International Institute of Social Studies

Erasmus

Social Representations of 'Childless' Women in Bangladesh

A Research Paper presented by:

Maksuda Khanam (439952mk)

(Bangladesh)

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:

Human Rights, Gender and Conflict Studies: Social Justice Perspectives

(SJP)

Specialization:

Women and Gender Studies (WGS)

Members of the Examining Committee:

Dr. Nahda Shehada
Dr. Dubravka Zarkov

The Hague, The Netherlands
December 2016

Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

Inquiries:

Postal address:

Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

Location:

Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

Telephone: +31 70 426 0460
Fax: +31 70 426 0799

Acknowledgements

My deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr. Nahda Shehada whose continuous pushing made me reach at this stage. Your tireless effort improved my writing and enabled me to reflect critically on my research which I believe I could not learn only by reading books. Thanking you compare to what you have done for me would be very little!

I am extremely grateful to my second reader Dr. Dubravka Zarkov. You always give your pin-pointed feedback before my every seminar which helped me a lot to refresh my ideas in head as well as in research paper. Moreover, you always pose critical questions with offering plenty of suggestions which shed light on my research from angles I have never imagined! Thank you Dubravka very much!

I am also grateful to our SJP Convenor Dr. Helen Hintjens. Throughout research period, you sent us tips and suggestions by mail also organized a meeting before research paper submission which I found very useful to guide my research. Thank you Helen!

I am grateful to those friends and relatives who helped me finding representation materials as well as gave me interview through skype spending their invaluable time. Special thanks goes to Helen Venganai, ex-ISS student whose research paper inspired me a lot to design my own research paper. I never see you but you deserve a great thank!

I extend my gratitude to my husband, Khalad who always besides me throughout my study in ISS. Thank you Emma Frobisher, Aneesh Correa and Rajin Alqallih for your assistance in the editing process of this paper.

Finally, my ultimate gratitude goes to my mother and father. Without their inspiration and prayer I would not be here.

Contents

List of Appendices

List of Acronyms

IVF	In Vitro Fertilisation
IUI	Intra Uterine Insemination
ART	Assistant Reproductive Technology
NRT	New Reproductive Technology
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
WHO	World Health Organization
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
SJP	Social Justice Perspectives
NFP	Netherlands Fellowship Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
CEO	Chief Executive Officer

Abstract

The research paper challenges the marginalization process of 'childless' women in Bangladeshi society. Here, Joan W. Scott's theoretical approach is used as major guide to examine the gendered social system that a 'childless' woman encounters regarding her reproductive status. Methodologically, I look at society's lens – scrutinizing various social and cultural representations that society made to stigmatize 'childless' women in the name of 'represent' them. Therefore, to challenge this stigma-normalization process, I put childless word within quotation mark before using it to refer women throughout my paper. After analysing data, the study demonstrates the subjugation of 'childless' women is embedded in society's pronatalist ideology-essentialization of having children. This pronatalism puts foremost demand on 'motherhood' in patriarchal social structure thus biological 'role' became as only 'role' for all women to be fit in society. Moreover, motherhood together with other institutions-health seeking sector, religion and masculinity etc. exacerbates women's lives where a 'non-mother' woman gets discrediting identity (e.g. childless, barren, infertile etc.) from society compare to a 'mother' one. Furthermore, both interview and representation analysis indicate that, 'childless' women exercise their agency either subtle or direct way depending their other attributes, surrounded environment and worldview. Overall, society historically constitutes a never-ended stigmatization process by creating old and new representations around women's reproductive status which continuously excluding 'childless' women from getting the 'whole' sense.

Relevance to Development Studies

The study contributes to shed light on various society-created representations to examine society's operations against 'childless' women. By engaging this gendered issue from feminist perspective with aim at exploring socially and culturally constructed discriminations regarding women's reproductive status makes this research relevant in development studies.

Keywords

'Childless' women, reproductive capacity, representations, Bangladesh, society, motherhood, ideology, symbol, institution, identity.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Setting the Research Stage

1.1. Background: Contextualizing childlessness in Bangladesh

Since independence in 1971, Bangladesh is seen as poor-resource based, over-populated small country[1] where global and local development organisations from the very first focus its fertility as the main problem and provide plan and assistance to control it (Nahar et al. 2000; Nahar 2010). State health policy is therefore highly influenced by this intervention. Here poverty is seen as the main product derived from people's fertility. It is taken for granted that, people are considerably fertile in this country and produce a number of children which make them unable to fulfil everyone's basic need regarding limited resource and monetary income. Various policies and strategies are provided to mass people such as advertising and circulating usefulness of family planning, provide free reproductive controlling pills, injections and other affiliated sterilisation techniques in rural and urban-everywhere for fertility reduction[2]. However, impacts of those extreme interventions are remained as close to untouched health issues. Even when NGOs and non-profitable organisations given priority toward reproductive health sector, their concerns are found limited within maternity and infant morbidity, female nutrition deficiency and related health constraints (Nahar 2012). So policy making and implementations are found taken around only those issues. All above health issues are indeed important but reproductive health sector also includes some other issues which are neglected as they do not appear as direct life threatening (Nahar 2012: 24). Childlessness or 'infertility'- the common term to introduce absence of children is such an important reproductive health issue but unlike other health issues mentioned above, it is neglected regardless having profound social and cultural consequences in Bangladeshi society (Nahar 2012b). Bangladesh state policy does not think infertility treatment should be prioritised for all class of people so people who belong or under poverty line cannot get subsidised infertility related biomedical diagnosis or necessary treatment (Nahar 2010). There is no national census around the prevalence of infertility which clearly shows state's indifference in this issue (Nahar 2010: 1780). However, a survey conducted by WHO found infertility rate of Bangladesh was 6.9 percent in 1976 (Nahar 2000: 33). Another study focusing overall primary and secondary infertility in South Asia suggests that Bangladesh is experiencing 15 percent infertility rate which is considered highest infertility rate among other South Asian countries (Kumar 2007 cited in Nahar 2012b: 149). Though state seems as an-

---

[1] According to official data, a total 149772364 people live in 147570 km² area which placed Bangladesh as the highest population-density country in the world (DGHS 2012).

[2] In 2014, fertility rate per women has declined to 2.3 which was 6.3 in 1975 and this stagnation is seen as stepping stone toward country's overall socio-economic development (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2015).

ti-natalist in nature, society conversely predominantly pronatalist and having children is seen as role fulfilling which further seen as a symbol of successful marriage having the perfect family. Here women are considered main responsible for performing the role and the inability to bear a child stigmatises them more than their male counterpart. As motherhood is seen synonymous as womanhood for a woman in Bangladesh, not having children after marriage questions her whole identity, reduces her from 'whole' sense and affects social, physiological and psychological spheres of life (Nahar 2014: 382).

Perception about causes of childlessness, seeking health treatment regarding to get rid of it, mechanism to engage with negative repercussions –all things depend upon 'childless' women's geographical location, religious affiliation, education, economic position and obviously access to get reproductive health service. All these intersect on 'childless' women's lives and regulate their worldview and identity formation around childlessness. 'Childless' women living in urban slum believe contraceptive use, evil contact, fat store in stomach and uterus are responsible for their infertility (Rashid 2007: 158). Similarly, rural poor 'childless' women think their childless situation occurs due to bad luck, God's will, supernatural spirit and so on. All above perceptions reveal that they are lack of reproductive knowledge around infertility and absence of state-led initiative is the main reason for this improper understanding. Bangladeshi culture put women in submissive position than men; so not having children is seen women's fault which further affects their personal and social well-being. Poor dependent women suffer physical and mental violence from husband or in-laws family and feel insecure regarding abandonment, husband's remarriage, divorce etc. (Ahmed et al. 2004; Nahar 2014). They also reported as suffering from self-guilt, lower self-esteem and experience social exclusion. The social consequences of childlessness are even lead women to suicide in extreme case which is found significant in rural areas (Ahmed et al. 2004). To get rid of 'infertility' stigma, they are seen (often secretly) seeking health service from local healers and religious priests but rarely meet up their desire (Nahar 2010). However, middle-class urban women are seen more able to tackle many unfavourable situations which they might face for infertile status because of having education and class privilege. Their husband does not let them abandon for childlessness rather cooperate in health seeking treatment financially and emotionally. This class of women highly depends on private promoted assistant reproductive techniques though holding religious ideology in mind often lead them toward religious priests also (Nahar 2010: 1784). They also perceive childlessness is occurred due to God's will and to some extent feel worthless not to perform the feminine role. Private sector targets this class of people and offers fertility treatments as a highly commercialised way, often tends to be bare expensive (ibid). To exaggerate people's desire to be 'fit' with the normative role, they provoke people, especially women to continue seeking treatment. Moreover state's tendency to keep this sector as non-regulative makes it desperate and massive exploitative. Living in a patriarchal society where motherhood is undoubtedly mandatory for women, all 'childless' women are found stigmatised, unworthy, abnormal within and outside family regardless class, economic position in varying degrees.

1.2.   Framing the research issue

Although knowing experiences of women around childlessness from above-conducted researches, it is yet unexplored how societal norms and ideologies are perpetuating this gendered discrimination against women. Specifically, previous researches conducted by qualitative interview or case study and exclusively focused on 'childless' women's experiences. However, society created main discourses are remained as untouched which might be helpful to know how society see childlessness and shape women's experiences around it. Exploration of the social lens around childlessness in this regard can contribute to understanding the social mechanism, its origin and nourishment process deploying marginalisation of women. It is said that very few works are done highlighting this social issues; therefore focusing social perceptions and depictions around childlessness through unpacking established social representations and examining society's function by revealing its historical strength and maintenance process potentially help us to uncover the situation of Bangladeshi 'childless' women in full phase.

1.3.   Relevance and justification process

Representation analysis is helpful to unpack any social issue situating it in broader social context. Therefore, studying discrimination and stigmatisation of women around their reproductive status can be better explored with the help of digging society created representations. Graham and Stephanie (2012) in their research shown that Australian print media reflects Australian's pronatalist ideology by articulating and publishing news around women's reproductive status though it often goes on the irrelevant way. Australian news media is seen here deliberately connect female-politician's childlessness issue with politics and make the link between this 'not fulfilling role' and governing capacity which ultimately provoke people to be doubt about their ruling performance. In this way, society is seen depicting women in a discrediting way and identifying women within reproductive status further contribute women's advancement and empowerment in a negative way.

Women's changing social position within specific social context also can be unpacked through exploring social representations. Mazierska (2006) shown in her research on Polish cinema that after the end of communism in 1989, women's position in Polish society became downgraded which reflected through Polish filmmaking process and using contents. In those movies, women are depicted within motherhood mandate as if motherhood were the only purpose of women's existence. Infertility is found as a tragedy for women in those filmy narratives which ravel regulation that 'childless' women should experience various negative consequences for their 'feminine role' failure.

Though research conducted in Bangladesh shown the state as anti-natalist in nature, I found it holds some representations around pro-natalism which derived from deeply rooted society's norms and ideologies. For example, the later twenties, the state-led family planning slogan was- *either boy or girl, two children are sufficient*. Then the twenty-first century, it turns into- *one child is better, if you have two, that's enough*. Both manifestoes reveal that state tries to control its population by encouraging people's motivation to decrease offspring number but the necessity of children is still found accepted and appreciated. The reason behind this-Bangladeshi people do not enjoy social provisioning for aged

time and it puts a foremost priority on having children. Moreover, essentialization of having children is not linked only with state governance but it is also emerged and maintained within the patriarchal social system and women's marginal position which further got depiction through various social representations- classic novels, folk songs, films, television dramas, etc. These representations shed light on various religious, cultural and political ideologies and institutions through which negative repercussions held against 'childless' women. Furthermore, one of my personal motivations pushes me to take this research initiative. I read one news article in a Bangladeshi daily on arresting two women; one for stealing a newborn baby in a government hospital and the other 'a childless woman' for buying the baby from the former one. The news did not clear whether that 'childless' woman actively involved that stealing rather her childlessness got considerable space to be discussed on stressing 'childless' women become a huge threat for new born baby stealing and trafficking. This news together with my experience as a married woman passing four marital years without children, I got the impression that society itself creates motherhood as mandatory and whoever not fit within this category got negative identity from society. Therefore, representation analysis has the potentiality to unveil gendered social operations around Bangladeshi 'childless' women.

1.4.　Research objective and questions

The objective of this research is to generate new knowledge about childlessness and related social consequences in Bangladesh perspective. The aim of this research is to explore this problem rooted in the gendered social system. Instead of focusing only on women's experiences, this research will shed light on various representations which are available in Bangladeshi society to disclose origin and transmission of social norms against 'childless' women.

To fulfil this objective, I formulate my main research question and sub-questions are:

How are 'childless' women represented in Bangladeshi newspapers, films, dramas, songs and folklores?

1. What kinds of ideologies are present in these representations, and how are these ideologies constructed around 'childless' women?

