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Blurring Boundaries: A New Historicist Approach to Humayun Ahmed's *Badshah Namdar* and Reimagining Historical Narrative

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Abstract: Humayun Ahmed, recognized as a leading figure in contemporary Bangladeshi literature, integrates historical and fictional elements in his novel *Badshah Namdar*. This paper examines the narrative strategies Ahmed utilizes to transform historical records into accessible literary narratives. *Badshah Namdar* upholds a balance between historical accuracy and creative interpretation, providing an alternative to traditional historical texts that may be less engaging for readers. Employing a New Historicist framework, this study investigates how Ahmed's work reflects historical realities and engages with the cultural and social contexts of both the novel and its sources. The analysis focuses on Ahmed's stylistic decisions, character construction, and adaptation of historical events, demonstrating that his approach to historical fiction combines educational and entertainment objectives. By critically assessing the implications of historical fiction as a tool for both resistances against dominant historical narratives and cultural critique, this paper brings new insight into Bangladeshi literature's role in shaping historical consciousness. Through the application of New Historicism, the paper demonstrates how *Badshah Namdar* interrogates conventional historical narratives and emphasizes the constructed nature of history as influenced by cultural and ideological forces. The study further explores the implications of Ahmed's narrative techniques, particularly their role in enhancing the accessibility of history for general audiences and in shaping historical consciousness.

Keywords: Historical fiction, New Historicism, narrative techniques

Introduction

Published in 2011, *Badshah Namdar* represents one of Humayun Ahmed's final contributions to Bangladeshi literature and is regarded as a significant component of his literary legacy. Together with works such as *Jyotsna o Jononir Golpo and Deyal*, *Badshah Namdar* reinforces Ahmed's prominence within Bengali literature. This historical novel focuses on the life of Emperor Humayun. In contrast to historical texts such as *Baburnama*, which primarily present factual accounts, *Badshah Namdar* incorporates fictional elements into its narrative structure. As a result, the novel exemplifies how literary works can reinterpret historical events through specific narrative strategies. The narrative of *Badshah Namdar* develops gradually, closely engaging with historical reality. Ahmed presents the lived experiences, psychological states, and internal conflicts of his characters, emphasizing their humanity and personal challenges. This connection to history is established through detailed depictions of daily life, interpersonal relationships, and emotional dilemmas, which situate the narrative within the context of the Mughal era. The progressive disclosure of historical events from personal viewpoints enables the past to emerge with immediacy and authenticity. Simultaneously, the novel maintains a degree of distance from history by reimagining, fictionalizing, and at times subverting documented events. Through narrative invention, selective emphasis, and creative interpretation, Ahmed departs

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from strict historical accuracy, prompting readers to reconsider the construction of historical truth. This dual approach allows *Badshah Namdar* to serve both as a narrative of the past and as a commentary on the nature of historical knowledge. By balancing proximity and distance, the novel demonstrates that history is an evolving narrative shaped by imagination, ideology, and cultural memory.

Recent scholarship has explored how historical narratives are shaped by authorial intention, cultural context, and the interpretive frameworks of both writers and readers, often resulting in a multiplicity of perspectives and contested meanings (Basaraba & Cauvin, 2023; Dirlik, 2002; Gubman & Anufrieva, 2024; Minyar-Beloroucheva, 2025). This review synthesizes research on the blurring of boundaries between history and fiction, the methodological implications of New Historicism, and the specific case of *Badshah Namdar* as a site for reimagining historical narrative in Bangladeshi literature.

Review of Literature

Although direct scholarship of *Badshah Namdar* remains limited, existing scholarship on South Asian historical fiction and New Historicism offers a relevant framework for interpreting Ahmed's novel. *Badshah Namdar* demonstrates the intersection of historical and fictional boundaries by employing narrative strategies to reconstruct Mughal history and examine the politics of memory and identity. The novel's methodology aligns with postmodern historiographic metafiction, which challenges conventional historical narratives and highlights the diversity of perspectives.

