Ecotopian Revisions in Saad Z. Hossain's Science Fiction

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, "Ecotopian Revisions in Saad Z. Hossain's Science Fiction," submitted in the partial fulfillment of my MS degree, is entirely my own work. I declare that the work is original and has not been published previously in any journal. I certify that all the material in this thesis borrowed from other sources has been acknowledged.

Signature

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Abstract

Popular global speculative and futuristic narratives showcase the tendency of condemning the cities of the Global South, especially South Asia, to an ecological pessimism, representing submerged or abandoned citiesin the wake of climate chaos. This study contends that South Asian futuristic fiction challenges the ecological pessimism that the cities of the Global South are condemned to as it endeavours to analyse re-visions of ecotopias in Bangladeshi writer, Saad Z. Hossain's novel, *Cyber Mage*; novellas, *The Gurkha and the Lord of Tuesday*,and *Kundo Wakes Up*; and his short story, "Bring Your Own Spoon". Hossain's narratives pave the way for the possibility of an ecological optimism for South Asian cities represented globally. My research seeks to explore the ways in which his fiction re-envisions an ecological utopia as a critical processual site of South Asian climate consciousness, as it investigates how reorganised urban spaces and multispecies justice become pathways of liveability in the future. Following Carl Abbott and Elizabeth Grosz's scholarship on the relationship of cities and bodies, I underscore the transformation of Hossain's futuristic spaces from "carceral cities" to "creative little worlds", foregrounding the malleability of futuristic cities that can provide opportunities of revolt against the neoliberal exclusionary policies of an ecological dystopia. I combine these voices with Christine Winter's ideas on "decolonial multispecies justice" to highlight the possibility of a climate-just future via the interspecies alliances formed between humans, cyborgs, djinns, and AIs in Hossain's fiction. My research hence states that Hossain's narratives act as sites of 'decolonial South Asian futurisms', centring the voices of South Asian writers intervening in the global climate change discourse via local epistemologies, Bangladeshi myths, and native aspirations for a more egalitarian mode of futuristic living.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

My research aims to investigate the role of South Asian fiction in challenging the ecological pessimism that the cities of the Global South are condemned to in popular science fiction narratives. The global climate change discourse portrays a bleak future for or a complete geographical erasure of South Asian cities based on the contemporary statistics on rising climatic concerns in South Asia[1]. This inspires the propagation of the trope of the 'drowning or falling Asian city' in popular Western futuristic texts, which functions as a "techno-Orientalist" discursive and cultural ploy used by the "Western nations vying for cultural and economic dominance with Asian nations" in the wake of neoliberal trade policies (S. Roh et al. 3). I seek to reject and break the paradigmatic juggernaut of these narratives that indulge in 'cancelling the future' for South Asian cities by zeroing in on the ecological re-visions in Bangladeshi writer, Saad Z. Hossain's futuristic fiction. My research, in this iteration, intervenes in the devaluation of South Asian futuristic spaces by outlining how in recent South Asian speculative and science fiction, ecotopian spaces become a site to disrupt ecological pessimism for the Global South and re-envision ecotopias as a space of sustainable and just co-living. I have chosen four texts from Hossain's oeuvre for this study: his novel, *Cyber Mage*; novellas, *The Gurkha and the Lord of Tuesday* and *Kundo Wakes Up*; and the short story, "Bring Your Own Spoon", that re-envision

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[1] "Global Climate Risk Index 2021", published by the internationally acclaimed research organisation, Germanwatch, features three South Asian countries, in its list of ten countries most affected from 2000 to 2019 due to climate change (Eckstein et al. 13).

the future of the cities of Bangladesh as a climatic refuge for both their valuable and dispensable citizens.

The genre of speculative and futuristic fiction, by foregrounding supernatural, mythical or magical elements and technoscientific marvels in storytelling, creates a dynamic and empowering site to re-canvas varying modes of existence and living in this world. This in turn paves the way for imagining dissident worldviews—arising from the lived experiences of different species and the subjectivities of various life systems—laying the ground for subverting the oppressive regimes and authorities prevailing in our real world.Debra Shaw states that science or futuristic fiction writing is not merely "about the future but is an extrapolation from known conditions into an imagined space … which provides for (often didactically so) a critique of the social and cultural moment in which the work is produced" (785). Taking cue from this stance, I propose that South Asian futuristic fiction proves to be a space produced in and through the lived climate anxieties of the Global South. It is this characteristic that propels my probing into the genre in order to seek an understanding of climate crisis and ecotopias serving as possible havens against it in South Asian fiction. While I study the portrayal of only Bangladeshi cities in a Bangladeshi writer's work, the shared climate concerns within the South Asian region colour my reading of the selected texts as South Asian and not simply Bangladeshi. In this iteration, this research foregrounds South Asian climate concerns transcending topographic barriers and projecting similar issues and aspirations of a climatically endangered South Asia.