2. What symbols are found to create certain meanings dominant over other meanings regarding childlessness?

3. How are institutions seen to regulate various operations against 'childless' women?

4. How are identities formulated around 'childless' women?

1.5.　Limitations of the research

Considering a limited number of sample I use in my thesis to study social dogmas and actions against 'childless' women, this research cannot claim to explore all forms of representational politics and realities that exacerbate 'childless' women's lives. Another thing bothers me that as NFP does not provide research grant this year, I cannot do direct field work hence always depend on the online availability of my sample collection so I cannot use that relevant

sample which might be very helpful to my research but absent in internet world. However, encountering space limitation, what the thesis attempts to do is to unpack some glimpse of social operations against 'childless' women by focusing on online available socially constructed representations.

1.6.   Methodology

For representation analysis, I select those media and cultural productions which are available and popular among mass people in Bangladesh. Therefore, I choose daily newspaper, film, television drama, and Bengali folklore as my main searching venues. For selecting daily newspaper, I choose one Bengali daily named 'Prothom Alo' and another English daily named 'The Daily Star'. 'Prothom Alo' (First Light) considered overall second highest circulated but the most popular daily with a 5.1 lakh circulation where The Daily Star tops among the 21 English dailies with a 41.45 thousand circulation (*Daily Sun* 2015). Both newspapers are privately owned by one of the business conglomerates in Bangladesh named 'Transcom Group'. This group has versatile business e.g. industry, tea plantation, food and beverage, pharmaceuticals also hosted many international brands as a local business partner ('Transcom Group' 2016). Latifur Rahman is the chairman and CEO of this business group and also one of the members of the governing board of BRAC[3]. As a sister concern of Transcom group, Prothom Alo first published on November 1998 ('Prothom Alo' 2016). Matiur Rahman acts as editor since its beginning who was a Marxist activist in his early life and later involve in critical writing against government's missteps and corruption further won Ramon Magsaysay Foundation Award for contributing social change in 2005 ('Matiur Rahman' 2016). Investigation and social movements around acid attacks and other violence against women, anti-drugs campaign, HIV patient rehabilitation, campaign against religious terrorism etc. are undertaken by Prothom Alo which made this newspaper as the most influential newspaper brand in Bangladesh ('Prothom Alo' 2016). For The Daily Star, it is founded on January 1991 by Sayed Mohammad Ali and now under the editorship of Mahfuz Anam who contributed as a freedom fighter during Bangladesh liberation war in 1971 ('The Daily Star' 2016). Anam has a long career as a media expert for UNESCO and as a human rights activist also runs a local NGO named 'The Freedom Foundation'- funded by Ford Foundation, New York (Burgquist 2003). Under Anam's editorship, The Daily Star nurtures a political view which wants to go beyond two leading political parties' ruling game (one currently holds power) condemning both parties through their conflicts paralyses country's overall political atmosphere and deprives people's freedom of expression (ibid). This political stand made this daily least favourite to both parties. Recently, Anam got allegation for printing 'falsehoods' corruption done by the current prime minister and 79 cases filed against him (Sattar 2016). Having motto on the front page 'Committed to people's Right to Know' The Daily Star claimed its reporting as non-partisan and investigative journalism in nature ('The Daily Star' 2016). For searching news around my desired research topic from both newspapers, I use keywords, - 'nisshontan' (childless), 'nisshontan nari' (childless women), 'bondhatto' (infertility), 'shontanhin nari' (women

---

[3] BRAC is a non-governmental organization located in Bangladesh.

without children) both in Bengali and English. Total eleven news dated from 2001 to 2016 are selected to analyse print media's representation around 'childless' women.

After news selection, I use same keywords for searching film and television drama produced within the same period. However, friends and family living in Bangladesh, in this case, ease this searching process. From their information, I watched several Bangladeshi films and dramas and finally sorted four films and two television dramas considering relevance to my research. First selected film 'Jalaler Golpo' (Jalal's Story) is directed by Shahed Emon and produced by Faridur Reza Sagar who is also the managing director of a popular private TV channel named 'channel i'. This movie released in 2015 and submitted as a film for foreign language category at 88th Academy Awards though not nominated (*The Daily Ittefaq* 2015). However, it won The Asian Cinema Fund (ASF) of the Busan Film Festival of South Korea (*The Daily Star* 2015).The film is about a boy who is rescued from a river and adopted three different men while suffering abandonment at various stages in his life. By depicting Jalal's uncertain journey, this film invites its audience to see through Jalal's eyes various violence against rural women. Another film named 'Char shotiner Ghor' (The House of Four Wives) released in 2005. This film is directed by Nargis Akter who made this on the basis of short story 'Ridoy o Sromer Shonshar' (House of Emotion and Labour) written by famous writer Selina Hossein. Nargis Akter is known for her directed films having a specific message to "bring about social changes particularly in the lives of the underprivileged and oppressed" (Bin-Habib 2006). Moreover, popular actors are casted here as leading roles which further created a quite stir among the public. Even published in youtube on Jan 18, 2016, it crossed over 125000 views. The movie is about polygamy marriage practising by a rural solvent childless man for aspiring children. After marrying for the fourth time, his new wife is found unready to accept herself as infertile rather she with the help of other wives forced their husband to be diagnosed and proved his infertile status. The main focal point of this film is to show public that infertility can be occurred from men side also. Another movie named 'Hazar Bochor Dhore' (Symphony of Agony) based on a famous classic novel (having the same name) written by famous writer Zahir Rayhan. This movie is released in 2005 directed by writer's wife, Kohinur Akter Suchanda. Bangladesh government financed this movie and it got National Film Awards for Best Film for the year 2005 (*The Daily Star* 2008). The movie revealed a polygamous culture of rural men to solve childlessness and women's submissive position in society. A rich solvent rural man is seen here unhappy due to his 'empty' house and later his wife marries him to a younger woman and suicides on that night by eating poisonous flower. Afterwards, the movie is shown next generation of this house also practising polygamy and exploiting their wives' labour. The other film 'Lalsalu' (A Tree Without Roots) released in 2001. The film is based on classic novel having the same name written by Sayed Waliullah in 1945. It is directed by Tanvir Mokammel with the financial support of Montecinamaverita Foundation, The Hubert Fund of the International Film Festival Rotterdam and Proshika[4]. It won eight Bangladesh National Film Awards including Best

---

[4] This financial assistance is referred in this movie.

Film Award ('Lalsalu (film)' 2016). It also got acclamation outside of Bangladesh at various film festivals (*The Daily Star* 2003). This film is about various superstitions and religious misinterpretations that have been practised by Majid, the main character to deceive rural people to make his money. Moreover, this film also depicted subjugated position of Majid's wife as childless which made my mind select this movie as an important sample.

To know social representations around 'childless' women in television media, I go through several dramas which are telecasted by various Bangladeshi television channels and then uploaded on youtube. My first selected television drama 'Test tube' is telecasted by private TV channel 'RTV' on 4 January 2015. This one-hour drama is written and directed by Pritam and a popular TV actress, Sumaia Shimu played here as the main character. This drama is dealt entirely with social consequences of childlessness that has been faced by an educated urban woman named Shimu. This situation exacerbates further by modern technologies' intervention to this couple's lives, especially when a doctor diagnosed Shimu's husband's infertility and advised her to take donor sperm's assistance to have an IVF baby. Despite husband's unwillingness, Shimu decided to take donor sperm's help and left her husband. Another drama named 'Biborno Ondhokar' (Pale darkness) released by another private TV channel 'ATN Bangla' on 10 May 2012 following Mother's Day. The script of this one-hour drama is written by Mohiuddin Ahmed and directed by Sayed Zamim. Most importantly a renowned and experienced TV actress Suborna Mostofa played here the main role. Before telecasting this drama, news also made highlighting that Suborna Mostofa in her personal life is a 'childless' woman and she plays the similar role in that drama (*Jay Jay Din* 2012). This drama is about the adoption of a one-year-old boy 'Farhan' by his maternal aunt from mother 'Murshi' when she and her husband went abroad for pursuing a career. Farhan grown up having apathy toward actual mother for abandon him and immensely loved his adopted aunt as a mother. Afterwards, he refused to go back his actual parents at the age of 23 when they returned in Bangladesh. Then Murshi blamed her childless sister arguing she tactfully created hatred in Farhan's mind. To get rid of blame given by sister, Suborna forced Farhan to go back his actual parents. The main focal point presented in this drama that women should prioritise motherhood over career as motherhood is priceless and cannot be compensated with other achievements as Murshi (biological mother of Farhan) experienced. This argument is supported from the script writer, Mahiuddin Ahmed's given interview that he wrote this drama to depict how competition for career establishment makes people losing their humane sides (*The Daily Janakantha* 2012).

It is further important to be noted here that I consider certain movies instead of their original novels/stories as only literate and literature-loving people read those literatures but movies and dramas have more popularity among mass people regardless educational background. Furthermore, my selected sample are found acted by popular and famous national media celebrities which further give me impression that those films and dramas are well watched let alone considerable number of online view. To explore whether all these modern representations have relation with ancient Bengali culture promoted documents, I select Lal Behary Day's collection book 'Folk-Tales Of Bengal' which was first published in 1883 further republished by Macmillan and co. Limited in 1912. Though all stories in this collection to some extent dealt with

childlessness, I select three famous stories which my mother heard from my grandmother and following I used to hear from my mother in childhood. They are: 1. Life's Secret; 2. The Boy whom Seven Mothers suckled; 3. The Boy with the Moon on his Forehead.

Primarily, I aimed at to conduct qualitative interview on eight pre-familiar urban middle class 'childless' women so that I could do comparative analysis between societal representations and 'childless' women's experiences around that representations. Being unable to go field for fund crisis, I conduct interview using Skype. However, I faced some obstacles doing so. For example, interruption of internet connection from interviewee's side, lack of privacy faced by interviewees during the conversation, withdraw their consent to express experiences around childlessness excusing it might increase their frustration and finally their unwillingness to be documented their information in my research paper. Finally, I collect and transcribe four interviews and decide to use some of this information using 'pseudo name' for interviewees in my research paper considering both ethical aspects and my limited space. Beside this, I use one folk song (from the Northern part of Bangladesh) about childlessness collected from a previous study done in Bangladesh context.

1.7.   Organisation of the paper

I have organised my paper into four major chapters; this first chapter dealt with a background of research in relation to Bangladesh context. Justification is given to choose this specific research issue, explaining research objective and research questions, poses limitations of this research and methodology about sample selection and data collection. In chapter two, I briefly discussed Joan Scott's theory- Gender as an analytic category which I use as my theoretical framework for this study. Ideology, symbol, institution and identity are the major concepts that are defined and analysed to describe their usefulness in my research on childlessness issue. I dedicated the third chapter to analyse my selected materials to understand social representations that depicting Bangladeshi women focusing their reproductive status. Finally, I conclude this paper by revisiting the entire study and try to give a reflection on the basis of my addressing research questions and findings combined with a theoretical contribution. Then I indicate some suggestions relating to my study for future research.

Chapter 2
Theoretical and analytical framework

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will detail a theoretical framework given by Joan w. Scott that I learned from one of the courses in SJP and selected as a major guideline to my research. In this theoretical framework, Scott proposed four concepts-Symbols, normative concepts (ideologies), Institutions and subjective identity which will also be unpacked here through other literatures considering them useful in informing my analysis. I will end this chapter detailing my analytical framework, significantly explaining how these concepts will be used to my data analysis.

2.2. Scott's theoretical framework

Joan Scott in her writing argued for gender as "a way to decode meaning and to understand the complex connections among various forms of human interaction" (1986: 1070). Moreover, she argued four interrelated aspects making this gender as major analytic category through which any social process can be analysed:

Symbols: Every culture has multiple symbols that deploy significant meaning in a binary way (Scott 1986: 1067). I will use this concept to explore what symbols of 'motherhood' in what context evolve in Bangladeshi culture and how those together with womanhood represent 'childless' women as 'worthless' oppose to those who have children.

Normative concepts: There are some normative concepts which through religious, educational, legal, political and other doctrines fix certain interpretation as single meaning for any symbol hence other meanings of that symbol become marginal and extinct at last (Scott 1986: 1067-1068). For my research, I will see what kinds of normative concepts, in other word, ideologies naturalise motherhood for women in Bangladesh and how they depict 'childless' women as 'other' through various gendered doctrines.

Institutions: Institutions and organisations are served as important places where permanent binary gender representation takes place (Scott 1986: 1068). I will look family, household, cultural and religious institutions to disrupt the notion of politics around which mandatory motherhood is nourished and perpetuated through overt and covert various practices.

Subjective identity: In order to understand identity-based power relations, it is necessary to know "the ways in which gendered identities are substantively constructed" (ibid). Therefore, I will look at how the identity of womanhood is subjectively constructed around the issues of ability and inability of motherhood which will further help me to understand stigmatisation politics against 'childless' women vis-à-vis their engagement encountering discrimination.