In South Asian literature, historical fiction frequently serves as a means of contesting official histories and amplifying the voices of marginalized perspectives. Ashraf and Ahmed (2019) demonstrated how postmodern novels, such as *The Glass Palace* and *Burnt Shadows,* transform traditional history through innovative narrative techniques and multiple perspectives, thereby decentralizing conventional historical narratives. Mishra (2025) explores postcolonial theory and literature, empowering marginalized voices and challenging dominant narratives of power and identity, examining works from various geographical regions. Kramer (2021) notes that historical experts play a crucial role in maintaining cultural identities; however, evidence-based narratives must be defended against public assaults on historical knowledge in both South Asia and the United States. These researchers also shed light on how postcolonial theorists study authors like Humayun Ahmed in their use of narrative strategies to reimagine the past, challenge dominant narratives, and reconstruct collective memory. The blending of personal, collective, and official histories is a recurring theme, with narrative techniques such as multiple perspectives, magic realism, and metafictional commentary employed to question the nature of historical truth (Ashraf & Ahmed, 2019; Kramer, 2021).

Recent research emphasizes interdisciplinary methodologies that combine narratology, hermeneutics, and semiotics to analyze historical fiction. Gubman and Anufrieva (2024) claimed that historical narration can enhance the meaningful potential and diachronic depth of cultural worlds by providing integrity, thematic and plot certainty, problematic character, a chronotope system, and efficient intrigue and composition. Eiranen et al. (2022) argue that narrative and experience are key concepts in both narratology and history, and their collaboration can enhance understanding of time- and situation-bound contexts for interpreting narratives. Kindenberg (2021) reveals four distinct historical recount types with different configurations of narrative-analytical interplay, highlighting the importance of narrative elements in history texts for education. Smith and Monforte (2020) describe how narrative analysis, influenced by narrative constructionism and new materialism, can explore the impact of stories on human and non-human actors and combine different analytical approaches in a single study.

Current scholarship primarily focuses on theoretical frameworks and general applications of New Historicism and narrative theory. However, empirical research and direct analysis of *Badshah Namdar* and similar Bangladeshi texts remain limited. Comparative studies across South Asian contexts and in-depth examinations of narrative techniques in individual works are also underrepresented. This comparison illuminates *Badshah Namdar*'s unique approach, highlighting its specific contribution to the representation of historical narratives within the region.

This paper analyzes how Humayun Ahmed's *Badshah Namdar* employs New Historicist strategies to reconstruct Mughal history. By applying a New Historicist perspective, the study examines how Ahmed's narrative techniques challenge and reinterpret historical events, providing alternative perspectives on the Mughal period. Close textual analysis reveals how Ahmed integrates historical facts with fictional elements to critique dominant historical narratives, propose new interpretations of the past, and contribute to broader discussions of history and memory in postcolonial contexts.

Theory of New Historicism

New Historicism is a literary and cultural theory that originated in the early 1980s, primarily through the scholarship of Stephen Greenblatt and his contemporaries. This approach transformed literary studies by asserting that texts should be interpreted within their historical and cultural contexts, and by recognizing history as a narrative constructed by power relations, ideology, and systems of representation. In the context of South Asian literature, and specifically Humayun Ahmed's *Badshah Namdar*, New Historicist readings reveal how historical fiction can reimagine and reconstruct the past, blending empirical data with narrative creativity to enrich cultural memory and identity (Gubman & Anufrieva, 2024; Kramer, 2021). This approach considers literature and history as closely connected, each shaping and reflecting the other rather than standing apart (Gallagher et al., 2000). It often uses "thick description," meaning detailed study of events, stories, or cultural objects, to show the larger social and power structures at work (Veerser, 2013). This approach is especially interested in how texts spread ideas, support or question authority, and influence social norms (Redding, 2000). It also pays attention to voices and details that are usually ignored, bringing out the variety of perspectives that exist in any historical moment (Gallagher et al., 2000). Most importantly, New Historicism questions the idea of neutral or objective history, arguing that every account is shaped by the writer's cultural and ideological position (Pavlov, 2023). The approach of New Historicism foregrounds the interplay between narrative form and historical content, emphasizing the constructedness of both history and fiction. Scholars argue that the boundaries between historical and literary narratives are inherently permeable, with each influencing the other in the creation of meaning (Ashraf & Ahmed, 2019; Cole, 2020; Dirlik, 2002; Gubman & Anufrieva, 2024; Laden, 2004).