My overarching argument is that Hossain's fiction provides a counter-argument to the eco-pessimistic portrayals of South Asian cities in popular science fiction narratives. Basedon this argument, I make three claims. Firstly, I claim that Hossain's texts critique the ecotopian models of carceral or walled-in cities which function on the neoliberal imperialist principles,

dividing the citizens into valuable and dispensable groups of individuals. Secondly, I claim that the selected texts re-envision South Asian ecotopias as decolonial South Asian sites of revolt against the underlying neoliberal imperialist structures of ecotopias when they foreground interspecies alliances as crucial pathways leading to the establishment of multispecies justice ensuring emancipatory models of ecotopias for all species.Lastly, I claim that Hossain employs a unique decolonial South Asian understanding of djinns which I analyse as decolonial metaphors foregrounding alternative modes of existence that encourage the inclusion of more-than-human bodies and their species-specific knowledges in creating a climate-just urban future.

My research propounds that Hossain's fiction operates as a site of decolonizing mainstream Western futuristic or science fiction narratives. Decolonial science fiction is "forged out of alternative lifeworlds and technological innovations [that] are used as platforms on which to stage social scenes specific to decolonial concerns" (Choksey n.d.). I foreground these concerns, specifically, "the anxieties around planetary death; and the ecological alliances and alternative knowledge-systems that might make survival possible" (Choksey n.d.) in the texts to lay bare their decolonial potency with Bangladeshi cities as the backdrop. Janet Fiskio asserts that "[d]epictions of climate change in popular culture [as in] speculative fiction … are locations where the meanings of climate change are formulated and contested" (13). Such a perspective inspires my engagement with Hossain's fiction as I read its re-visions of ecotopias[2], paving the way for the possibility of an "ecological optimism" (Shirkova-Tuuli 59) for South Asian cities which "reflects a positive side of the complex and difficult relationship between man and nature […] and confirms that there always is a way out of any hopeless, desperate situation" (59). This

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[2] "Ecotopia is a sub-genre of utopia that makes a sustainable relationship to the natural world central in the vision of an ideal society" (Fiskio 20).

counters the popular West-centric depictions of the urban spaces of the Global South, perishing due to class tensions, interracial conflicts, and poor and corrupt governance. It is in the light of these subjugating Western narratives that I posit that the South Asian landscape is as much "a site of political struggle" to "understand [and fight] climate change" (Fiskio 13) as the Global North is.

My study contributes to the existing debates on ecotopianism, urbanism and posthumanism through its critical focus on Hossain's emphasis on the potency of multispecies relationalities—foregrounded in the djinn lore, indigenous folklore and native concerns of Bangladeshi culture—leading to the 'rebirth of the society'. I read his unique standpoint as a pertinent addition to the foundations of decolonial "South Asian futurisms" that "mix colonial ideas with indigenous philosophical thought, scientific knowledge and cultural mythology, in ways that reject Western understandings of South Asia" (Kamal 19).By analysing the metaphorical role of the species of djinns as a decolonial strategy, encapsulated in "alternative [and indigenous Bangladeshi] knowledge-systems" (Choksey n.d.), I underscore Hossain's intervention in popular Western scholarship that falls behind in acknowledging the necessity of the inclusion of djinns as the nonhuman or more-than-human voices in establishing a just multispecies society[3].

I posit that Hossain imagines an egalitarian emancipatory model of an ecotopia as he unveils the exclusionary neoliberal practices of futuristic cities, labelled by their neoliberal administrative forces as ecological utopias for all the inhabitants, but functioning as "carceral

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[3]"[M]ultispeciesism articulate[s] a 'worldview' that [is] appropriate to actively design alternative less-speciesist futures by … curating stories of our engagements and encounters with animals [and by extension, nonhumans]" (Michelle 2018).

cities" (Abbott 93) with confined urban spaces favouring only a few citizens. Such a model of an ecotopia functions as a dystopia due to an undemocratic division of biotechnological and socio-cultural resources. I look into the transformation of these spaces from "carceral cit[ies]" (Abbott 9) to "mosaic[s] of minor communities" (qtd. in Park Dixon Goist, 53), distinguished by "sets of subcultures" and "little worlds" (Abbott 195-6) that are in a state of constant exchange across different classes, genders and species. An osmosis of these "subcultures" and "little worlds" (195)—claimed by specific species namely djinn, humans, cyborgs and AI—is only made possible by accessing the city and its citizens' own bodies as 'mutually constitutive' as they are "assemblages or collections of parts" that can alter in different scenarios for various purposes (Grosz 385). This mutual co-constitution lays the framework for the "multispecies justice [MSJ]" (Tschakert et al. 1) that "recognizes the numerous … everyday interactions that bind individuals and societies to networks of close and distant others, including other people and more-than-human beings" (2). I study this MSJ lens to navigate the possibilities of "climate-just [South Asian] futures" (3) by "repositioning justice to encompass all beings as quintessentially relational" (4) and entangled with each other, making provision for imagining the contours of an all-inclusive liberating model of ecotopia.