I take help from relevant literatures to understand Scott's defined four pillars in below. However, unlike Scott, I synchronise them (placing ideology analysis before analysis of symbols) to ease my analysis:

2.2.1. Ideology

Teun A. van Dijk in his work (1998) done a very extensive analysis around ideology. He argued that all previous studies struggled to define ideology in its full phase because of its vagueness and related different theoretical trajectories (Van Dijk 1998: 1). In classical tradition, ideology is considered embedded within the terrain of power and dominance. In that case, ideology is understood such as- false beliefs; undermine social relational reality and block interest to others; certain beliefs which belong to others; fix truth and falsity around self-serving social and political nature (Van Dijk 1998: 2). All above notions of ideology are derived from a political economy perspective where Marx and Engels argued that ideologies are dominant ideas which "are part of the 'superstructure' and hence determined by the economic or 'material' base of society" (Van Dijk 1998: 2). Here, ruling class does not control only the means of production but also ruled over means of (re)production of ideas (e.g. politics, media, literature, education). So they have ability "to make their ideologies more or less accepted by the ruled as the undisputed knowledge of the 'natural' ways things are" (ibid). However, within Neo-Marxist thinking, ideology is not seen as determined and controlled by economy rather considered as autonomous and has potentiality further to influence economic infrastructure in the top-down way (Van Dijk 1998: 3). This way of thinking was derived from Gramsci where he tried to settle this relationship between society and ideology coined as 'hegemonic'. Here Gramsci dismissed "the imposition of dominant ideologies by a ruling class, hegemony more subtly works through the management of the mind of the citizens, for example by persuasively constructing a consensus about the social order" (ibid). The latter half of the twentieth century, ideologies are started to see as more inclusive and less pejorative way. Here ideologies are identified "as political or social systems of ideas, values or prescriptions of groups or other collectivities, and have the function of organising or legitimating the actions of the group" (ibid). But these arguments are found too general and required further specification (Van Dijk 1998: 4).

Instead of repeating and reinterpreting classical narratives about ideology, Stuart Hall defined ideology as "the mental frameworks-the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation-which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, figure out and render intelligible the way society works" (Hall, as cited in Van Dijk 1998: 9). Van Dijk agreed with Hall's point of view and further opined that "ideologies are not limited to making sense of society, but that they also serve to regulate social practices" (Van Dijk 1998: 9). He defined ideologies "as the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group. This means that ideologies allow people, as group members, to organise the multitude of social beliefs about what is the case, good or bad, right or wrong, for them, and to act accordingly" (Van Dijk 1998: 8). Thompson (1984: 10-11) identified three phases which he considered necessary to unfold ideological interpretation. The first phase, he termed as 'social analysis'. Here analysis is done to disclose socio-historical conditions where agents' action and interaction take place. The objective of this analysis is to know features of responsible

institutions and their historical backgrounds and relations. In this way, this phase of analysis helps us to explore how dominations through various relations take place in society and how these dominations gain visibility through various forms of social expressions. The second phase of analysis is coined by Thompson as 'discursive analysis'. This analysis indicates the sequence of expression study which crosses the limit not only covering social and historical occurrence rather goes beyond and linguistic construction also gets attention. In this way, discourse analysis helps us to understand ideological operation in a certain social structure. For Thompson, discourse analysis and ideological investigation are interrelated and should be analysed in the third phase, which he called as 'interpretation'. The interpretation of discourse, in this case, tends to seek construction of certain meanings through which certain discriminations are exercised and persisted. "The interpretation of ideology may thus be conceived as a form of depth hermeneutics which is mediated by a discursive analysis of linguistic constructions and a social analysis of the conditions in which discourse is produced and received"(Thompson 1984: 11). These three phases altogether help us to understand how the formation of discourse around dominant ideologies in a certain social condition takes place and how that discourse reflected through linguistic construction and contributed to social discrimination as the final outcome.

2.2.2. Symbol

Henry Peyre, in his work, *What is symbolism* argued that "one of the difficulties of the word symbol lay precisely in its being both too restrictive and too vague" (2010: 1). He cited art historian Vladimir Deonna's argument to see art as symbol where ideas and objects are translated "by means of an appearance that is not its immediate copy, but that serves to evoke that object in an oblique way, more often by analogy or by some other mental process" (1980: 6-7). However, ideas or objects also can be seen as symbols when they indicate the idea of different things which do not come to our mind at first sight (Jouffroy, as cited in Peyre 2010: 12). Poetry also in this way become another type of symbol which offers "to the mind in order for it to conceive the invisible" (ibid). All religions have the existence of symbol and seen it came to earth from divine (Huysmans, as cited in Peyre 2010: 7). In this perspective, symbol is something that related with realising and feeling about God's activities both his satisfaction and anger upon a human being. Considering other people's opinion around symbol seen it as art, poetry, ideas, objects or image, Peyre defined the symbol as a sign which "represents or evokes in a concrete manner what is innate within it, the thing signified and more or less hidden" (2010: 8). Peyre argued that a symbol contains multiple meanings where "certain ones addressed to all, others to the initiated alone" (ibid). Lombardo and Petra argued for a symbol having a certain power to evoke meaning; not limit within communicating meaning rather to some extent, symbol embodies such meaning (2016: 20). The flag is considered here such an example of the symbol where it's not only a piece of cloth "rather it is the meaning attached to the piece of cloth that turns into a flag representing a country or nation" (Lombardo and Petra 2016: 21). The representative power of the symbol is important here which "resides not in what it is, but in what it is able to evoke. Its strength lies in the fact that it manages to evoke the same principal everywhere within the context in which it is employed" (Lombardo and Petra 2016: 21-22). However,

the meaning of symbol is not derived from the objects themselves rather meaning of symbol relies on actions and beliefs of persons (Mitchell, as cited in Lombardo and Petra 2016: 22). Symbols never exist as given though representations of those symbols found sometimes relying on pre-existing figures (Smith, as cited in Lombardo and Petra 2016: 22). Moreover, those figures and images contain certain meanings which are shaped and transcribed to fulfil representation purposes (ibid). Symbols also provoke emotion and lead to taking action. Symbols can play as "objects, acts, concepts, or linguistic formations that stand ambiguously for a multiplicity of disparate meanings, evoke sentiments and emotions and impel men to action" (Cohen, as cited in Alvesson 1991: 214). However, symbol and ideology are considered very close to their meanings and operations where "ideologies are often expressed in symbolic forms, and symbols must often be understood against the background of ideology" (Alvesson 1991: 215).

Symbol can be studied by social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, as cited in DeZalia and Moeschberger 2014: 9). Though a symbol obviously has multiple meanings, one meaning became dominant over others by getting social acceptation. Whoever in society attribute this meaning accordance to society's accepted way, can be included 'in group' where failure to attribute this meaning depicted people as deviant 'out group'. In-group people always depicted themselves as 'we' in society while out-group people remain as 'they'. This social categorization always situated in a hierarchical way where 'we' see ourselves different and superior to 'them' (DeZalia and Moeschberger 2014: 9). Therefore, exploring symbol around which dominant meaning it holds, how that meaning provokes emotion and action around this meaning and finally intervenes social regulatory process can be effective for gender analysis.

2.2.3. Institution

"Institutions are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" (North, as cited in Tang 2011: 3). Both formal rules (which are formally created and exercised such as constitutions, laws etc.) and informal rules (which are deliberately evolved such as taboos, norms etc.) in the case are considered as social institutions (Tang 2011: 3). Since institutions are various rules and those rules are sum up with various ideas, Durkheim seen institutions are in that case very much embodied by ideas or coded ideas (ibid). In definition, North focused on constraining part of institutions. However, Giddens emphasised on the capability of instruments. "Institutions do constrain and enable agents at the same time" (Giddens, as cited in Tang 2011:3). Tang agreed with Giddens than North here arguing that institutions contribute many positive effects on human life for example, in the crisis period, institutions sometimes raise social provision and expand safety nets to reduce human sufferings (ibid). Therefore, institutions are not always oppressive; sometimes they do help people also.

Berger and Luckmen defined institutions as "typification of habitualized actions by types of actors" (as cited in Tang 2011: 3). To see institutions essentially as patterned behaviours is problematic for Tang. Because institutions are not only responsible factor for shaping human action, rather inherent human instincts do have an influence on human behaviour as well (Tang 2011: 3). Durkheim also noted that agents are not always following the rules regulated

by institutions, often they further resist to adopt those rules (ibid). Therefore, considering institutions as interrelated behaviour and then applying them to explain same behaviour put a great risk in relation to logical fallacy (Duffield cited in Tang 2011: 3). For Tang, agent as correlated behaviour and institution as a pattern of structure both mutually create rules to govern human interaction (Tang 2011:3). Therefore, "when institutions are defined as patterns of correlated behavior, the system of institution as structure will no longer have its duality that agent and structure mutually constitute each other" (Tang 2011: 3).

To see 'institutions and organisations are same' also problematic for Tang when he analysed the relationship between social movements and collective actions (Tang 2011: 4). Social movements always tend to change institutions that mean rules and ideas where organisations are taken into account for success (ibid). So whatever changes institutions get, the changes appear in organisational settings though that do not hold the whole reality. Organisations seem instruments for making and changing rules but they are not rules themselves (North, as cited in Tang 2011: 4). Here Tang detailed his ontological position in relation to institutions and organisations. For him, individual agent and organisations are material in nature or somehow they hold material input however, institutions are absolutely ideational (Tang 2011: 4). Therefore he found institutions are regulated by power but organisations are not that power rather organisations as agent exercise that power (ibid).

2.2.4. Identity

Identity is seen as a process (in an intersubjective complicated context) which is not fixed rather fluid and depend on the interrelation between subjective experience and constructive experience (Van Katwyk 2009: 2). Here 'subjective' indicates personified and actual experience of the person where 'constructed' refers to the constructing outcome of "social, cultural, historical and material experience" (Van Katwyk 2009: 2). Identity is considered collective set of meanings that explain people regarding certain roles, membership of specific groups, inherited characteristics etc. (Stets and Richard 2013: 34). Identities help to "organize an individual's "place" in an interaction, guide behavior, facilitate the development of stable social relationships, and make interaction possible" (McCall and Simmers, as cited in Stets and Richard 2013: 35). Stets and Richard in their work (2013: 38) described three forms of identity formation. One is roles identity where "[r]oles are the shared expectations attached to social positions in society such as teacher, student, and parent" (Stets and Richard 2013: 38). Role identity, therefore, indicates a particular set of internalised meanings affiliated with a given role. Next is group identity that is evolved in communication with a specific set of others like family, class, community etc. Here group members are expected to behave in a specific way which formulates their group identity. The third one is person identities. Person identities are culturally recognised features which define a person as a unique individual which is not related to person's role or group membership (ibid). Those three types of identities are not separable rather function in an overlapping way.

Identity can also be seen such a system of meanings (that meanings are understood in a relative way) what people deliver when they express them-

selves (Stets and Richard 2013: 41). "Individuals control their identity meanings at a particular level" (Burke and Stets, as cited in Stets and Richard 2013: 41). So, meanings of identity can be measured by identifying current level where individual's meanings are set, for example, "asking respondents about the important and relevant meanings for themselves" (Stets and Richard 2013: 41). A certain meaning of any given identity is always depends on its opposite meaning (e.g. female identity vs male identity) hence reflecting the binary characteristic of the semantic differences (ibid). To confirm or disconfirm an identity (which is either prominent or salient in nature) is related with individual's emotions where emotions trigger "the degree of correspondence between perceptual meanings of the self in the situation and identity standard meanings" (Burke and Stets, as cited in Stets and Richard 2013: 46). Positive emotions derive from identity verification. In contrast, negative emotions come from non-identity verification that "involves self-perceptions in the situation falling short of one's identity standard as well as exceeding one's identity standard" (Stets and Richard 2013: 46). Negative emotions stimulate people alter their non-verifying identity by encouraging them "doing something different in the situation or reinterpreting the perceptual meanings of the self in the situation in order to create a verifying state" (ibid). In this way, people's cognitive and behavioural changing related strategies' study can be helpful to understand subjective identity formation.

Van Katwyk in her doctoral work (2009) done an extensive discussion on contemporary theoretical understandings around identity formation where she detailed McNay's argument in relation to identity. McNay saw identity is understood either essentialist perspective or constructivist way and both she found problematic to understand identity formation fully (as cited in Van Katwyk 2009: 5). In essentialist perspective, identity is analysed through deterministic relational basis. Therefore identity formation appears here as fix hence agency has little to operate action against that fixed identity formation (ibid). Chodorow and Gilligan's conceptualization of identity fall into this category. Both of them normalise identity formation by essentializing female identity against that of men (ibid). McNay also discussed the constructivist idea of identity formation which is very much hermeneutic in nature. Here identity is seen as unfixed and influenced, subjected and regulated by society's dynamic power relations. Considering identity such externally imposed experience also limit our possibilities to scrutiny agency as well. McNay, therefore, opined that both essentialist and constructivist area of identity analysis fail to recognise certain human actions which are neither resistant nor relational in nature hence seem inadequate to understand creative human activity regarding identity construction (as cited in Van Katwyk 2009: 6). Therefore, McNay tried to seek an alternative idea of identity formation and found Paul Ricoeur's proposition of the narrational structure of the self is important to analyse both identity formation and action. "The narration of identity creates a meaningful order from the variability and discontinuities of life by grounding the self in the similitude of idem. At the same time, narrative allows the exploration of the potentialities of the self relatively freed from the actualities of idem character evident, for example, in imaginative and philosophical explorations of the themes of freedom and necessity" (McNay, as cited in Van Katwyk 2009: 7). In this way, the narrative structure of identity through the analysis of sameness (idem) and selfhood can be seen as a broader aspect to understand identity in relation to agency.

