does not permit the social human being to be driven by the pleasure principles. Therefore, the readers find a kind of release imagining their alter ego acting like Himu. Himu, whose full name is Himalaya, asserts himself as a symbol of full fledged freedom and the readers are attracted by him like anything. Then, Himu carries the image of a 'mahapurush'(great man). The inside characters of the fictions regard Himu as a man of supernatural power. Himu also exhibits his supernatural power in many cases though he himself tends to consider the incidents mere coincidences. Himu, with his supernatural power or hyper-real sensitivity, does many apparently strange things. Through this, the readers have another dimension of release against the natural but unattainable longing of human being to attain some sort of supernatural power. Therefore, Himu becomes the champion of people's hearts and every follower wants to become a Himu. Then again, the books of Himu do not contain any serious issue. There is no plot or compact story as such in any Himu book. Rather, very commonplace everyday bits of life are collected from here and there and then, artistically twisted in an amazing manner. So, the readers do not get indulged in any deep thoughts or do not feel any intense impulse of emotion, but freely flow with the stream of trivial occurrences. The Himu books, thus, do not have any story to remember or to share, they do not have any long lasting impact on the readers from the story-perspective; but, they are utterly successful to create instant appeal among the readers. These books are not story

oriented; rather, they are Himu oriented as Himu is the prime focus rather than a compact narrative. Moreover, there are so many tiny bits of life that the readers of every age, gender and class can find themselves associated with any of the incidents. As a writer, Humayun Ahmed also operates the character of Himu masterfully. Humayun Ahmed incorporates an amusing sense of humour in the character of Himu and he also brings sudden comic punches in his narrative, which make the reading even more enjoyable. The character of Himu is articulated with a positive ethical sense. There is hardly anything negative in Himu from the ethical perspective. It also contributes to Himu's image of a popular hero. As a protagonist, he is a non violent protest against greed, ambition, hypocrisy and materialism. Himu is probably the most desired hyper-real bachelor figure among the female fans of him. In most of the books, Himu entangles himself with a girl other than his girlfriend Rupa, but he ultimately does not form any kind of permanent relationship with any of the girls, not even with Rupa. He remains an illusive figure ever for the girls. This is another dimension of his popularity. Even the male readers love Himu as a bachelor forever, as the young generation of boys likes to be desired by a number of girls, but they never want themselves or their hero be chained up with a particular girl, because, it is the typical thinking of the boys that whenever one boy gets chained up with a particular girl, his image as a demanding bachelor gets affected. From that perspective, Himu is an ever demanding figure. Now, as the word 'Himu' can be called the shorter version of 'Humayun' from the perspective of phonetic resemblance, the author, Humayun Ahmed loves to feel himself as Himu. Humayun is inside Himu and Himu is inside Humayun. Himu is Humayun and Humayun is Himu.

Now, as Himu's popularity is Humayun Ahmed's popularity, readers tend to count Humayun Ahmed as Himu. Himu has a demand as a bachelor figure, as it is stated earlier. Likewise, though Humayun Ahmed is not a bachelor, but his first wife, Gultekin, is not a public figure. But, the author's second marriage with Meher Afroz Shaon, a popular media face, seems to affect the demanding status of him to an extent. It is because, first, it is the second marriage, which always carries a negative tone in our society. Second, the age difference between him and Shaon somehow does not go with the traditional sense of our society. Third, Shaon was like a daughter figure to him; in fact, she was the friend of his daughter. Because of this second marriage, some people, especially the female readers are found a little critical about him. But, it should be a very personal decision of a person's personal realm and the others should not be judgmental regarding anyone's personal affairs without being really empathetic to that particular person. Misir Ali also enjoys the popularity because of his uniqueness. Some of those features of Misir Ali match with that of Himu, but there are some more that are only of Misir Ali's own. The prime cause of Misir Ali's popularity is his telepathic power through which he can connect himself with the ever mysterious internal mechanics of human psyche. His telepathic power is believed to be something supernatural by the inside characters of the fictions; but, Misir Ali himself believes that, this sort of power can be attained through earnest contemplation or sincere effort to read the way of activity of