Hossain's selected fiction canvases futuristic Bangladeshi cities in which the survivors of a climate endangered world are huddled into enclosed urban spaces which are continuously regulated by the urban authorities in order to maintain a breathable and safe air quality. Medical devices are implanted into the bodies of these survivors which serve as air purifiers and regulators by feeding off of the anatomical functions of these bodies. Despite their promise of providing the citizens of these cities with ecologically safe spaces, the cities serve as prisons for their residents whose bodies are closely monitored and contained within the different urban

zones perpetuating class divisions even within an 'ecotopia'. Hossain imagines alliances between different species and classes within these narratives holding the potential to subvert the discriminatory urban systems that overtly favour a few citizens while pushing the less valuable ones into death zones. I read these alliances between djinns, humans, cyborgs and AIs as decolonial ploys used by Hossain to imagine alternate futures for South Asian cities, radically critiquing the ecological pessimism to which they are mostly subjected to in popular narratives of global speculative and futuristic fiction.

1.2 Problem Statement

My research seeks to explore the ways in which the selected fictional narratives re-envision an ecological utopia as a critical processual site of South Asian climate consciousness via an investigation into how reorganised urban spaces become pathways of liveability in the future. I further explore how Hossain's speculative and futuristic fiction delineates the concepts of decolonial South Asian futurisms through an analysis of the role of interspecies alliances, specifically between the human and djinn characters, in paving the way for acquiring a decolonial multispecies justice, and eventually formulating egalitarian ecological utopias as sites of co-living and co-existing.

1.3 Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate how the selected South Asian fictional texts generate resistant discourse on ecological utopias, challenging their exclusionary neoliberal practices.

2. To highlight the role of interspecies harmony and multispecies alliances in building a climate-just society in the future.

3. To investigate the metaphorical role of djinns in the envisioning of decolonial multispecies justice and the re-envisioning of eco-utopias.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions of my study are:

1. How do the selected fictional texts offer a counter-narrative to popular Western futuristic representations of South Asian cities?

2. In what ways do Hossain's fictional works revise the formations of an ecological utopia that is constructed on neoliberal exclusionary policies by the state?

3. What is the metaphorical role of djinns in the envisioning of decolonial multispecies justice and the re-envisioning of eco-utopias?

1.5 Methodology

The current study follows the qualitative form of research and employs the technique of close textual analysis. The selected works for research include four works from Saad Z. Hossain's oeuvre: his novel, *Cyber Mage*; novellas, *The Gurkha and the Lord of Tuesday* and *Kundo Wakes Up*; and the short story, "Bring Your Own Spoon". The primary sources of information for this research include *Imagining Urban Futures: Cities in Science Fiction and What We Might Learn from Them* by Carl Abbott, "Bodies-Cities" by Elizabeth Grosz, "Flat Ontology and Differentiation" by Anna Grear, and "Unearthing the Time/Space/Matter of Multispecies Justice" by Christine J. Winter. The secondary sources include books of criticism, journal articles, and reviews related to the theoretical framework of the study. This research focuses on the different characters in the selected works; their interactions, aspirations, distinct knowledge-systems and various worldviews based on their species-specific knowledge systems.

For this research, I build a nexus between Elizabeth Grosz's theorization of "bodies-cities" and Abbott's concept of "interpenetrating little worlds or sets of subcultures" providing opportunities of reimagining cityspaces as sites of revolt and liveability for all citizens. Grosz's idea of bodies-cities entails that urban bodies and cityspaces are mutually constitutive and hence can form and reform one another at any given time in history. Carl Abbott's conceptualization of creative futuristic urban spaces states that the unjust and neoliberal exclusionary spaces within a city can transform into more democratic and liberatory spaceswhen they function as mosaics of little worlds. This research engages with these concepts to foreground the malleability of Hossain's futuristic cities that become revised models of South Asian ecotopias in his work. My research foregrounds how this malleability can provide opportunities of revolt against neoliberal exclusionary policies of an ecological dystopia, garbed as an ecological utopia for all species and classes by the statesmen.

Furthermore, to engage with the human-nonhuman interactions and alliances in the selected texts, this study develops a theoretical framework combining Tschakert et al's conceptualization of multispecies justice, Christine Winter's concept of decolonial multispecies justice, and Anna Grear's theorization of decolonial new materialism. This nexus provides a channel to study Hossain's re-envisioned ecotopian spaces which prove to be emancipatory and just for all species, making his work non-anthropocentric and truly ecotopian in its essence and politics. This researchborrows Grear's concept of decolonial new materialism which in turn extends Jane Bennett's seminal work on new materialism. Grear finds affinities between the indigenous onto-epistemologies of more-than-human worlds and human/nonhuman relationalities. My research engages with this concept as it combines these voices with Tschakert et al's MSJ lens and Winter's decolonial MSJ lens to highlight the possibility of a climate-just

future via multispecies alliances, grounded in South Asian epistemologies and djinn lore, particularly coloured by Hossain's indigenous Bangladeshi understanding of this species.