2.3. Analytical framework

For this research, I will use Scott's (1986: 1066-1069) four interrelated elements of gender as an analytical category to explore the social construction of motherhood and related social consequences which a 'childless' woman faces through her life. For Ideology, I will look at how ideologies around 'mandatory motherhood' through its discursive manifestations emerged in Bangladeshi society, how they acted, and changed, reshaped and finally stigmatised to 'childless' women as 'deviant' or 'other'. Specifically, I will look at using Hall's argument around ideology about what language, concepts, categories, the imagery of thoughts deploy childlessness through emerging a set of representations. Moreover, I will use Thompson's analytical approach to study ideology to see how various dominations get visibility in forms of social expressions and impose on 'childless' women's lives and whether those women further develop their own ideologies against those discriminations or just accept those in their minds and actions.

For symbols, I will analyse them connecting with ideology since many symbols as signs and images in society represent 'childless' women in their absence where the symbols themselves are not focused rather an ideological depiction of those women became the central. Specifically, I will use Peyre's argument looking existed symbols such as visual image, folk song etc. to see how those symbols identify 'childless' women, in my case, represent them as 'infertile' individuals. Moreover, following DeZalia & Moeschberger's argument, I will see whether cultural beliefs in a symbolic way influence social representations regarding the childlessness issue and how those depictions create a specific category for 'childless' women.

For institutions, I agree with Tang's argument regarding institutions and will consider that as a different entity from organisations in my research. I will consider marriage, motherhood, religion, health seeking treatment as analytical institutions (because of having coded rules) in relation to understanding their operations on 'childless' women. I will see how they create constraints to women in relation to mandatory motherhood and how those women as agents engage with those institutional mechanisms.

For identity, I will look at which shared set of meanings 'childless' women articulate as their identities regarding not performing 'motherhood' role in society. Following Van Katwyk's argument, I will focus on social representations beside exploring women's experiences to see how 'childless' women got their multiple identities (both constructive and subjective) having specific 'place' in society. For 'childless' women, childlessness is not culturally recognised feature in Bangladeshi society, so this is responsible for creating their person identity in one hand and childlessness situated against the role of married women that is 'mother' so it also affects their role identity on the other. Specifically, I will see using Stets and Richard's argument about how these two types of identities emerge around 'childless' women and how they affect their emotions and actions. When women depicted as childless by society, they encounter a forceful social notion of 'infertile' that is upheld by prevailing ideas of motherhood. Therefore, I will explore following McNay's argument in what levels society influence 'identity formation' around 'childless' women and how those women narrate their identity through exercising agency.

2.4. Chapter summary

In this chapter, I reviewed the four pillars of gender offered by Scott that will guide this research namely; symbol, ideology, institution and identity. With the help of others' writings, I also detailed those four aspects to understand their characteristics and formation process and found they are interrelated hence cannot be discussed one aspect without the help of others. For example, one cannot start to study ideology as something separate entity without paying attention to how ideology is appeared as oblique way (symbol), often guided by coded rules (institution) to create a certain identity. The chapter also indicated how these concepts will be used in analysing the case of social representations of 'childless' women relating Bangladeshi society. Next chapter examines some representational events that depicted social consequences a 'childless' woman faces through her life.

Chapter 3

Representations of 'childless' women in Bangladeshi society

3.1. Introduction

This chapter offers an analysis of selected materials around childlessness issue using the analytical tools discussed in chapter 2. Here, I will first discuss print media's representation to explore ideological existence in it. Next to it, symbolic representation will be analysed mainly based on a film's visual image and related narratives. I will explore institutional operations around childlessness and identity formation of 'childless' women with the help of films and television dramas in the next two sections. Moreover, by way of narratives from the respondents, I will attempt to create space for them to articulate their experiences as 'childless' around the representation of selected materials. In the last section of this chapter, Bengali folklores will be detailed to see its connection with the contemporary process of representation around 'childless' women.

3.2. Essentialization of having biological children: Pro-natalist ideology

To explore the print media's representation around childlessness, I focus on its (describing event) contents, language pattern, depicted person and relevance in relation to childlessness issue. Finally I end up identifying three categories that embedded in my analysed news articles. In first category, I found those news which contents' do not have any connection with childless(ness) but the term 'childless' is used there as a descriptor to whom the news focus; in all cases, the person who got this identity, is a 'woman'. For example, one news was published about a woman aged 57, who was burnt by accidental fire in his rented room in Habigonj City (a district in Bangladesh) and died for not being rescued in proper time (*Prothom Alo* 2016). In the first line of that news article, described women as 'childless' before describing relevant information about how that fire occurred or what factors are found responsible for belated rescue process. The sentence is stated as- "A childless and divorced woman rented a room of a house which accidently fired and she died" (*Prothom Alo* 2016). The same irrelevant use of 'childless' descriptor is found even in rural context when either the news reported about a widow (52 years old) was murdered by her step sons and their wives for disputed land issue (*The Daily Star* 2013) or a woman's dead body (60 years old) was found in a village pond adjacent to the house where she was sheltered by one of her relatives (*Prothom Alo* 2016). All above news depicted those dead women as 'childless' which further indicates a very profound 'solitary' state they have had during their lifetime regardless considering their death situation (which was accidental in above cases) had little to do with if they were 'mother' of any child. In order to explore responsible socio-historical context which Thompson argued as the first phase of ideology analysis, 'normative family formation' concept is found perpetuating main role for using the term 'childless'. It is expected that parents deserve care in aged time from children the way they looked after their children once. Therefore considering reported age for all dead women tends to construct a

specific meaning embedded in news that is those women supposed to have 'grown up' children and grandchildren in their sixty's which further could assure their secured life by accompanying family members. Here narrating their death events 'unnecessarily' linking with reproduction status provokes readers to think about the necessity of having children. For Thompson, ideology in a specific way makes certain interpretation meaningful by using certain language (1986: 11). Considering Thompson's argument, here 'childless' term, therefore, found as a word creating devaluing language around women. Instead of remaining merely a word, 'childless' actually appeared emotion-discharged powerful descriptor as if children could protect those dead women from the situation they died or they can be alive for their children even after death. Since gender-sensitive thinking is claimed taking place in today's writing in Bangladesh, it is still found yet to value women's activities in full phase rather it glorifies the role of bearing children over other roles and women are seen main responsible to perform this role. For example, a news article was published on the death anniversary of Begum Rokeya about her literary and social contributions on Muslim Bengali women's education and awareness in the Nineteenth Century (Falguni 2010). However, after praising Rokeya for establishing the first Bengal school for emancipating women from ignorance and patriarchy, the article ended up saying "Although Rokeya gave birth to two children, none of them survived more than six months. A childless Rokeya died in 1932" (Falguni 2010). The use of her childless status here seemed to have no connection with the objective of that article (which supposed to reflect on her activities as a pioneer of the revitalization of Muslim Bengali women) but we found it indicates Rokeya's inability to perform the main role which she supposed to be as a 'woman'. Though that news article discussed her works and activities in detail, finishing it by tagging her as childless might make her identity as alone and fragile that further can be devalued her from whole sense. One of my interviewees, Najma's impression is significant here:

Najma (32 years) trying for baby for the last seven years. She and her husband continue medication for years though she did not disclose what the reason of their childlessness is. She read my selected news articles prior to interview as I requested and found above one is more touching her emotion. In her words-

'Rokeya is a legendary woman and before reading this article, I did not even know her childless status. Though she done huge social activities, I feel bad for her … whatever she done, she was alone…She became widow early and died as childless that means she was alone…Without having a child, I don't feel myself as 'full' that's why I keep trying with medication…'

From Najma's illustration, it is clear that childless depiction emerged here as discreditory feature of Rokeya. Moreover, it left impression to her readers and followers that Rokeya's all works are in vein as she did not become the mother of 'survived' children through which her lineage could spread.

The second category of news article dealt with new-born babies who found abandoned in a bamboo bush (*Prothom Alo* 2016) or beside highway (*Prothom Alo* 2015) or found inside a sewer saying- "The baby neither found lap nor intensive care from his mother rather heinous cruelty blows over his innocent soul…"(*Prothom Alo* 2014). Besides all of those babies in above news are reported to be adopted by 'childless' women after rescued and medical treatment. If we carefully scrutinise those linguistic constructions and related ex-

pressions used in above news (which analysis coined by Thompson as 'discursive analyses'), an articulated structure around the supreme importance of biological motherhood will be appeared where mothers of those abandoned babies are criticised for not valuing motherhood role. For example, all news keep their lion part to describe blessing of birthing own children by women and criticise those women as 'cruel' or 'heartless' who abandon their new-born babies. Moreover, no news article has referred those women about their experiences who rescued those abandon babies and showed eagerness to adopt them. Adoption of abandoned babies are considered as philanthropic work in Bangladeshi society and it is also reflected in the headline of a news article in *Prothom Alo* (2014) '*Pother Dhula theke mayer kole*' (From street to mother's lap). However, the way news proceed reveal this action cannot be gained same appreciation as birthing own children. Therefore adopted women are not found getting any attention from news making rather their status is squeezed within 'childless' word which indicates society counts biological parents more than adopted ones. Therefore all news are found creating emotion around birthing own children how to make mother or guardian dare abandon them but less attention is paid for those who adopted them, leaving them labelled as 'childless'.

The third category of articles, I analysed around 'childless' depiction is written by medical infertility professionals who seen childlessness as unfortunate status for any couple. Moreover, they show their concern about social consequences that a woman has to suffer for not being a mother. For example, one article saying- "The desire of the children by women is stronger than self-interest in beauty, stronger than the claims of career. Childlessness is generally a tragedy of married women..." (Bashed 2015). Another article stating- "A woman possesses a dormant desire to be a mother. In most cases, this desire exceeds everything including her career development or physical beauty" (Purabi 2015). In both articles, a similar tone is found which essentializes having children for women. Moreover, childlessness is seen in those news as the only root of women sufferings in terms of getting disrespectful treatment from husband and in-laws (Akhter 2012), facing disruption in emotional life (Based 2015), experiencing dissolve marriage and suicide (Purabi 2015), getting an exclusion from society (Charanji 2006). Without questioning this exercised 'mandatory motherhood' dogma, they further see it as women's biological urge to have children over sacrificing other attributes and achievements. So they introduced various Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) to help childless couple especially women from misfortune. Majority techniques described here for applying on women's body and negative consequences of these applications are not taken into account. Bodily exposure for taking these ARTs whether affect women's privacy concept or religiosity ideas and how to deal with those are not even discussed. The only thing essentialized here is that- childlessness is a big problem for women and medical science helps those 'shattered' women to make a baby. Therefore, campaign around 'fulfil a woman by helping to make a child' inherits the discriminatory patriarchal ideology that a woman without bearing children cannot be considered a full woman hence 'childless' women should seek medical intervention regardless considering cost, time, physiological consequences.

The way 'childless' or 'infertility' used in above news articles denying irrelevance (death event), reduced explanation (adoption) or promote

biological motherhood (ARTs) reveals that those representations hold and invite people to exercise particular meaning to fit with particular culture as Hall argued it is common politics embedded in any representations (Hall 1997: 22). In that case, we found those representations creating that sense of a society which already established around society's pronatalist ideology. Pronatalism, as Veevers proposed can be seen such an ideology which is directly or indirectly promote parenthood and appreciate fertility with the help of producing and circulating beliefs, showing attitudes and taking actions in favour of parenthood and fertility (as cited in Rich et al. 2011: 228). This ideology further shapes cultural discourses around femininity "in which the act and desire to mother is deemed central to what women do, and what women are" (Gillespie, as cited in Rich et al. 2011: 228). Therefore, we see womanhood through this process become synonymous as motherhood hence a full phase of human life that a woman supposed to belong, turn into delimit within her reproductive position. Parenting and role of mothering in this way do not merely consider as desirable to women rather "seen as the natural expression of their 'femininity'" (Campbell, as cited in Rich et al. 2011: 228). For this reason, above news representations are found using 'childless' or 'infertile' words as discreditable descriptors for those women who fail to conform within 'normative femininity' in other words, do not have own biological children. Using discreditable term 'childless' or 'infertile' in print media around women's reproductive status as Goffman argued stigmatise women, and this stigma can be revealed through interaction and information sharing (Graham and Stephanie 2012: 10). In this way, pronatalist ideology creates devaluing descriptors for Bangladeshi women having certain negative meanings which Thompson (1984) identified as an important function of ideology, serves to certain discrimination exercised and persisted within society.