The Principles of New Historicism in *Badshah Namdar*

Historical Contextualization

Badshah Namdar does not follow a strictly chronological presentation of historical events. Instead, Ahmed animates historical figures through dialogue and detailed description, illuminating their social environments, psychological states, and cultural contexts. The narrative centers on Mughal Emperor Nasir al-Din Muhammad, referred to as 'Humayun Mirza' in the novel, and emphasizes character development rather than strict adherence to a linear timeline. Through contextual descriptions and dialogue, the novel creates vivid historical imagery that differentiates it from conventional historical accounts. For example, Badshah Namdar dramatizes the death of Emperor Babur, while *Humāyūn-Nāma presents the event in a factual manner.* Textual Presentation of *The Death of Babur* in Beveridge's 1902 English translation of Gulbadan Begam's *Humāyūn-Nāma*:

> *During Humayun's illness his Majesty walked round him and turned his face (in intercession) to his Reverence. He kept up that going round from the Wednesday and made intercession on the Tuesday, in anxiety and deep dejection. The weather was extremely hot and his heart and liver burned. While going round he prayed, saying in effect: "O God! if a life may be exchanged for a life, I who am Babar, I give my life and my being for Humayun."*
>
> *That very day he fell ill, and Humayun poured water on his head, came out and gave audience. Because of his illness, they carried my royal father within, and he kept his bed for two or three months.* (p.105)

In *Humāyūn-Nāma*, the account is straightforward and factual, highlighting Babur's physical act of walking around Humayun in prayer, symbolizing his sacrifice. The tone is somber and emotionally restrained, focusing on the emperor's dual roles as father and ruler. Babur's prayer, "O God! if a life

may be exchanged for a life, I who am Babar, I give my life and my being for Humayun," conveys his desperate plea for his son's recovery. Textual Presentation of the death of Babur in *Badshah Namdaar*:

> *Unconscious Humayun Mirza lies on the bed. The doors and windows of the room are closed. Three lamps are burning inside the room. Except for Emperor Babar, no one else is with the prince. Babar begins to circle around his son's head. He silently says, "I have taken on my son's affliction in my own body. O Merciful One, please heal my son." After circling three times, unconscious Humayun opens his eyes and says, "Father, what are you doing here?"*
>
> *Having taken on his son's fatal illness, the Emperor dies at the age of fifty. On 6th Jumada al-Awwal 937 Hijri, December 26, 1530 AD, three days later, Humayun Mirza ascends the throne.* (Ahmed, 2011, p. 27, trans. by the authors)

Badshah Namdar presents the scene with heightened dramatic effect and vivid imagery, enhancing its emotional impact. The detailed depiction of the closed room, burning lamps, and Babur's solitary presence establishes an atmosphere of intimacy and solemnity. Babur's act of circling his son is portrayed as both a spiritual and sacrificial gesture, suggesting that he assumes his son's suffering. Humayun's awakening and subsequent question serve as the emotional climax of the episode.

In the event where Emperor Humayun temporarily grants authority to a Vistiwala, Ahmed uses detailed characterization, dialogue, dramatic tension, and controlled pacing to fictionalize the event. This narrative approach also foregrounds marginalized perspectives within the historical context.