1.6 Operational Definitions of Terms

This research engages with some critical terms that are being defined here for clarity of thought.

a) Speculative fiction

Speculative fiction is an umbrella term that encompasses science fiction, futuristic fiction, fantasy, dystopian and utopian fiction etc. R. B. Gill, while deliberating on the question—how to define speculative fiction—contends that "[s]peculative fiction envisions a systemically different world in which not only events are different, but causes operate by logics other than normal ones" (73). In this iteration, this genre departs from the narrative rules of realism; and explores alternate realities, life-forms, and timelines, often incorporating elements of fantasy, magic, imagination, extra-terrestrial life, and science fiction etc.

b) Science fiction

It is a genre of speculative fiction that portrays imaginative and futuristic concepts, often dealing with scientific or technological advancements. My research engages with the definitions and concepts of science fiction via Darko Suvin's conceptualization of this genre as "the literature of cognitive estrangement" (4). In a more elaborate version, Suvin contends that it is a genre "distinguished by the narrative dominance or hegemony of a fictional 'novum' (novelty, innovation) validated by cognitive logic" (63). Works of science fiction involve something that is not to be found in our current circumstances, such as extra-terrestrial life, interaction with alien beings, time travel, artificial intelligence, humanoid figures, robot mechanisms and technologically enhanced human capabilities, or other such staples of the genre. Science fiction, according to Suvin, differs from other subgenres of speculative fiction in that the 'novum' or innovation in its works is treated as "a natural rather than supernatural phenomenon, hence

validated by what he calls cognition or cognitive logic" (Envine 11).Magic and fantastical elements are hence not found in this genre.

c) Ecological utopia

Ecological utopia or ecotopia is a sub-genre of utopia that makes a sustainable relationship to the natural world central in the vision of an ideal society. This research analyses ecological utopias within Saad Z. Hossain's work by taking cue from ecological theorist, Marius de Geus's model of an ecological utopia as a "navigational compass" or a "politico-navigational compass" (190-1) that keeps (re)-orienting the decision-making bodies of a state towards temporally and spatially relevant ecological policies. Geus's conception advocates for the layout of an ecotopia that works in a "flexible, subtle, and gradual manner toward a generally more ecologically sound society" (191). Hence, ecotopias or ecological utopias are not fixed, apolitical or stagnant models of sustainable living.It further lays emphasis on the "relevance of ecotopias" for the contemporary political debates concerning development and sustainability of the society in the wake of rising climate concerns (192). Such a dynamic, politically charged and spatially relevant definition of an ecological utopia or ecotopia guides my reading of Hossain's portrayal of South Asian ecotopias within his works.

d) Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is an economic policy which imagines a perfected society operating on the principles of a free world market where the governments of different states do not intervene in or dictate the rules of trading. My research takes into consideration Raewyn Connell definition of neoliberalism as "the agenda of economic and social transformation under the sign of the free market that has come to dominate global politics", and which additionally includes "the institutional [re]-arrangements to implement this project" (22-3). A number of studies have recognized that these free markets essentially gain more potency by seizing control of

administrative, political and economic affairs from the hands of the government, and introducing an era of private corporatization.

e) Imperialism

Imperialism is a broad concept which encourages an unjust economic and political system. My research regards Vladimir Lenin's detailed study of imperialism which terms it as "the highest historical stage of … capitalism" ("Preface" 16). Lenin charts out the key features of an imperialist epoch which include "the concentration of production and monopolies" (20) and "the division of the world amongst capitalist cartels and the great powers" operating in a world market as opposed to a national market (112).According to Lenin, imperialism thus becomes the necessary and inevitable result of the logic of accumulation in late capitalism. Imperialism is a system where one nation exerts force and dominance over another, usuallyvia direct control or indirect influence. Neoliberalism thus can be studied as a tool of imperialism.

f) Neoliberal imperialism

Neoliberal imperialism refers to the form of imperialism driven by neoliberal policies, characterized by the rise of free-market capitalism, private corporatization and the fall of our governments' social welfare policies.Neoliberal imperialism evinces the "intimate ties between the neoliberal movement and the British Colonial Office" (Cornelissen 26), and further investigates "[t]he [neoliberal] trend towards privatization, deregulation and corporatization that … began in the post-colonies after the end of empire" (Koram 225). In this iteration, neoliberal imperialismbecomes a mechanism that protects the interest of the imperial forces within a region by exerting economic and political dominancethrough financial institutions, multinational corporations, and the promotion of specific cultural values favouring the capitalist policies of the global elite.

g) Decolonial South Asian futurism

This concept entails the contemporary imaginings of the multifarious and ambiguous futures for South Asian, ingrained in local and indigenous forms of struggle and resistance, delinked from Western/Eurocentric ideas of sustainable futuristic living for all species.My research takes cue from the emerging field of "South Asian futurisms", which Nudrat Kamal contends is concerned with "[f]inding utopias within dystopias" within a South Asian context(27). I extend Kamal's concept which does not encompass ideas of decoloniality, and hence strive to portray Hossain's ecotopias as spaces of 'decolonial South Asian futurisms'. This extended definition homes in on the decolonial re-visions of ecotopias, leading to the 'rebirth of the society' through the portrayal of interspecies alliances and decolonial multispecies justice via Christine Winter's interconnected triad of "all time/space/matter" (52).Decolonial South Asian futurism foregrounds locally published and imagined South Asian futuristic and science fiction which centres the locally situatedstruggles and indigenous epistemologies of South Asian citizens as opposed to Western imaginings of South Asian futures in the wake of the global climate crisis.