3.3. 'Mother cow superior to non-mother women?' -Symbol glorifies reproduction capacity

While analysing representation around childlessness, it is seen that ideology which perpetuates various discriminations against 'childless' women is not always appeared as concrete way. Rather it is embedded within symbol hence operates its action in a symbolic representational way. In the movie 'Hazar bochor dhore' (Symphony of Agony), we see a background story with Shikder and his wife before starting the movie. Here dress up of Shikder, full of his house- yard with paddy, workers working in his presence give signs to audiences that he is one of the richest in the village. His richness is not mentioned directly or linguistically here but the way above signs appeared, it possibly connects the audiences with their pre-existing idea about 'rural richness' which Jouffroy argued the main feature of any symbol having the capacity to transform invisible reality into visible one (as cited in Peyre 2010: 12). Moreover, these representations were going without any dialogue but checking paddy quality with hand and then smiled with satisfaction sitting in a relaxed way depicted Shikder as a successful man. However, when he looked at his domestic cow which was suckled milk by its calf in the yard, his smile disappeared and sorrowfulness spread over face. His wife, working with paddy processing in the same yard suddenly found him staring at the cow and calf and then came to him and delivered the first dialogue of that movie-'*May I tell you something? Why don't you marry again*'? All above scenes, I described, actually sum up of multiple

symbols which altogether provoke supreme demand of having children over other achievements. First, if we consider Peyre's idea that symbol rested upon the pre-existing figure, we see the above context fulfils this precondition. Specifically, the mother cow and its calf played here as main images and their appeared relationship evokes a certain meaning which reflected through Shikder's wife's response following husband's unhappy gesture. However sign (therefore, symbol) has the capacity to deploy multiple meanings where one meaning dominant over other meanings by linking with people's predominant ideas Peyre (2010: 8). This analysis of symbol has relevance with my stated context. Shikder could get multiple impressions from watching 'calf suckling its mother cow' scene. For example, he might see it as a simple natural event- a cow feeds its offspring; he could grasp this as profitable thinking: now he has two cow which will be multiplied further or he could see it as 'mother-infant intimacy' and there is a possibility to get all those meanings at a time. But we see all these meanings undermined by the meaning around reproductive capacity and it became only meaning hold by Shikder. Moreover, this dominant meaning made Shikder unhappy despite having enough resources. Because, his staring at the cow symbolises the idea that a cow is more successful than him for having offspring while being a human he did not have one child. Therefore 'cow feeding its calf' emerged as a strong symbol of essentialization of having own biological offspring in every species where that 'mother' cow represented as more valued than Shikder's wife as she failed to become 'mother' of Shikder's heir. According to Smith (as cited in Lombardo and Petra 2016: 22) symbol has the power to goes beyond pre-existing figure and evokes a certain meaning which gains as principal meaning for the similar context in everywhere. Following his comment, as we have seen reproductive capacity is not found limiting within 'cow and its offspring' depiction rather it encompasses all species' reproductive capacity including human being. That is why Shikder's wife asked Shikder to marry again because she found herself in the same context as the cow belongs but more subtly perceived herself a failure one. One very common narrative around childlessness in Bangladesh is relevant here to reflect Shikder's mournful appearance- '*For whom I build all resources when I don't have any heir*!' Furthermore, Cohen argued that symbol not only produces meaning but also provokes emotion around that meaning; most importantly, it impels to take action following that meaning (as cited in Alvesson 1991: 214). In this case, we have seen a series of actions is taken after this symbolic representation. First, his wife proposed him to marry again and next to it, a marriage ceremony is seen where Shikder sat beside his newly married wife. Right after Shikder's second marriage, his first wife is seen suicide being unable to bear husband's second marriage for her childlessness. The whole context depicted society's normative ideology that 'not having children' almost occurs in woman's side. This kind of symbolic representation and comparison between women and other female species around reproductive capacity is not unique in Bangladeshi society which reveals another folk song quoted from Nahar's writing:

"*Allah, if a fish can have thousands of baby fish, oh graceful God (!) why can I not have just one*? (Ekti matro macher pache lokhkho lokhkho pona, amare dite putuli ke koriche mana, doroder Allhare, machere dao amare kano na?)" (Nahar 2014: 384). In this song a 'childless' woman is depicted as mourning for her empty womb and considered herself as inferior to fish.

All this symbolic or signed expressions (either cow having offspring or fish having baby fishes) evoke strong emotion around reproduction ability where having this capacity seems as accepted and normal characteristic. Moreover, following DeZalia and Moeschberger's study (2014: 9) regarding symbol, a common platform is found created by symbols around birthing capacity where whoever has this capacity can be included as 'in group' members. However, who fail to reproduce offspring cannot be considered as normal, hence also cannot be included as 'in group' members regardless divisions of female species. They considered as abnormal or deviant 'out group' members who unable to perform assigned role. For this reason, cow and fish for reproductive capacity became more accepted hence 'in grouped' compare to Shikder's wife. Moreover, symbols around childlessness do not limit within making categorization; they also create hierarchies on the basis of who have/have not reproductive status. This categorization and related hierarchies have very transmitting power through above symbolic representation process so that without conversation just following Shikder's vision, his wife got the same meaning that Shikder encounters and found her worthless existence compare to cow having a calf. Moreover, her mourning situation following suicide left impression that she perceived herself excluded from society where cow fitted but she could not. The idea about reproductive capacity derived from society so whoever fit this idea eventually accepted by society and seen as 'us' through society's lens. In contrary, who do not fit this normative idea (e.g. Shikdre's wife) seemed as deviant and abnormal.

3.4. Motherhood playing the main role to govern other institutions around 'childless' women

As we have seen from previous two sections that pronatalist ideology and reproductive capacity of women both constitutively shape societal attitudes on 'childless' women, therefore it is now necessary to locate the places where those actions organised and exercised. A brief discussion about Bangladeshi social structure prior to analysing institutions might be helpful in that case.

Though urbanisation spread rapidly, still Bangladesh is considered as a village-based country where the main occupation of villagers is peasantry. Kandiyoty (1988) argued for this pattern of the peasantry is ruled by classic patriarchy which further regulated by a patrilocal residence where exploitation of women's labour and body by husband and/or in laws family taken place. Further Kotalova (1993: 240) identified lineal succession (together with age seniority of men) and women exchange through marriage are two systems which mutually construct Bangladeshi social structure. According to Kotalova, marriage seems merely a social continuity for a man but a transformation for a woman which means she needs security and control by a man (ibid). From their writings, it is clear that women's transformable position through the marital system not only indicates their change of living place but also creates a huge submissive and exploitative position for women. I found their arguments have relevance to my selected films where women are seen living in husband's house after their marriage and they keep busy all day with paddy processing and feeding cows besides cooking. Moreover, at night, they keep busy with husking paddy, making rice from paddy by local machine till midnight while their husbands are asleep. Their sleepless nights, pale unhappy faces and their arrogant husbands give the impression that those women are not treated well

as movies represented their childlessness affect their conjugal life while other contributions remain unrecognised. In Bangladesh, marriage is the only legal and socially sanctioned union which permits a man and a woman can have sex and offspring born within this union only can consider as legal chilnuancedren. Therefore, a husband and his natal family highly depend on the bride for having legal children to continue generation which ultimately creates pressure on women. According to North's argument (as cited in Tang 2011: 3), institution is such an entity which is created by human filling with restrictions to regulate their own interaction. Considering North's definition, marriage is seen here as important institution regulating social pressure on women for having/delaying/not having children. However, 'having children' for women is not just a pressure created by external agents, women themselves also aspire children to achieve adult status and greater acceptance within and outside family in developing societies (Hollos, as cited in Greil et al. 2011: 740). Moreover, Dube focused on Indian women saying that Indian women consider their reproductive capacity as a powerhouse because of their deprivation from power from other sources (as cited in Riessman 2000: 112). His argument is also significant to understand childless issue among Bangladeshi women as Bangladesh belongs to the same cultural belt. Moreover, for Bangladesh, giving birth a male offspring added extra value for mother in society and this cultural imperative gets visibility in my selected movies. For example, in the movie 'Jalaler Golpo' karim is found abandoned his two wives and saying his newly married third wife-'*If you can give me a son, you will live here as queen*'. Another movie 'Char Shotiner Ghor' Kashem, in the same way, urge his newly bride, Phulbanu despite having three other wives -'*Only you can fulfil my desire. I just want to be a father of a son*'. All expressions from two men reveal that they perceive their childlessness happened due to their previous wife's fault and new wife can get value more if they produce male offspring which ultimately re-establish Kandiyoti's argument that women "can establish her place in the patriliny only by producing male offspring"(1988: 279). It is important to be noted here that both movies set their arguments in a much nuanced way. In one hand, both movies revealed their main characters are not ready to accept themselves as infertile hence found remarrying one after another woman. This depiction has relevance with Nahar's findings on Bangladeshi rural and slum context around childlessness where she argued "the 'treatment' for males is remarriage, as women are held responsible for infertility" (Nahar as cited in Greil et al. 2011: 740). On the other hand, both movies left the impression that childlessness actually occurs in male's side despite their refusal (for 'Jalaler Golpo' it is symbolically represented that Karim is the responsible where 'Char Shotiner Ghor' a medical diagnosis prove Kashem's infertility). However, in both movies, women are seen getting the blame as 'barren' from their husband, and the absence of any hospital further reveals that those women do not have access to get proper knowledge of infertility[5]. Moreover, movies shown women (except Phulbanu) are perceived themselves as self-guilt for not producing an heir for their husband. For example, in the movie 'Chat Shotiner Ghor' first wife saying- *It's my failure that I can't have a single child for my husband*' where the second

---

[5] Except Phulbanu in 'Char Shotiner Ghor' who made her husband to come far-distanced capital city to know the reason of childlessness.

one is also expressing same emotion- '*Neither me bubu[6]*'! Furthermore, we see both (from perceiving their 'role' failure) assisted their husband to marry Phulbanu, the fourth time. The other movie 'Lalsalu' it is seen that Majid, within very short time of his marriage, excused his wife that without children his house seemed empty but his first wife remained silent and assisted him to marry to another woman. Here, women's self-guilt depiction can be seen originated from the inseparable link between motherhood and marriage hold by Bangladeshi male-dominated culture where "the presumption is that women are only childless if they are infertile" (Greil et al. 2011: 741). Moreover, as we have seen from above depictions, absence of children considered synonymous as absence of motherhood which deepen women's subjugated position in society. This subjugation is further fixed by femininity driven pronatalist ideology where "motherhood is perceived to be the cornerstone of adult femininity and the desire for motherhood and the role of mothering central to what it means to be a woman" (Glenn, as cited in Gillespie 2003: 124). For inheriting this type of culturally coded ideas, motherhood is appeared here as the most influential institution following Tang's definition (2011: 3) that institution can be seen the sum of rules where rules are made of codified ideas.

Since motherhood is seen holding a predominantly central position in women's lives, the brunt of childlessness has to bear a woman even in that case when a community identifies the husband as main responsible. For instance, in the movie 'Jalaler Golpo' Karim is seen facing tremendous demonstration of villagers for his upcoming chairmen election- '*We won't vote for an infertile man. We won't*'. This demonstration indicates that villagers know very well about his infertility hence denying to elect him as chairman having cultural imperative that an infertile man cannot be a good leader to govern others. But Karim is seen try to fix his barrenness by changing wife, one after another instead of thinking whether he is the responsible for this problem. Here, this film indirectly but critically shed light on specific kind of manhood hold by Bangladeshi men that is, man is always fit and fertile in the reproductive sector, and it is the only woman whose physical constraints block or delay the process. Furthermore, we see this way of thinking let Karim follow superstitious rural practices provided by hypocrite healer e.g. cutting his moustache, collecting blood from killing ducks etc. Moreover, Karim forced his present wife against her will to follow local healer's strange instruction where all 'rituals' are seen performing to correct her 'infertile' body. Moreover, the movie represented that hypocrite healer forced Karim's wife to sleep with him and continuously doing so. However, it is not clear from that movie whether Karim became finally aware of his own infertility and strategically let his wife sleep with that healer. But the way, the healer is frequently seen entering Karim's house (which is not normal for a stranger in rural context), it reveals that Karim is desperate to achieve a child, not for lineage continuity but uphold his social position. However, the way Karim's wife was seen in film enduring healer's misbehaviour hoping that 'having children' from 'healer' can save her house, it possibly creates a negative image of rural women depicting them as weaker individuals who sacrifice their chastity for economic security. Moreover, representation also made around 'childless' women showing them immoral in nature. For instance, in the movie 'Char

---

[6] In Bengali, the word 'bubu' referred as sister.

Shotiner Ghor' the third wife deprive of getting Kashem's attention (as he married the fourth one to have children) involved an extra-marital relationship with house assistant. All these negative penetrations indicate that absence of motherhood creates space to see women as immoral where women are seen engaging either forcibly or voluntarily with deviant activities.

After exploring rural poor women's lives through film analysis, now it is necessary to see how urban 'childless' women having education and economic independence are manifested by Bangladeshi television drama. In the television drama 'Test tube', it is found that Shimu, after doing whole domestic responsibilities (from preparing breakfast to everyone, preparing lunch box to husband etc.) get ready for work even her husband is seen cannot find his watch without her assistance. Depicting her as superwoman reveals society's expectation that a woman regardless her engagement with the external profession is still expected to meet up everyone's needs using her physical and mental labour within the family. This scenario reminds us previous movies' depiction where rural women are seen giving intensive labour to families. Representations around both rural poor and urban solvent women, therefore left the impression that married women of all places and classes are overburdened with work in Bangladeshi society. For Shimu, we see motherhood is still prevalent despite her other achievements even she is seen bound to justify her childlessness in every aspect. For instance, we see Shimu's day is started with sister-in-law's disappointment- '*I don't like to stay here an absence of niece and nephew whom I can play with*'! Following that, she received her mother's phone advising to visit a 'popular' religious priest while she was on the way to the office. After that, she received one of her colleague's attention just arriving to visit a foreign-degree holder infertility specialist. Finally, we found her criticising by mother-in-law for her childlessness in dinner table- '*So many years already passed but this house is still empty*'! This depiction shows that working women having education and the salaried job cannot escape from social pressure for not having children and ultimately it digs her heart and mind, made her esteem low and incompatible for lack of 'normative feminine' that ultimately aggravates her urge to 'fit with society' by any means.