> *A play has begun outside the court, at the main gate. A man with bare feet is trying to enter the court. He is wearing a cheap shawl over his clothes, and despite the heat, a dirty blanket is draped over it. His face is covered in a rough, patchy beard, and his eyes are bloodshot. He introduces himself as Nizam, a Vistiwala, and claims to be the savior of the Emperor's life.*
>
> *The chief guard says, "You have caused enough trouble. If you do not leave now, you will be thrown into prison."*
>
> *Nizam the Vistiwala says, "The Emperor will recognize me the moment he sees me. Please give me a chance to meet him."*
>
> *The chief guard replies, "You do not have the qualifications to meet the Emperor. Your clothes are filthy, your feet are bare, and you have not brought any gifts for the Emperor. Earning the reward of the guards is far beyond your concern."*
>
> *Nizam the Vistiwala says, "The Emperor promised me that he would have me sit on the throne for one day. If the Emperor keeps his promise, I will arrange for the reward of all of you."*
>
> *The chief guard replies, "I have heard many ridiculous things in my life, but I have never heard anything like this."*
>
> *"Believe me," says Nizam, "the moment the Emperor sees me, he will recognize me. If he doesn't, I am willing to spend the rest of my life in a dark cell."*
>
> *Nizam the Vistiwala's words proved true. As soon as the Emperor saw him, he recognized him. Smiling, he said, "Are you Visti Nizam?"*
>
> *Nizam bowed and said, "Yes, Your Majesty. Your memory is beyond praise."*
>
> *"I told you that I would have you sit on the throne, even if only for one day. Half the day has already passed, but if you wish, you can sit on the throne today. Would you like to sit on the throne today?"*
>
> *"The Emperor's generosity and greatness are beyond the oceans of the world. I would love to sit on the throne today."*
>
> *The Emperor's three brothers were stunned. The nobles exchanged looks, not understanding what was happening. The Emperor said, "This Vistiwala saved my life with his skills. As a reward for saving my life, he will sit on the throne for half a day. The nobles will show him the respect he is due. He will be given all the honors that are owed to an Emperor. If he wishes, he may issue royal decrees as well."*
>
> *The court fell silent for a moment. A mere Vistiwala from Delhi? What was this? All eyes were on Vistiwala Nizam. He did not seem to be troubled by the grandeur of the court; his gaze was fixed on the Emperor.*
>
> *Kamran Mirza walked towards the Emperor. In a low voice, he said, "May I speak to the Emperor of India for a moment?"*
>
> *Humayun replied, "Of course. But the Emperor of India is no longer me. The Emperor now is Vistiwala Nizam."* (Ahmed, 2011, pp. 114-116, trans. by the authors)

In contrast, Beveridge's 1902 English translation of Gulbadan Begam's *Humāyūn-Nāma adopts a factual and concise tone, lacking* emotional depth or attention to the servant's perspective. The

account remains closely aligned with historical documentation, providing a direct description of the event and its significance without any fictional elaboration or embellishment.

> *In those days his Majesty had a certain servant, a water-carrier. As he had been parted from his horse in the river at Chausa and this servant betook himself to his help and got him safe and sound out of the current, his Majesty now seated him on the throne. The name of that menial person we did not hear, some said Nizām, some said Sambal. But to cut the story short, his Majesty made the water-carrier servant sit on the throne, and ordered all the amirs to make obeisance to him. The servant gave everyone what he wished, and made appointments. For as much as two days the Emperor gave royal power to that menial.* (Beveridge, 1902, p.140)

Intertextuality

In *Badshah Namdar*, Humayun Ahmed employed numerous letters, verses, "shers", and lyrics to enable readers to establish a deeper connection with the history. A total of 16 letters were included in this historical novel, which portrays the power dynamics of the Mughal Period and offers insights into the relationship between the Mughal and Sur Emperors. The letters between Emperor Humayun and Emperor Sher Shah reveal the political dimension of the contemporary period:

> *To the Lord of Delhi, Emperor Humayun,*
> *You are about to bring the lowly and insignificant Sher Khan to justice. I am your humble servant. I cannot bear the fact that you are suffering in this intense heat because of me.*
> *I request that you return to Delhi.*
> *I hereby give you the fort of Chunar.*
> *I have sent you some gifts. I am sure you will find them to your liking.*
> *Yours sincerely,*
> *Adham Sher Khan (Farid)* (Ahmed, 2011, p. 60, trans. by the authors)