h) Interspecies alliances

This concept entails alliances between different species—human and nonhuman—that wilfully come together to tackle the exclusionary principles laying the foundation of futuristic societies within unjust ecotopias.My study engages with the defining traits of this concept via Jane Bennett's vital understanding of thing-power in the form of "conjunctions" or "the property of an assemblage" which, according to Bennett, leads to re-addressing our ecological thinking by foregrounding that all material bodies have relational ontologies ("The Force of Things" 353-4). Bennett contends that these relational ontologies keep overlapping in the wider web of the world. What surges to the front as a consequence is an intertwined web of multispecies "co-feeling or

sympathy" ("The Force of Things" 361) whose aim, I suggest, is establishing justice for all species in a climatically endangered South Asian landscape. Humans, animals, cyborgs, artificial intelligence, robots, spirits and djinns form alliances against the dominant social and political forces, jeopardizing the future for all the species in a climatically endangered world. Interspecies alliances thus pave the way for a harmonious mode of existence that has the potential of combatting climate crisis in a more efficient and egalitarian manner.

i) Decolonial multispecies justice

The framework of multispecies justice attempts to view all beings as relational instead of individualistic on earth. My research engages with this term via the crucial praxis of what decolonial theorist, Christine Winter, calls "decolonial multispecies justice" according to which "justice resides in the relationship [between humans and nonhumans], not the individual or species" (46). I further connect Winter's ideas with Petra Tschakert et al's "relational multispecies justice lens" which emphasizes the elements of"intersectionality", "inclusivity" and "response-abilities" (4-6) in imagining a more democratic and emancipatory model of ecotopia. Decolonial multispecies justice hence provides us with a framework to explore the relational ontologies of beings, interconnected and dependent on one another, based on indigenous South Asian ideas of justice for all species. It further encapsulates the cultural myths and alternate knowledge-systems of South Asia, portrayed through the human and nonhuman characters in the novels under study.

1.7 Significance of the study

My research contributes in identifying the ways in which South Asian fiction can provide alternate ways to engage with global climate change discourse by pitching in a South Asian decolonial tangent, ingrained in djinn lore and native Bangladeshi cultural and socio-political

concerns. My analysis of the re-presentations of South Asian urban futures highlights the reclamation of South Asian voices in imagining their futures their own way, and also adds indigenous egalitarian pathways of finding liveable futures for all species. Furthermore, my research calls for recognition of djinns as a separate species and as potent members of the more-than-human or non-human agency, pivotal in creating a just posthuman society.Being a member of the South Asian community, I intend to foreground the significance of the fiction of South Asian writers in voicing the concerns of their own communities, cultures and geographies. The critical representational strategies used by Saad Z. Hossain in his fiction enable me to underscore the urgency of including decolonial worldviews in sketching sustainable futures for all species on earth.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

While my focus remains on Bangladeshi texts, my research addresses climate concerns of South Asia at large. This approach is rationalized on the grounds that similar climate issues are mirrored in South Asian citieswhich are blemished by a consistent pessimistic portrayal in popular speculative and science fiction narratives around the globe. South Asia, the subregion of the Asian continent, geographically includes many countries India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.Flash floods, fatal heatwaves, rising sea levels, melting glaciers, disrupted ecosystems and depleting water resources are some of the common concerns of this region as it tackles the climate crisis[4].The shared challenges of climate change transcend the local topographies of these different countries within the South Asian region which guides

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[4] Germanwatch, in its report, "Global Climate Risk Index 2021", studies which countries suffer the most from extreme weather events related to climate change. The index highlights the shared climate concerns of these countries and ranks the top ten countries most affected by climate change consequences. Bangladesh and Pakistan are respectively the seventh and eighth ranked countries in this report considering the period 2000 to 2019, whereas India is ranked seventh in the year 2019. The report confirms that the South Asian region is at the risk of the increased perils of climate crisis ("Risk Index 2021", n.d.).

the overall argument of this research engaging with South Asian climate concerns via the study of ecotopias in Saad Z. Hossain's science fiction. I foreground that despite topographical differences between Bangladesh and all the other South Asian countries, the climate concerns and issues remain the same.

Engaging with the science fiction texts from all these different countries would have been a strenuous task and so, my research endeavours to highlight the shared climate concerns of all these countries by zooming in on Hossain's portrayal of Bangladeshi cities in particular. From Hossain's oeuvre, I have selected his novel, *Cyber Mage*; novellas, *The Gurkha and the Lord of Tuesday* and *Kundo Wakes Up*; and the short story, "Bring Your Own Spoon". His novel, *Djinn City*, has not been included in this study since it does not succinctly portray the revised models of ecotopias in its plot.*Djinn City* deals with the interactions between an imprisoned human and a djinn character who navigate an apocalyptic Bangladeshi city in the future. This novel does not portray the interspecies alliances and politics leading to the establishment of emancipatory and just ecotopias that my research aims to analyse.

1.8 Structure of the Study

My research is organized in five chapters.

Chapter 1, titled "Introduction", delineates the scope, background and itinerary of my argument. It also includes my topic area, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, methodology, and significance of the whole research.

Chapter 2, titled "Literature Review", outlines the review of existing scholarship related to this research, and it provides a critical overview and evaluation of the current body of research related to my area of investigation. This chapter has been divided into five sections. The first two sections include the scholarship on the defining traits and scope of the genres of utopias and

ecotopias. The third section deals with the exclusionary policies of ecotopias. The fourth chapter outlines the scholarship on interspecies alliances and multispecies justice while the last one incorporates the existing research of the selected fictional narratives of Hossain.