One of the intense criticises got professional women around childlessness that they are ambitious and selfish in nature as they are suspected for lack of desire to have children thus ignore their family and relatives' expectation. We see Shimu's mother in law having the same idea that Shimu voluntarily delayed her motherhood and now became infertile. Her thinking revealed when Shimu offered her herbal juice that she used to take every morning, she refused and further said- '*I have already taken. Any work should be done on right time*'. Gillespie's argument is relevant here as she said "Choosing to be childfree …is often seen as deviant, unfeminine, and an unhealthy choice for women; one that transgresses traditional constructions of femininity" (Gillespie, as cited in Gillespie 2003: 124).

In Urban 'childless' women's life, health seeking treatment especially new reproductive technologies (NRTs) plays an important role where childlessness "has shifted from being seen as a private problem of couples to being seen as a medical condition that focus primarily on women" (Becker, as cited in Greil et al. 2011: 736). In this drama, Shimu got advice from a doctor to take test tube baby by donor sperm as her husband has an infertility problem. Here Greil's argument is significant as he said: "defining oneself as infer-

tile involves not simply negotiations between the individual and medical professionals but also negotiations within the couple and, possibly, larger social networks" (2011: 737). For this reason, we see a conflict arise between Shimu and her husband around IVF baby. Shimu is seen eager to have a baby with donor sperm however his husband preferred to remain as childless instead of getting baby saying- *'we don't need child…we are happy enough without it'*. His decision can be seen governed by two other institutions. First one is masculinity where a man always wants to dominate her woman's all spheres of life and this domination is exercised controlling her body, mobility, labour etc. Therefore, being pregnant with the help of another man's sperm is seen by Shimu's husband as 'unbearable' because he perceived that process given access to another man to enter his wife's private body. Moreover, it also indicates his failure in reproductive process and shows other men are fertile even able to contribute 'baby making' for his wife. In Throsby and Gill's study (as cited in Greil et al. 2011: 740-741) suggests that infertile men have tendency to discontinue IVF influenced by a hegemonic masculine culture which further affects conjugal relations. They argued, "Husbands feel that infertility threatens their masculinity; while wives are pitied, husbands are teased" (ibid). Next institution bothered Shimu's husband is religion which has a negative relationship with some NRTs. In Islam, marriage is seen as a contract between husband and wife and any kind of third party involvement is strictly forbidden and the child born in that case is seen as illegal (Inhorn 2005)[7]. This religious role is found governing Shimu's husband's mind- *'This won't be my baby. This is not our baby. I will die if the baby born. Please do abortion for my sake'*. We found this NRTs, masculinity, religion intersect badly in middle-class couple's life and deteriorate their conjugal relationship. Since, biological motherhood is considered as 'role' duty for women and in Bangladesh context, not fulfilling this 'role' depicted women as deviant, so society expects women must be fit in 'normative social behaviour' by achieving that ideal femininity. This social expectation is revealed in this drama when Shimu denies to miscarriage her baby and leave her husband. Here, leaving husband for baby can be seen as her agency practice which will be detailed in next section. However, this representation actually provokes childless couple to pour over NRTs instead of showing the vast reality of using NRTs regarding cost, effort, possibility, health outcomes etc. Here this drama tries to re-frame existed society's ideology showing that man can be responsible for childlessness and there are many options to have children. But it does not question the essentialization of having children rather medical science is seen commercialise reproductive sector by using pronatalist ideology and provoke people to take assistance from NRTs and ARTs.

Since adoption is practised in Bangladesh as a way out to escape from childlessness but it is not become a desired way for having children. "Islam prohibits adoption because there is no maternal bond and no blood ties to the

---

[7] This is the third point out of ten points Inhorn presented in her study to detail Sunni Islamic position on medically assisted conception. Since Bangladesh is a predominantly Sunni Islamic country, I found this point relevant to my study. However, Shia Islamic doctrines are quite different from Sunni doctrines. For detail both doctrines, see Inhorn, M. C. (2005) Making Muslim Babies: Sunni versus Shi'a Approaches to IVF and Gamete Donation', paper presented at USSP Annual Conference on Infertility and New Reproductive Technologies, Tours, France.

father" (Inhorn, as cited in Greil et al. 2011: 742). Another thing is adopted parents are not getting social acceptance as biological parents and there is always a fear of adopted child can be claimed back by biological parents anytime. This reality is reflected in the television drama 'Biborno Ondhokar'. We see Farhan, the adopted boy was wanted back by her biological mother, Murshi after twenty two years. In one side, we see Murshi repented for her decision prioritising career over son and her guilty feeling is reflected through narratives: *'I should not leave my son for the sake of career. It is you who made my career driven and now my son does not love me…this money, property I achieved nothing can compensate my sorrow'* (conversation with husband); *'I made a mistake…I never thought I lose my son…I am his mother but he refuses even to talk to me…I can't tolerate this pain'* (conversation with her sister, Subarna). On the other, Farhan is found articulating his anger saying- *'I don't consider you as my mother…no mother can leave her child'* (conversation with Murshi). This drama, through all above narratives, provides a message to career-driven women that a woman should consider her child first before pursuing other achievements otherwise, she will lose the priceless bond which will never be restored. This focalization is even more cleared from Subarna's response toward Murshi- *'You only drive for career and now your son doesn't want you. I also made my career but never let Farhan away from me for a single moment. That's why he loves me and want to stay with me'*. I detailed this scenario with considerable narratives because this drama offers some meanings in a nuanced way. First, it criticises career driven women depicting that they can lose their children for career and even children tend to refuse them as the biological mother. Second, it is also depicted in this drama that motherhood for a woman is a final priority while a mother is seen ready to compensate anything for have /back a child (a profound emotion is created here in favour of Murshi depicting she tried a lot to convince Farhan). However, this drama also represented a non-mother woman (through nurturing and rearing) can get love from adopted children even more than a biological mother. However, offering multiple to some extent, contradictory meanings to its audiences, this television drama finally depends on biological motherhood to sort the problem –whom Farhan should stay? We see this drama represented Subarna convincing Farhan to go back Murshi saying- *'She is your biological mother…She gives birth you…She realised her fault leaving you…for my sake, go back to her'*! Considering this narrative, this drama represents society's expectation that a child should always prioritise it's biological mother first. Moreover, when Subarna backed Farhan to his biological parents, we see her crying for Farhan sitting his bed and touching his books which also create emotion for non-mother Subarna that she rears Farhan for twenty-two years but has to return only for not being his biological mother. One of my respondents, Sumi (32 years) being involuntary childless for four years articulated her ideas around adoption:

> *'After spending huge money on medication even trying IVF once, sometimes I think I should adopt a child instead of wasting more money further. But my mother in law told me to adopt a light skinned baby so that others cannot differentiate it from us. Moreover, she warns me not to adopt from orphan centre hesitating their birth identity (legal or illegal) otherwise they will not consider it as their grandchild… it's weird you see! After watching this drama, I have the impression that the way this drama showed 23-year old Farhan finally decided to go back to the biological mother, it is not happening in real world…Because anyone in this age becomes mature enough to stick with own decision. But Subarna's situation*

touches my heart…in reality, in her position, I would become mad…Maybe it's
better to try for biological one because on one can snatch it from me…'

Therefore above drama analysis together with respondent's experience, a supreme position of motherhood is found existed in a society where an adopted mother gets less value than a biological one.

3.5. Self-guilt or self-esteemed? Ambivalences of identity formation around 'childless' women

According to Stets and Richard (2013: 38), identity construction for an individual depends on three interdependent aspects: fulfilling role assigned by society, incorporating a group following specific behaviour and perceiving self on the basis of one's own culture. Following their argument, I found my sample films and television dramas also depicted 'childless' women around this three aspects. For example, the identity construction of Shikder's wife in the film 'Hazar Bochor Dhore' can be discussed. As we have seen from symbol analysis section, Shikder's wife is represented as a failure woman who cannot produce children for Shikder. This failure is seen by society as 'role' failure because 'birthing children' or motherhood is considered main feminine template to govern womanhood. We see her 'role' failure affects her group membership because reproductive capacity determining who can/cannot get access to a group around having/not having feminine attributes. Since Bangladeshi culture socially accepts two genders according to two sex: male and female, it is, therefore, necessary for a woman to determine her position against a man being an ideal woman. Without reproductive capacity, a woman is seen by society neither a 'proper' woman nor 'a man at all'. Here Shikder's wife has seen such an incomplete feminine version where cow or fish are seen more successful than her. This role and group identity failure contributed her self-guilt subjective identity formation where she is seen crying near a pond at night (just after Shikder married the second wife) and eating poisonous leaves to kill herself. The way this film represented her suicide event, it is possibly left an impression to an audience that she found herself worthless in the world and her self-guilt situation left no place for her to live further. However, my interviewee, Lopa (31 years) argued after watching this film that society tends to affect a 'childless' woman's personal wellbeing in a negative way but not always deteriorated a woman's selfhood the way this film presented. Her experience is significant here:

Lopa got married at the age of 21 and she is trying for a baby for the last ten years. She has ovulation problem and took medicine from many gynaecologists. Now she discontinues medical treatment thinking it's a waste of money. She also discontinues attending any get together especially when people invite her for their children's birthday or name day as she found people tend to ask her childlessness in these gatherings. She feels bad when people seek explanation to her private matter in public places but she never thinks her as worthless. In her words:

'Yes I tried for a baby and I give up seeking further treatment…my cousins,
friends whoever in my age have children…but I have education, job, a supportive
husband who keeps saying he doesn't need children, further I contribute to an or-
phan centre on a monthly basis and all these factors make me satisfied, worthy…'

From both events how Shikder's wife's identity is seen constructed by film, and how Lopa articulates her subjective position during the interview, it is found that surrounded environment where a 'childless' woman found her situated and her other socially-accepted attributes mutually play role in shaping her identity. Here, Shikder's wife represented as a rural woman who has an unsupportive husband. Further, her contribution to crop processing is not counted as economic work rather her 'non mother' status blocks her to exercise minimal power in the household. However, Lopa being an urban, educated and jobholder has many attributes to reconsider her selfhood overlooking 'childless' status. Further connecting herself with orphan centre gives her space to mix up with children thus alleviates her sorrow for childlessness. Burke and Stets's argument (as cited in Stets and Richard 2013: 46) is relevant in this case where they said perception on the basis of specific situation and society-determined standard meaning together shape identity construction in varying degrees in correspondence way.

When society considers someone in a negative way which made his/her social position low, individual is found refusing to accept that imperative rather tries to settle position through verifying own identity in a positive way (Stets and Richard 2013: 35-36). For instance, in the television drama 'Test tube', the way Shimu made the decision to sort out her childless stigma with IVF baby, it can be seen her attempt to make her identity (which is childless) into verifying one. Moreover, we found her arguing with husband to stick with donor sperm's assistance because she knows her husband does not have to bear the brunt of childless stigma compare to what every moment exacerbates her life. We see at one point she left her husband knowing childless status is a worse predicament for her than 'living without husband'. Here she is found using her agency to choose better one from two worse situations. However, after birthing that IVF baby, her husband is seen apologised for his behaviour and wanted her back accepting this baby. Important here is, Shimu is seen returned his husband's house with the baby which revealed her another agency practice knowing that rearing a child without a father would create 'less accepted' social position for her.

However, 'childless' women are not always found verifying their identity by having children rather proving their husband's infertility also can be a way out to relief from stigma. As we see from 'Char Shotiner Ghor' Phulbanu is not accepted herself as infertile though her husband criticised her not having a baby. Rather she is seen questioning her husband's fertility saying it's his fault after having four wives. Though this film depicted Phulbanu's family forced her to marry triple-aged Kashem to relieve from bare poverty and abandon by husband possibly make her position even worse, she is found arguing with Kashem to seek a medical diagnosis. Furthermore, we see she convinced her other co-wives not to sleep with Kashem unless he agrees to take Phulbanu with him in the hospital for both of their medical diagnosis. Afterwards, it is disclosed that childlessness occurred due to Kashem's infertility. In this way, Phulbanu freed herself from 'barren' status which can be considered her notion of self-esteemed identity. One of my interviewees, Rumi (35 years) found Phulbanu character is exceptional because she thinks it is not easy and accepted in society to disclose husband's infertility. In her words:

'I tried for a baby for the last 11 years, done two Intra Uterine Inseminations, went to Bangkok but all are in vein. Now I think 'having a baby' is not written

in my fate. I performed Haj this year thinking Allah knows better…even nowadays I found my aspiration for a child is gradually declining… I already endured huge pressure within and outside the family for years …no pressure now bothers me as I habituated with all those stuff…'

As we already seen society creates standard meanings for women around their 'motherhood' status, it oppositely creates a negative identity for 'non-mother' women. To confront this negative identity formation requires strengthening their behaviour which further depends on their surroundings. For Rumi, though she did not disclose either she or her husband diagnosed having infertility problem, her narratives around low self-esteem (especially getting pressure from family) and the way she kept silence during interview left the impression that she perceives her surrounding is not supportive enough which creates her negative emotion.