Whereas the letters between Emperor Kamran Mirza and Sher Shah portray the disobedience of Kamran towards his elder brother Humayun and the plot of conspiracy against him:

> *To the Great Emperor of Delhi, the World-renowned Hero and Noble Sher Shah,*
> *I shall not engage in long correspondence. My brother, Humayun Mirza, is particularly skilled in this matter. Let me come to the point. I am willing to capture my brother and hand him over to you. I would be pleased if you could inform me through your messenger what I will receive in exchange.*
> *Yours faithfully,*
> *Your obedient servant,*
> *Mirza Kamran* (Ahmed, 2011, p. 139, trans. by the authors)

Ahmed also integrates verses originally composed by historical figures into *Badshah Namdar*, *serving multiple function*s within the context of historical fiction. These verses are woven into the narrative to enhance its thematic depth and to bridge the gap between fiction and historical reality. By incorporating these authentic texts, Ahmed strengthens the novel's connection to its historical context. For example, the cover page features a verse that reflects philosophical and spiritual conceptions of time:

> "*Although one's image be shown in the mirror; it remains always apart from one's self. It is wonderful to see one's self in another form: This marvel will be the work of God".*
> (Humayun Mirza, ca. 16th c., as cited in Ahmed, 2011, p. 130, trans. by Beveridge, 1903, p. 145)

By integrating these verses, Ahmed allows the characters to express their inner thoughts, emotions, and philosophical dilemmas. The use of poetry helps reveal a deeper psychological complexity that prose alone may not be able to achieve. For instance, the verse of Kamran Mirza about the country as a beautiful maiden:

> *"The kingdom is like a beautiful young maiden,*
> *To kiss her lips,*
> *One must have the sharpest of swords."* (Kamran Mirza, ca. 16th c., as cited in Ahmed, 2011, p. 208, trans. by the authors)

This verse exemplifies the tension in Kamran's life, illustrating the duality between his loyalty to his elder brother, Humayun Mirza, and his ambition for power. Such themes are recurrent in historical

fiction, where figures are remembered for both their actions and their literary contributions. By incorporating these verses, Ahmed situates his characters within the literary tradition of the period, transforming them into symbols of the broader cultural ethos. The inclusion of historical poetry also allows Ahmed to highlight the complexity and richness of the era, thereby bridging historical fact and literary art. The following verse by Kamran Mirza expresses emotional resonance toward Humayun Mirza:

"One cannot hold nectar in a clay pot.
I am Mirza Kamran, nothing but a clay pot.
I can hold poison,
But never nectar.
Humayun is a golden pot,
That is why he has been able to hold nectar in his heart…" (Kamran Mirza, ca. 16th c., as cited in Ahmed, 2011, p. 225, trans. by the authors)

Through these verses, the novel's historical figures reflect on themes such as life, death, loyalty, and fate. The following verses attributed to Humayun Mirza extend beyond the immediate historical context to address universal concerns.

"We live within beauty,
But beauty is surrounded by the ugly.
Just as virtue is encased
By the hard shell of sin.
Fortunate is the one who, tearing through the veil of the ugly,
Sees the beauty.
And moves towards virtue, breaking through.
The hard shell of sin." (Humayun Mirza, ca. 16th c., as cited in Ahmed, 2011, p. 108, trans. by the authors)

Cultural Reinterpretation

Traditional historical texts typically emphasize factual details such as dates, events, military campaigns, and political achievements. In contrast, Ahmed integrates these facts with cultural narratives, emotional depth, and symbolic interpretation to reinterpret the period's culture. He highlights the personal and human dimensions of historical figures by including elements such as cuisine, dreams, symbolism, and personal reflection, resulting in a nuanced portrayal of the Mughal Empire. This literary and human-centered approach offers readers both historical knowledge and an immersive experience of the era.

The detailed description of royal meals and the emphasis on the luxurious lifestyle of Emperor Humayun and his court provide a vivid portrayal of Mughal court culture. Ahmed not only lists the foods but also integrates the cultural significance of food in the Mughal Empire.