Chapter 3 titled "Ecotopian Re-visions: Carceral Cities to Creative Little Worlds", deals with the analysis of the selected fictional texts in terms of critiquing the neoliberal elitist contours of ecotopias and their ultimate failure to protect all the citizens and species of a state. By incorporating the mutually constitutive relationship between cities and bodies, Hossain envisages ecotopias within his fiction that allow for transformations within their policies and contours based on an osmosis of critical ideas and information for survival.

Chapter 4, titled "Multispecies Justice Leading to Decolonial South Asian Futurisms" builds upon the analysis of the selected texts to foreground alternative modes of existence that encourage the inclusion of more-than-human bodies and species in creating a climate-just urban future. It explores the metaphorical role of djinn in the critical process of re-envisioning ecological utopias. Furthermore, this chapter analyses the entanglements between different species in terms of their lived experiences, knowledges and hopes for a more egalitarian future for all beings on earth.

Chapter 5 is the "Conclusion" which provides a conclusion for the entire research, and focuses on the findings and the further scope of my research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of and traces the gaps in the existing study of ecological utopias vis-a-vis their neoliberal imperialist configurations. In this chapter, I first outline the theoretical formations of ecotopia as a subgenre of speculative and futuristic fiction. I also discuss the significance of the inception of this subgenre in political theory and philosophy. By examining its emancipatory potential,I underscore the status of speculative and science fiction as a counter-narrative to the inevitable apocalyptic imaginations, sprouting from the current analysis of the global climate crisis. Following this, I map out the unjust exclusionary practices emanating from ecotopias—despite their liberatory blueprint as a genre—by bringing to the fore the neoliberal and imperialist policies inherent in them. Furthermore, this chapter underscores the pivotal role of multispecies alliances and harmony in the establishment of an egalitarian emancipatory ecotopian society through a review of scholarship in this domain.

2.1 The Literary Configurations of Utopia and Dystopia

It may be hazarded that Utopian Thinking (UT) surfaced from the 1516 publication of Thomas More's eponymous *Utopia* that highlighted the perils of the rise of capitalism in a post-feudal English society and prophesied a "fictional island society, a 'no place'" with Christian social ideals (Rast 13,14). More's *Utopia* is characteristic of Annette Giesecke and Naomi Jacobs's contention that utopias are "good places" but they "have not and will never exist" since the word "'utopia' is a neologism evoking both *eutopia* (Greek for 'good place') and *outopia* (Greek for 'no place')" (6). Such positive utopias proliferated early utopian fiction focusing on 'arcadian' representations of ideal societies. Resultantly, a key theme that is threaded throughout the

literary tradition of early utopian thought seems to be the "vagueness about location [in] these alternative communities" constructed as "eutopias" which in turn helps "authors [to] critique their own society by offering social, political, legal, and ethical contrasts with these idealized, unattainable alternatives" (Murphy 478). Hence, the earliest Western literary representations of utopias were embedded in the narrative of hope for a more sustainable and equitable future for humanity.

Gradually, by the end of the 19th century, utopianism evolved from being a genre, initially dedicated to building ideal imaginary places of social and political order and peace, into a "prognostic genre" (Schaer 5), or an "anticipatory genre" (Rast 14) that predicted coming history here on earth.Abandoning the "idealism generally characteristic of the eighteenth century utopian fiction", the utopias of 20th century took a "critical turn" while homing in on the socio-political concerns of the 1960s and 1970s that encompassed "demands for change in the areas of global exploitation (the 'Third World problem,' ecological exploitation), gender inequality, race inequality, and class antagonism" (Rogan 310, 313). Tom Moylan reads the literary utopias of this age as "critical utopias" which question the role of state policies in building a liveable society in the future while being connected with the socio-political realities of a state. Peter Fritting contends in a similar vein that "'critical utopias' of the 1970s were often perceived as outlining the essential components of a better society … or at a minimum, to give the reader an indication of what needed to be changed in her own society (to make the world a better place)" (136-37). Critical utopians' imagination and promise of ideal futuristic spaces of survival and progress for all humans were hence coupled with a critique on the real-time socio-political policies and environmental choices of a specific state, that then underscored a pedagogical tone in their utopias. Hossain's portrayal of Bangladeshi futuristic cities echoes the concerns and

principles of critical utopias as it conjoins a call for building more egalitarian spaces to live with a critique on the state policies combating climate disaster.

Several studies indicate that utopian thinking or utopianism, marked by its prophetic enterprises for the future of earth, transformed to include a contestation between narratives on "the dream and the nightmare, paradise and disaster, 'eutopia' and 'anti-utopia'" (Schaer 5), or more simply, between "utopian (optimistic) and anti-utopian (pessimistic) writings" (Rast 14). One of the prominent debates in 20th century scholarship on utopianism is structured around a continuous fictional and theoretical dispute between utopias and dystopias. Critical to point out here is the distinction between anti-utopia and dystopia. Existing scholarship on anti-utopias reveals their theoretical conception as "the anti, saying that the idea of utopia itself is wrong and bad", and that utopia would eventually create "an intended or unintended totalitarian state" ("Dystopias Now", n.d.), and so anti-utopianism finds fault with the very genre of utopia itself. Dystopian thinking contrarily anticipates an inevitable bleak future for human society as observed in the seminal dystopian fictions namely Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984*. A relevant description of dystopias can be summarized as

> [T]he new, it warns us, is not always the better. 'Progress' is not automatic, and may be dangerous. What benefits the few may harm the many. Machines may devour us. So many corporations or revolutionaries. Hurtling towards an uncertain but clearly perilous future […] The task of the literary dystopia, then, is to warn us against and educate us about real-life dystopias (Claeys 501).