Above analysis shown that identity formulation depends on various issues e.g. situating environment, supportive partner, identity verifying capacity, the level of emotion etc. All these factors intersect a 'childless' woman's life to formulate her identities either depicting as self-esteemed having agency one or as low-esteemed.

3.6. Negative representations of 'childless' women is a historical process: Exploration of Bengali folklores.

Bengali folklores which transmit orally from generation to generation can be regarded best sample to explore historically constructed negative stereotyping around 'childless' women. In those folklores, majority famous and popular stories are found starting with describing king's unhappiness due to not having any children. In 'Life's secret' story, the first line illustrating -"There was a king who had two queens, Duo and Suo. Both of them were childless" (Day 1912: 1). The same tone found in the story 'The Boy whom Seven Mothers suckled'- "Once upon a time there reigned a king who had seven queens. He was very sad, for the seven queens were all barren" (Day 1912: 113). Another story named 'The boy with the Moon on his Forehead' same trend continued- "There was a certain king who had six queens, none of whom bore children…The king was disconsolate" (Day 1912: 227). Having seen all those narratives, it is clear that no one ever thinks about king's infertility rather all kings are found marry one after another to get children. Interestingly, no kings are seen taking any herbs/medicine themselves rather queens are seen taking those provided by saint which further disclose the fact that all kings did not have children because of their queens' defected bodies. This way of thinking- relating infertility always with female side, has similarity with today's ideas and dogmas around childlessness which reflected through contemporary social representations-films, dramas that I already detailed above sections.

'Childless' women were seen negatively from long since which proved by Bengali folklores. In the story, 'Life's secret' the elder queen named 'Duo' seen as very cruel to her stepson 'Dalim Kumer' who born from younger queen 'Suo' after blessed by a holy saint saying the prince never die by killing his body rather his life is secretly kept in a hidden place. The prince was little and fond of everyone except Duo queen. She cleverly collected the life's secrecy from that little prince and killed him. Here, Duo queen is found very selfish and jealous as she does not have her own children rather seen murdering an-

other woman's child. Moreover, the way she tactfully behaves with the prince to collect life's secrecy to kill, it shows readers that a 'childless' woman cannot love and care any child rather she seeks her happiness doing harm for a child. If we carefully scrutinise the name given those two queens, we found elder queen got the label as 'Duo' whose Bengali meaning is bad, not lovable where younger queen termed as 'Suo' that means lovable. This naming and shaming pattern reveals that a queen only for her childlessness is shown as bad, demon who has no chance to get sympathy from readers. Furthermore, the 'childless' women can be found in involving inhuman activities in the story 'the boy with the moon on his forehead' where six childless queens ordered to kill newborn twins immediately after their birth from the seventh queen. Moreover, they put the puppy in seventh queen's bedside and managed king and kingdom to believe that respective queen brought bad luck giving birth puppies instead of human children. Here, 'childless' women represented as greedy and vindictive who always found concern about their wealth and luxuries and used heinous tactic not to share anyone with their self-centric lavish life.

All above depictions around 'childless' women in Bengali folklores prove that 'childless' women are seen very negative, ill-behaved women from ancient time in Bangladesh and they have the potentiality to influence contemporary social representations and social actions around 'non-mother' women.

3.7. Chapter summary

This chapter has analysed the insights from various representations made in society around 'childless' women. Focus of the chapter was on mechanisms used by society (in representational ways) to stigmatise women highlighting their childlessness. Moreover what also emerges from the findings are the complex interpretations of childlessness that allow women to make sense of their position in society regarding representations as well as practical life. The next chapter will pose a summary of overall research findings highlighting the paper's theoretical contribution focusing Scott proposed theoretical framework.

Chapter 4

Conclusions

4.1. Revisiting representations of 'childless' women in Bangladesh context: A synthesis

The paper was started to examine the main research question-*How are 'childless' women represented in Bangladeshi newspapers, films, songs, dramas and folklores*? Here I used Joan Scott's 'Gender as an analytical category' approach and examined her proposed concepts- normative concept (ideology), symbol, institution and subjective identity to uncover gendered social operations on Bangladeshi women around childlessness. Here representational analysis was taken as the main methodological tool to understand negative portraits of Bangladeshi women regarding their reproductive status. By analysing textual representations of daily newspapers and Bengali folklores along with visual depictions of films and dramas and then further considering experiences of childlessness from interviewees, this research presents some insights on social perceptions and related actions against 'childless' women in Bangladesh.

As we have seen from chapter 3, pro-natalist ideology is found deeply rooted in Bangladeshi society. This ideology promotes unquestionable priority for having biological children which further stigmatises those who do not have it. 'Having children' is used as a crediting attribute relating to religious aspect (children as God's blessing), social aspect (children look after aged time) and cultural aspect (children make life fulfilled). In contrary, childlessness is seen as insecurity, weaker positionality and unworthy human life. Moreover, an important finding is, 'childless', the word itself emerges as a devaluing indicator for women. So using the word before mentioning women, either in the news articles or films instead of questioning its 'usability', ultimately normalise the whole stigmatisation process against women. Therefore I put this word within single quotation throughout my paper to challenge this normalisation. Moreover, the thesis has shown that pro-natalist ideology does not always play role directly, very often it takes help from symbols to exercise its dominance over women in a more profound way. Furthermore, this dominance can be seen highlighting reproductive capacity where other non-human species become more acceptable in society regarding reproduction but 'childless' women are categorised as deviant or abnormal entity. The research has also demonstrated that marriage works as an institution to undermine and devalued women's contribution to Bangladeshi patriarchal society. Since pronatalist ideology situated on essentializing women's reproductive capacity, marriage, in that case, validates this burden creating a huge demand for 'motherhood' from women. Representations also made showing that though infertility has the possibility to occur from men's side, men are not ready to accept it rather try to fix their problem through remarriage which lies in the male-dominated imperative that women body is the only responsible to have/have not offspring. Moreover, motherhood together with other institutions- health seeking sector, religion, manhood dogma etc. creates a discriminatory spectrum around women's lives where women's body is intervened (through NRT), women-rights are neglect-

ed (through blocking their interest) and violence is held (both physical and mental). Above all, motherhood centric institutional system resists women to be considered as 'whole' through operating actions and stigma around their 'non-mother' status.

However representations also show that women do not always remain silent while society stigmatises them rather they are found making their decisions to restore their status in society. Both rural and urban context, women's resistance against 'childless' stigma (through having IVF baby or disclosing husband's infertility) can be seen as exercising their agency. However, evidence also found from interviewees and films that some women also suffer as self-guilt or lower-esteemed which further reveal that, correspondence to surrounding environment and perceive one's own situation in society have a great impact to formulate identity around childlessness.

Significantly, all the four concepts (ideology, symbol, institution, identity) discussed throughout the paper revealed that they are mutually constructed hence cannot be explored separately. Moreover evidence also found during sample analysis that each selected material has all the four elements to be potentially discussed and analysed. However, considering time and limited space, I attempt to highlight one concept for analysing a certain type of representation to searching deeper meaning along with covering multidimensional representations. Another important aspect is already detailed in the methodological section about constraints regarding distance-conducting interview. If I had a chance to interview respondents directly instead of relying on Skype, this research could offer more time and privacy to interviewees to elaborate their experiences hence many nuances and subtle aspects of micro-politics around childlessness could come into light. However, the thesis has shown that women's experiences are useful for representation analysis as they permit to see how society-manifested events shape women's worldview and self-hood around childlessness and evoke them to take further initiatives.

Overall, this paper has demonstrated that 'childless' women are seen as negative character historically. Their reproductive status is seen determine their identity, personality, humanity and moral characters which are historically constructed from undated Bengali folklores depiction to modern social representations. Here society is not seen the only perpetrator act against 'childless' women rather women themselves are seen self-guilt, repent on their childlessness and try to fix their abnormality even in extreme case, attempt suicide. Here it is clear from representation analysis that society does not leave any space beyond the reproductive capacity of Bangladeshi women regardless their rural poor or educated urban status. Therefore, 'essentialization' process of 'having children' remains unquestioned in society. In other words, it can be said that no representation is found to problematize the mandatory motherhood process and no women are depicted to be voluntarily childless rather we see every woman is trying to achieve normative social behaviour by all means. All these reflected society's one-dimensional desire that all women should be a mother to be accepted in society.

4.2. Theoretical contribution

What also appears from this study is the usefulness of Scott's theoretical framework to explore gendered representational mechanisms in society. Using

her theory, it is found that all representations are located in a patriarchal social structure where the position of men and women are pre-dominantly unequal. To sustain this inequality, society is seen squeezing women's role within 'motherhood' and ignore other contributions that women might use to conform this inequality. Therefore, all representations are found, to some extent serving society's interest by devaluing 'non-mother' woman regarding reproductive capacity. However, Scott in her theory referred only subjective identity considering of its potentiality to explore any gendered social process in full phase. However I found this subjective identity is more effective to explore identity formation from interviewees' experiences than to understand representations-based identity formulation. Unlike Scott, some researchers such as Van Katwyn (2009: 1), Stets and Richard (2013: 35) also argued for constructive identity considering its effectiveness to explore society's regulation on people. Moreover, MacNay as cited in Van Katwyn (2009: 7) proposed narration of identity is useful to explore agency. Using the insights from these studies considering subjective, constructive and narrational structure of identity formation, this paper has succeeded in bringing together a multi-dynamic analysis around social depictions 'childless' women.

4.3. Suggestions for further research

Though this study has addressed the research question, there are some areas which exploration can be beneficial for further research around childlessness. For example, during the interview, my respondents showed their disappointment with medicalization process (considering as 'unsuccessful' attempt) which I skipped in my research encountering time and space limitation. It might be another significant area to explore medical intervention on women's bodies and lives in the name of restoring childlessness issue. Since Western infertility treatment rapidly spread to metropolitan areas of Bangladesh, it offers 'fertility' as a commodity which only is attributed if women agree to take expensive treatment. This treatment process and its impacts on women's psychology and body even create debate within Western developed areas then examining about how it is experienced by Bangladeshi women mingled with patriarchy, masculinity and religious terrains might shed light on new insights around childlessness. Therefore focusing study on experiences of 'childless' women considering both subjective, constructive and narrative identity formations through ethnographic fieldwork, further research can be potentially unpacked the relation between medicalization and marginalization of 'childless' women in Bangladeshi society.

References

Ahmed, M.K., J. van Ginneken, A. Razzaque and N.Alam (2004) 'Violent Deaths among Women of Reproductive Age in Rural Bangladesh', *Social Science & Medicine* 59:311–319.

Akhtar, S. (2012) 'Only women bear the brunt of infertility', *The Daily Star* 1 December. Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://archive.thedailystar.net/newDesign/cache/cached-news-details-259414.html>.

Alvesson, M. (1991) 'Organizational Symbolism and Ideology', *Journal of Management Studies* 28(3):207-225.

Bangladesh Bureaue of Statistics (2015) 'Fertility Diferentials in Bangladesh: Trends and Determinants. Population Monograph Volume 14'. Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureaue of Statistics.

Bashed, M. A. (2015) 'Dealing with infertility', *The Daily Star* 8 March. Accessed 12 October 2016 < http://www.thedailystar.net/dealing-with-infertility-59295>.

Bergquist, K. (2003) 'Outspoken editor from Bangladesh'. Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://www.culturebase.net/artist.php?1271>.

Biborno Ondhokar (2012) Z. Karim (Producer) and S. Zamim (Director). Dhaka: Antarip Productions.

Bin-Habib, K. (2006) 'Celebrating International Women's Day: Nargis Akhter Empathy with women', The Daily Star 8 March. Accessed 21 October <http://archive.thedailystar.net/2006/03/08/d603081402109.htm>.

Charanji, K. (2006) 'Childlessness New Hope for Parenthood', *Lifestyle* (A weekly magazine of The Daily Star) Volume 3, Issue 45 Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://archive.thedailystar.net/lifestyle/2006/06/04/centre.htm>.

Char Shotiner Ghor (2005) FemCom Creative Wing (Producer) and N. Akter (Director). Dhaka: FemCom Creative Wing.

Daily Sun (2015) 'Bangladesh Pratidin Highest Circulated Daily', 6 September. Accessed 3 November 2016 <http://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/73667/Bangladesh-Pratidin-highest-circulated-daily>.

Day, L.B. (1912) *Folk-tales of Bengal.* London: Macmillan.

DeZalia, R.A.P. and S.L. Moeschberger (2014) 'The Function of Symbols that Bind and Divide', in S. L. Moeschberger and R. A. P. DeZalia (eds) *Symbols that Bind, Symbols that Divide: The Semiotics of Peace and Conflict,* pp. 1-12. London: Springer.