For Emperor Humayun and his family during wartime, there were a thousand cooks. The chief cook, Naki Khan, used to invent new dishes. One of the dishes he invented, Glasi, is still available in some old restaurants in Old Dhaka.

Recipe for Glasi (from the Mughal period):

Thinly sliced goat meat should be tenderized using a scorpion's sting (alternatively, the thorns of a cactus). After tenderizing the meat, add raisin juice, ground poppy seeds, ground pistachios, ground royal cumin, ginger juice, onion juice, garlic juice, yogurt, milk, and ground wheat flour. Add salt to taste. Then, add ground mace, nutmeg, and cinnamon. Mix well, place in a clay pot, and seal it. The pot should be left in the sun for the whole day. Before serving, the meat pieces should be lightly fried in buffalo milk ghee.

During the journey towards Bengal, the stock of ghee consisted of ten maunds of buffalo milk ghee and thirty maunds of cow's milk ghee.

Food for the Soldiers:

A portion of milk, barley bread, a small amount of barley flour, meat, and onions. (Ahmed, 2011, p. 58, trans. by the authors)

The dreams experienced by emperors and their interpretations offer insight into the spiritual and symbolic beliefs of the Mughal period. The practice of using dreams to predict the future or understand personal transformation was integral to the cultural worldview of the time. Ahmed incorporates this

dimension to demonstrate that dreams were regarded as omens or divine messages rather than random events:

> *The Emperor saw a dream. A pure white heron was sitting on a branch of a tree, eating leaves.*
>
> *The dream interpreters explained the meaning of the dream as follows:*
>
> *The heron is carnivorous. It catches and eats live fish and insects. In the dream, it changes its nature and eats tree leaves. Symbolically, the heron represents Sher Shah, as he, like the heron, moves from one place to another. Just as the heron is white, Sher Shah's turban is also pure white. The full meaning of the dream is that the heron has undergone a change in its nature. This means that Sher Shah has changed his behavior, and this change is a result of his defeat in battle.* (Ahmed, 2011, p. 124, trans. by the authors)

The depiction of the desert journey in the novel highlights socio-cultural practices during periods of adversity, illustrating how the emperor and his soldiers confronted significant hardships. The narrative's focus on water scarcity and its consequences underscores the physical challenges encountered by the Mughal Empire. These difficulties are portrayed not only as matters of survival but also as demonstrations of collective spirit and resilience. Ahmed emphasizes that human endurance and communal effort were fundamental aspects of Mughal culture, even during times of crisis:

> *Johar Abtabchi, Emperor Humayun's personal water carrier. In his written book, Tazkirat-un-Waqiat, there are some poignant descriptions of the time when Humayun had lost his empire.*
>
> *The journey started in the afternoon. The caravan had to continue throughout the remaining two hours of the day, the four hours of the night, and the next three hours until midday. During the journey, no water was found. Due to the lack of water, many members of the caravan became weak and near death. With only an hour left in the day, the people, exhausted and distressed, started searching for water in every direction. At that moment, a desert oasis came into view. A water-filled pond was discovered there.*
>
> *Because of the lack of water, many people died that day. Johar Abtabchi's book mentions that the deceased were buried there. (*Ahmed, 2011, p. 175, trans. by the authors)

Fiction as a Tool for Historical Reconstruction

Throughout the novel, Ahmed consistently presents Emperor Humayun in a favorable manner, suggesting a potential authorial bias. In an interview with Alim Aziz and Taimur Reza, Ahmed acknowledged deliberately omitting certain aspects of the emperor's lifestyle. This has led to some criticisms of his approach, with some scholars arguing that such omissions may compromise the historical authenticity of the narrative. Critics of New Historicism might also argue that the approach can sometimes blur the lines between fiction and factual history too much, potentially leading to misunderstandings. However, supporters argue that this blending enables a richer and more engaging interpretation of history. These criticisms underscore the ongoing scholarly debate about the balance between historical fidelity and creative license in historical fiction.