Literary dystopias were imagined as a result of the postwar doom and the global destruction of natural resources in the three decades after World War II. Lisa Garforth, in her essay on "green utopias", contends that "[e]nvironmental thought since the late 1960s has been

strongly associated with prophecies of doom, apocalyptic predictions, and dystopian scenarios", suggesting that dystopian fiction, imbricated with environmental concerns, was introduced as a genre in the late 1960s (393). However, a deeper insight into the study of the chronological publications of the dystopian imaginations of an ecologically unstable and defiled planet reveals that dystopia was conceived and theorized as a genre, addressing environmental crises, before the 1960s. Anthony Matarazzo, in his in-depth study of the ecological history of dystopia, postulates "the co-emergence of dystopianism and environmentalism in the roughly three decades after World War II" (2), that is before the quintessential decades of the 1960s and 1970s that were deemed as the tipping point of the introduction of ecological utopias in literary theory and fiction. Matarazzo refers to the postwar period as the "Great Acceleration" that manifested in the form of "an unparalleled access to and expansion of energy sources" even in the aftermath of the nuclear horrors of two world wars (5). This "Great Acceleration" inspired dystopian fictions in the postwar period, addressing the inevitable apocalyptic collapse of the planet and an erasure of all its resources. Dystopian visions thus put into focus the need to take prompt actions to retaliate climate change, but, as Tobias Rast highlights, they "illustrate that there are larger forces, such as capitalism or imperialism, that keep the collective from this important realization; the result is a dystopian future that is, thus, inevitable" (39). Despite the fact that dystopian representations of South Asian cities sit well with an international readership, Hossain takes on the more laborious decolonial task of building utopian cities within the side-lined tapestry of the Third World. His fiction thus contributes in eradicating the dearth of decolonial South Asian texts by re-canvassing South Asian futuristic spaces as sites of hopeful egalitarian co-living where different species and classes cohabitate and share the same resources for a sustainable living experience.

Literary dystopias "reject [both the] blueprint and dream" (Rogan 313) of a better society that are deemed as foundational features of utopia, and serve as "powerful tool[s] of political criticism" about the society that they are situated in (Heise n.d.). Environmental theorist, Ursula Heise posits that "[d]ystopia as a literary genre by and large developed in the 20th century, in the shadow of world wars, totalitarianisms, genocides, and looming threats of nuclear war and environmental crisis" ("What's the Matter" n.d.). This socio-political background proves pivotal in understanding the bleak themes defining this genre. Tracing these key themes in classic dystopian speculative and science fiction novels, Graham J. Murphy highlights "Yevgeny Zamyatin's critiqueof totalitarian rationalization in *We*, condemnation of consumer capitalism in *Brave New World*, and George Orwell's censure of nightmarish government power in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*" (474) in futuristic spaces. Murphy reads these "dystopian nightmares" as narratives of "technological dependency, dehumanization, and the sacrifice of ideas" (474) with heightened surveillance systems of governance inspired by Jeremy Bentham's idea of the panopticon. Such nightmarish representations of the future inform dystopian texts to this day and contribute to the understanding of this subgenre of SFF as "negative utopia" (473). This statement is upholstered by Olivia Bina et al's cross-disciplinary and qualitative study of techno-utopias functioning as dystopias in speculative and futuristic fiction in which they posit that "[t]he dystopian consequences of elite rule through advanced technology and the imposition of a strictly rational and controlled social order are pervasive features of the future urban worlds imagined in fiction" (8). My research departs from this seminal yet excessively depressing and pessimistic discussion of dystopia and anti-utopia, and instead zeroes in on the utopian configurations in Hossain's work. I analyse how Saad Hossain's fictional texts, despite illustrating elements of dystopia, abound with utopian underpinnings. In this way, Hossain's futuristic fiction moves away from an

acquiescent acknowledgment and acceptance of the dystopian future, and seeks ways to envision more equitable and optimistic futures for all the species on earth.

2.2 The Liberatory Potential of Ecotopia

In response to the pessimistic depictions of the future of life on earth in dystopian fiction, ecological utopias envision an optimistic portrayal of futuristic societies, embedded in hopeful socio-ecological plans of creating harmony amongst the human and nonhuman actants on earth. Their purpose to do so is to foreground the possibility of altering the planetary future, and to counter the dormant acceptance of the ecological doomsday—the prevalent theme in dystopian fiction. Rast places emphasis on this agentic potency of ecotopias while contending that "eco/utopian thinking specifically is valuable and may even be seen as the key to the gridlock in the fight against anthropocentric climate change" (12). Ecological utopias or ecotopias—both fictionalized in critically and publicly acclaimed novels, and densely theorized in social and political theory—provide blueprints for alternate societies and worlds in the future, thus paving the way to move beyond dystopias.