human mind. Now, it is the natural human desire to be able to read the mysteries of others' inner psyche. As Misir Ali is a master of this art, he is regarded as someone very popular. People's inability to walk through the channels of others' minds results in utter respect for Misir Ali. Moreover, any kind of mystery attracts everyone like anything and whenever someone is dragged into a mystery, naturally his/her consciousness creates a longing to solve the mystery. Misir Ali books attract the readers using the same approach and when the mystery is solved by Misir Ali's wisdom and telepathic power, the readers have no choice but to like him. Then, like Himu, Misir Ali is such a character that has no trace of something negative in it which is a point of benefit on the way to become a public hero and to be loved by the people. The Misir Ali books are identical to detective stories to some extent, but this series has its uniqueness as it deals with only those mysteries which are somehow associated with the course of action of human mind. In fact, the very name 'Misir Ali' carries a touch of mysticism that the readers find in the Misir Ali books and in the character portrayal of Misir Ali as well. Now, in the realm of popularity, Himu seems to have an edge over Misir Ali. This is, perhaps, due to Himu's younger age and more eccentric personality. Misir Ali discovers different colours of human psyche but as a character he himself is not as colourful as Himu is. Himu himself carries the true colour of variety. He is a colourful character under the light of twisting oddities against the established norms of civility. Humayun Ahmed seems to cash in on the popularity of Himu and Misir Ali, especially of Himu, as the frequently published Himu books suggest. Himu becomes the hub of a network which is growing stronger day by day contributing to the pro rata increase of popularity of Humayun Ahmed. Other than enjoying the growing popularity through Himu and Misir Ali, Humayun Ahmed also achieves commercial success, because, along with the growing popularity, people consume more Himu and Misir Ali books. It is clearly evident that, Humayun Ahmed feeds the readers' interest. As Himu is more popular than Misir Ali, the Himu books are published more frequently than the Misir Ali books. Humayun Ahmed goes for commercial success but he does so through a figure like Himu who himself does not consume much. Apparently it seems that, Himu may influence the readers to consume less. There can be two different explanations for the matter. First, Humayun Ahmed may have an intention to promote a certain set of ideologies of his own through the character of Himu as Himu is considered to be the alter ego of Humayun Ahmed himself. The commercial success may have been given the second priority in that case. But, there can be a second explanation which seems to be more logical than the first one, and that is, Himu is already a commercial success with his typical image and characteristic features. In that case, bringing a change into Himu's way of life would result in the other way round. Moreover, as Himu remains unchanged in his typical image, it may influence the readers to consume less in the other sectors of life but the readers never think of consuming less in case of consuming the books of Himu. So, even if Himu himself is a character that consumes less, it continues to produce commercial benefit for Humayun Ahmed.

And, if Humayun Ahmed wants to promote frugality through the character of Himu, that venture is not hindered as well. Finally, the themes of Himu and Misir Ali books are not grand ones, not serious or deep thought provoking ones either. Therefore, these books are often accused of being the 'inferior' kind of works. It is true that, these books deal with trivial and scattered issues but the ways they are presented in, they have their charm and attraction in those ways. And, in the postmodern era, no work is 'inferior' as long as it is being popular and being well liked by the masses. Moreover, in those trivial and apparently less serious issues, Humayun Ahmed presents a fair amount of social satires and morals that are helpful to raise awareness among the conscious readers.

6. Conclusion- This essay tries to offer a study of the characters named Himu and Misir Ali by the popular Bangladeshi writer, Humayun Ahmed. The study encapsulates the analyses of the distinct features of the two aforementioned characters, the relation between the author and the readers of those characters, the road to the popularity of the two, the author's ideology and his association with commercial success. The study is expected to be helpful especially for the students of Bangla literature to get an idea about the realm of popular culture associated with literature. This paper may also help to get the idea about the popular literary heroes of current young readers of Bangla literature and about the way of the heroes' development to the state of popular hyper-real icons. This study is also expected to make its readers interested in more advanced study of literary popular culture of Bangla literature focusing on other writers and their pieces with the aim at figuring out a complete sketch of the current trend of Bangla literature under the light of popular culture.

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