History books may be limited by the available records or the perspectives from which they are written. *Badshah Namdar* filled in these gaps by imagining the experiences, emotions, and personal stories of ordinary people or historical figures who might not have left extensive documentation. For example, it explored the thoughts and actions of lesser-known characters or provided insight into events that were not fully documented. For example,

> *The Emperor nodded in affirmation and said, "Now, tell me your request."*
>
> *Hamida Banu said, "When we were fleeing, one night we were in an open field. We sat under an unfamiliar tree. Do you remember?"*
>
> *"I remember."*
>
> *Hamida Banu said, "I have a great desire to visit that place again with you."*
>
> *The Emperor replied, "I have already granted your request."*
>
> *On a moonlit night, the phoenix rises. Humayun's wife, Hamida Banu, is leaning against an unfamiliar tree. Humayun is wandering around the tree aimlessly, without any reason.*
>
> *The Emperor has not come alone. Bairam Khan, with a large army for his protection, is waiting out of sight.*
>
> *Humayun said, "Hamida, are you happy?"*
>
> *Hamida did not reply. That night, she had laughed merrily. Today, her eyes were filled with tears. (*Ahmed, 2011, p. 228, trans. by the authors)

This scene illustrates the dynamics of the relationship between Humayun and his wife, emphasizing mutual respect, intimacy, and emotional connection. Such personal dimensions are often absent from official historical records and extend beyond the scope of political history.

Findings

Badshah Namdar moves beyond recounting historical events by reconstructing Mughal history through the integration of characters and events within their cultural, political, and social contexts. The narrative examines the influence of political dynamics, colonialism, and socio-economic conditions on the Mughal Empire, providing insight into the complex relationship between history and fiction. The work both critiques and reinterprets the history of the Mughal Empire. This aligns with the New Historicist practice of looking at a range of cultural artifacts, not just official records, to understand the power relations and ideologies of the time.

Ahmed's narrative technique combines historical events with cultural narratives, mythologies, and oral traditions, offering a reimagined perspective on the Mughal era. This method aligns with New Historicism's focus on non-traditional historical sources, such as folklore and personal stories, to challenge dominant narratives often produced by colonial or imperial authorities.

By fictionalizing historical events, *Badshah Namdar* reconstructs versions of history that are often marginalized or excluded from mainstream narratives. Through the integration of historical facts and fiction, Ahmed highlights silenced aspects of history, reflecting the New Historicist view that literature actively shapes historical understanding. Ahmed further demonstrates that fictionalized history can encourage readers to engage with primary historical sources.

> *But history in Bengali books is written in a very stiff and rigid way. No one reads these writings. I feel like sharing these stories with the readers. It's the stories that actually inspire me. The book of Gulbadan has been in my house for seven years. Shaon never showed any interest in reading it. But when she finished reading Badshah Namdar, she began to feel drawn to Gulbadan's book. Now she is reading Gulbadan and Baburnama."* (Aziz & Reza, 2011)

Conclusion

To conclude, *Badshah Namdar* reconstructs Mughal history by utilizing New Historicist strategies that blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, contextualize power relations, and amplify marginalized perspectives. This methodology enables a dynamic and critical reimagining of the past, representing hybrid identities and fostering cross-cultural understanding. The impact of this approach varies according to national and linguistic contexts, resulting in diverse literary forms and political implications across the region. Furthermore, the insights gained from this study of Humayun Ahmed's narrative techniques can inform future research in postcolonial and historical fiction studies by highlighting how literary works can engage with historical narratives to challenge prevailing discourses. These findings could be beneficial for teaching approaches in literary studies, encouraging students to explore alternative historical perspectives and understand the role of fiction as a means of cultural critique and resistance. By expanding the framework of historical analysis, educators and researchers can further contribute to the discourse on literature's role in shaping historical consciousness and identity. New Historicism has fundamentally transformed literary studies by emphasizing the interplay among literature, history, and power. It continues to serve as an essential framework for analyzing how texts reflect and influence the societies that produce them.

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