Directorate General of Health Services (2012) 'Health Bulletin 2012' Dhaka: Directorate General of Health Services. Accessed 2 November 2016 <http://www.dghs.gov.bd/licts_file/images/Health_Bulletin/HB2012_CH/HB2012_CH1_BD-at-a-glance.pdf>.

Falguni, A. (2010) 'Begum Rokeya, Sultana's Dream and Woman Power', *The Daily Star* 11 December 2010. Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://archive.thedailystar.net/newDesign/cache/cached-news-details-165630.html#skip>.

Gillespie, R. (2003) 'Childfree and Feminine: Understanding the Gender Identity of Voluntarily Childless Women', *Gender & Society* 17(1): 122-136.

Graham, M. and S. Rich. (2012) 'What's "Childless" Got to Do With It?', Working papers, 2(36). Geelong, Australia: Alfred Deakin Research Institute. Accessed 3 November 2016. <https://www.deakin.edu.au/research-services/forms/v/3671/wps-36w.pdf>.

Greil, A., J. McQuillan and K. Slauson-Blevins (2011) 'The Social Construction of Infertility', *Sociology Compass*, *5*(8):736-746.

Hall, S. (1997) 'The Work of Representation' in S. Hall (ed.) *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices,* pp. 13-74. London: SAGE Publications.

Hazar Bochor Dhore (2005) K.A. Suchanda (Producer and Director). Dhaka: G Series.

Inhorn, M. C. (2005) 'Making Muslim Babies: Sunni versus Shi'a Approaches to IVF and Gamete Donation', paper presented at USSP Annual Conference on Infertility and New Reproductive Technologies, Tours, France (July 2005).

Jalaler Golpo (2015) F.R. Sagar (Producer) and S. Emon (Director). Dhaka: Impress Telefilm.

Jay Jay Din (2012) 'Nishhontan Suborna', 10 May. Accessed 2 November 2016 <http://www.jaijaidinbd.com/?view=details&archiev=yes&arch_date=10-05-2012&type=single&pub_no=122&cat_id=3&menu_id=63&news_type_id=1&index=0>.

Kotalová, J. (1993) *Belonging to others: Cultural construction of womanhood among Muslims in a village in Bangladesh.* Dhaka: University Press Limited.

Kandiyoti, D. (1988) 'Bargaining with patriarchy', *Gender & Society* 2(3):274-290.

Lalsalu (2001) Kino-Eye Films (Producer) and T. Mokammel (Director). Dhaka: Kino-Eye Films.

'Lalsalu' (film) (2016) Accessed 12 October 2016 <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lalsalu_(film)&oldid=712817115>.

Lombardo, E. and P. Meier (2016) 'Theorising Symbolic Representation' in 'The Symbolic Representation of Gender: A discursive Approach', pp. 19-38. Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate.

'Matiur Rahman' (2016) Accessed 21 October 2016 <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Matiur_Rahman_(journalist)&oldid=703842515>.

Mazierska, E. (2006) 'In The Name of Absent Fathers and Other Men', *Feminist Media Studies* 6(1): 67-83.

Nahar, P., A. Sharma, K. Sabin, L. Begum, S.K. Ahsan, A.H. Baqui (2000) 'Living with Infertility: Experiences among Urban Slum Populations in Bangladesh', *Reproductive Health Matters* 8: 33–44.

Nahar, P. (2010) 'Health Seeking Behaviour of Childless Women in Bangladesh: An Ethnographic Exploration for the Special issue on: Loss in Child Bearing', *Social Science & Medicine* 71: 1780–1787.

Nahar, P. (2012) 'The link between Infertility and Poverty: Evidence from Bangladesh', *Human Fertility* 15(1):18-26.

Nahar P. (2012b) 'Invisible Women in Bangladesh: Stakeholders' Views on Infertility Services', *Facts, Views & Vision in Issues in Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Health* 4(3):149–156.

Nahar, P. (2014) 'How Women in Bangladesh Confront the Stigma of Childlessness: Agency, Resilience, and Resistance', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 28(3): 381–398.

Peyre, H (2010) *What is Symbolism.* Alabama: The University of Alabama Press.

Prothom Alo (2014) 'Pother Dhula Theke Mayer Kole…', 20 March. Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/173155/%E0%A6%AA%E0%A6%A5%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%B0-%E0%A6%A7%E0%A7%81%E0%A6%B2%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%A5%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%95%E0%A7%87-%E0%A6%AE%E0%A6%BE%E0%A7%9F%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%B0-%E0%A6%95%E0%A7%8B%E0%A6%B2%E0%A7%87>.

Prothom Alo (2015) 'Bashjhar Theke Nobojatok Uddhar', 21 May. Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/865135/%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%81%E0%A6%B6%E0%A6%9D%E0%A6%BE%E0%A7%9C-%E0%A6%A5%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%95%E0%A7%87-%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%9C%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%A4%E0%A6%95-%E0%A6%89%E0%A6%A6%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%A7%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0>.

Prothom Alo (2015) 'Rastar Pash Theke Nobojatok Uddhar', 16 November. Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/684754/%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B8%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%A4%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0-%E0%A6%AA%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B6-%E0%A6%A5%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%95%E0%A7%87-%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%9C%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%A4%E0%A6%95-%E0%A6%89%E0%A6%A6%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%A7%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0>.

Prothom Alo (2016) 'Atka Pore Agune Morlen Nari', 10 April. Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/825745/%E0%A6%86%E0%A6%9F%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%AA%E0%A7%9C%E0%A7%87-%E0%A6%86%E0%A6%97%E0%A7%81%E0%A6%A8%E0%A7%

37

87-
%E0%A6%AE%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%B2%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%A8-%E0%A6%8F%E0%A6%95-%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%80>.

Prothom Alo (2016) 'Lash Uddhar', 27 July. Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://www.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/article/926359/%E0%A6%B2%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B6-%E0%A6%89%E0%A6%A6%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%A7%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0>.

'Prothom Alo' (2016) Accessed 12 October 2016 <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Prothom_Alo&oldid=742387420>.

Purabi, N. S. (2015) 'Know the Reasons of Infertility', *The Daily Star* 7 June. Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://www.thedailystar.net/health/health-tips/know-the-reasons-infertility-93094>.

Rashid, S. F. (2007) 'Kal Dristi, Stolen Babies and 'Blocked Uteruses': Poverty and Infertility Anxieties among Married Adolescent Women Living in a Slum in Dhaka, Bangladesh', *Anthropology & Medicine* 14(2): 153-166.

Rich, S., A. Taket, M.Graham and J.Shelley (2011) "Unnatural', 'Unwomanly', 'Uncreditable' and 'Undervalued': The Significance of Being a Childless Woman in Australian Society', *Gender Issues* 28(4): 226-247.

Riessman, C.K. (2000) 'Stigma and Everyday Resistance Practices: Childless Women in South India', *Gender & Society* 14(1): 111-135.

Sattar, M. (2016) 'Bangladesh Editor Faces 79 Court Cases After an Unusual Confession', The New York Times 27 March. Accessed 21 October 2016 <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/28/world/asia/bangladesh-editor-faces-79-court-cases-after-saying-he-regrets-articles.html?_r=0>.

Scott, J.W. (1986) 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *American Historical Review* (91): 1053-1075.

Stets, J.E. and R. T. Serpe (2013) 'Identity Theory' in J. Delamater and A. Ward (eds) *Handbook of Social Psychology*, pp. 31-60. London: Springer.

Tang, S. (2011) *A General Theory of Institutional Change*. London and New York: Routledge.

Test tube (2015) A. Adnan (Producer) and R.B. Pritam (Director). Dhaka: Versatile Media.

The Daily Ittefaq (2005) 'Jalal'er Golpo selected for Oscar submission', 23 September. Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://www.clickittefaq.com/bangladesh-picks-jalaler-golpo-for-foreign-language-film-category-in-oscars/>.

The Daily Janakantha (2012) 'Ma Dibosher Natok Biborno Ondhokar', 10 May. Accessed 3 November 2016 <http://oldsite.dailyjanakantha.com/news_view.php?nc=42&dd=2012-05-10&ni=95832>.

The Daily Star (2003) 'Lalsalu Hits Cinema Halls', 28 June. Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://archive.thedailystar.net/2003/06/28/d30628140278.htm>.

The Daily Star (2008) 'National Film Awards for the last Four Years Announced', 1 September. Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-52684>.

The Daily Star (2013) 'Man, Woman Killed by Sons over Land', 20 June. Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://www.thedailystar.net/news/man-woman-killed-by-sons-over-land>.

The Daily Star (2015) "Jalal'er Golpo' Wins ACF Grant at Busan', 8 March. Accessed 12 October 2016 <http://www.thedailystar.net/jalaler-golpo-wins-acf-grant-at-busan-31119>.

'The Daily Star' (2016) Accessed 12 October 2016 <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Daily_Star_(Bangladesh)&oldid=732071865>.

Thompson, J.B. (1984) *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

'Transcom Group' (2016) Accessed 12 October 2016 <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Transcom_Group&oldid=729595550>.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1998) *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. London: Sage publications.

Van Katwyk, P. (2009) 'Constructed Identity, Subjective Identity and Inter-Subjective Transformation: An Exploration By Way of Motherhood and Canadian Maternity Benefits'. PhD Dissertation. Ottawa: Wilfrid Laurier University.

Appendices

Appendix A: Selected Materials at a Glance

Category	Title	Name of the Newspaper	Date/Year of Publication	Editor/Collector	Director	Producer	Affiliation
News Article	*Pother Dhula Theke Mayer Kole*	Prothom Alo	20 March 2014	Matiur Rahman	N/A	N/A	Transcom Group
	Bashjhar Theke Nobojatok Uddhar		21 May 2015				
	Rastar Pash Theke Nobojatok Uddhar		16 November 2015				
	Atka Pore Agune Morlen Nari		10 April 2016				
	Lash Uddhar		27 July 2016				
	Know The Reasons of Infertility	The Daily Star	7 June 2015	Mahfuz Anam			Transcom Group
	Man, Woman Killed by Sons over Land		20 June 2013				
	Begum Rokeya, Sultana's Dream and Woman Power		11 December 2010				
	Childlessness New Hope for Parenthood		2006				
	Dealing with Infertility		8 March 2015				
	Only Women Bear the Brunt of Infertility		1 December 2012				

Folk-tales	*Life's Secret*	N/A	1912	Collected by Lal Behari Day	N/A	N/A	MacMillan
	The Boy whom Seven Mother Suck-led		1912				
	The Boy with the Moon on his Forehead		1912				
Film	*Jalaler Golpo*	N/A	2015	N/A	S. Enam	F.R. Sagar	Impress telefilm
	Char Shotiner Ghor		2005		N. Akhter	FemCom Creative Wing	FemCom Creative Wing
	Hazar Bochor Dhore		2005		K.A. Suchanda	K.A. Suchanda	G Series
	Lalsalu		2001		T. Mokammel	Kino-Eye Films	Kino-Eye Films
Television Drama	*Test tube*	N/A	2015	N/A	R.B. Pritam	A. Adnan	Versatile Media
	Biborno Ondhokar		2012		S. Zamim	Z. Karim	Antarip Produc-tions
Folk Song	*Akti Matro Macher Pache Lokhkho Lokhkho Pona*	N/A	2014	Collected by P. Nahar	N/A	N/A	N/A

N/A = Not Applicable

Appendix B: Profiles of Interviewees

No	Pseudo Name	Age (Years)	Educational Status	Employment Status	Age of Marriage	Since Trying for Baby	Medication Status	Reasons for Childlessness
1	Najma	32	Post graduated	Employed (In a Bank)	8 Years	Last 7 Years	Continued	Unspecified
2	Sumi	32	Post graduated	Not Employed	6 Years	Last 4 Years	Continued (Tried IVF once)	Blocked Fallopian Tubes
3	Rumi	35	Graduated	Not Employed	11 Years	11 Years	Discontinued (Tried IUI Twice)	Undisclosed
4	Lopa	31	Post graduated	Employed (In a University)	10 Years	10 Years	Discontinued	Irregular Ovulation

Appendix C: Interview Guide

1. Do you look at the news articles/films/television dramas/folklore stories that I sent you?

2. What do you see from the news articles and folk-tales?

3. How do you feel about those?

4. Do you agree/disagree with those depictions? Why/Why not?

5. Are those depictions relevant for you? Why/why not?

6. Do the news articles/folk-tales stigmatize childless women? Why? Why not?

7. What do you come to know from those films?

8. Do you feel commonness with those materials' depicted childless women? How?

9. Which social ideas, cultural norms, and religious signs you found here related with childlessness?

10. Do you agree with those depictions? Why/why not?

11. Do you find anything that is presented here but to mean something else or beyond that? Why do you think that?

12. What do you come to know from those television dramas?

13. Do you find any relevance of those dramas' event to your present life? Can you say something about it?

14. What do you feel when seeing these dramas? Is it comfortable for you to share about that?

15. Does it provoke emotion? What type of emotion? For whom? For what reason?

16. Beside those news articles/films/television dramas/folklore stories, do you find anything you feel/experience in your life but absent from those representations? What are they?