In this thesis, I argue that the literary act of (re)envisioning the foundations and operating principles of ecotopias provides the groundwork for an emancipatory model of a futuristic society. In order to explore this, I present an overview of literature on ecotopianism or ecotopian thinking as a literary, philosophical and political enterprise, critiquing the ongoing climate chaos, and initiating the debate on finding possible ways to curb climate disasters. Tracing a genealogy of the intersection between utopian imagination and the configuration of ecological utopias, in the 1960s and 1970s, I analyse both fictional and theoretical contributions stemming from the postwar period[5], and operating amidst rising global consciousness about the climate crisis[6].

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[5] The postwar period denotes the three decades succeeding World War I and II, that include 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* and *Ecotopia Emerging*, Aldous Huxley's *Island*, Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*[7] are deemed to be some of the first canonical ecotopian texts, envisioned in the literary form. Together with trailblazing environmental tracts like Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and Edward Goldsmith's *A Blueprint for Survival*, also published in the 1960s and 1970s respectively, these texts lay the foundations of ecological social theory, "one of the great inheritances of 1970s, a storehouse of ideas and attitudes that feeds much of the ecological consciousness of today" (Kumar 558). In the succeeding decades, literary theorists and political philosophers joined the chorus of these voices and consolidated the necessity of theorizing "ecosophical values and ecological concepts to imagine alternative social structures" (Hubbell 96) that prove to be more inclusive and egalitarian for all the species on earth.

Ecotopias represented in SFF have been characteristic of an antagonism, or at the very least, a speculation towards the use of technology, and "the complex interaction between big government and big corporations, with the former serving the interests of the latter" (Sheehan 2,3). Analysing the ecological anxieties and hopes reflected in literary ecotopias, Anne L. Melano highlights that "[u]topian anxiety in ecological utopias is largely directed at the forces impoverishing the biosphere, whether framed as industrialization, consumerism or capitalism

[6]Two international conferences, organized by the United Nations in the postwar period, set the stage for debates on rising climate concerns in the wake of depleting natural resources as a result of human activities. "In 1949, the UN Scientific Conference on the conservation and utilization of resources (Lake Success, New York, 17 August to 6 September) was the first UN body to address the depletion of [natural] resources and their use … Held in Stockholm, Sweden from 5 to 16 June 1972, the UN Scientific Conference, also known as the First Earth Summit, adopted a declaration that set out principles for the preservation and enhancement of the human environment, and an action plan containing recommendations for international environmental action" ("From Stockholm to Kyoto").

[7] The years of publication of these fictional narratives on ecotopia are significant in that they align with the theoretical inception of neoliberalism, i.e., the 1960s and 1970s. This will be further explored in the literature review as I foreground the connection between ecotopias and neoliberalism.

itself, and whether with or without technology as the source or the magnifier" (448). Ecotopian fiction thus calls into question the devastating ecological imprint of economic growth—pedalled by technology and capitalism—on earth. Callenbach's *Ecotopia* is engrained in this antagonistic approach towards economic growth at the expense of climate crisis. Deemed as the pioneer ecotopian text underpinning the "unease with bigness, technology and bureaucracy" against the backdrop of "anti-establishment protests … in the USA", *Ecotopia* advocates for the establishment of "small, self-reliant nations" or "mini-cities" that "can best manage sociocultural, economic and ecological processes sustainably" (Sheehan 2-4). Commenting on this anti-technology and anti-bureaucratic sentiment in *Ecotopia*, Monika Bregović and Miranda Iossifidis posit that the early ecotopian fictions mainly centered on a return to "nature [considered] as a space of phenomenological dwelling and comfort" (8). In this light, ecotopian representations of the future societies advocate for the nature-human harmony that is lost in a highly technologized and artificially stimulated world today.

Theorists like Peter Ruppert, Anne Cranny-Francis and Tom Moylan argue that all utopian thinking is marked by "open-endedness […] agency, dynamism and the free play of dream and desire" (Garforth 397). Ecotopian theorists envision an ecologically sound society in the light of such characteristics of utopian thinking. Marius de Geus, affirming that an ecotopian ideal is far from creating a "fixed, abstract final goal", develops a model of an ecological utopia as a "navigational compass" or a "politico-navigational compass" (190-1) that keeps (re)-orienting the decision-making bodies of a state towards temporally and spatially relevant ecological policies. Geus's conception advocates for the layout of an ecotopia that works in a "flexible, subtle, and gradual manner toward a generally more ecologically sound society" (191). It further lays emphasis on the "relevance of ecotopias" for the contemporary political debates

concerning development and sustainability of the society in the wake of rising climate concerns (192). Hence, ecotopias can only be approached and theorized in the light of the 'relevant' climate concerns of an era and a space, and consequently, the spatio-temporally 'relevant' plans of action to imagine and sustain them. My research takes hint from the "transformative and the self-critique inducing function" (Rast 17) of ecotopias to peruse how Hossain's texts envisage ecotopias—imagined in Bangladeshi cities—as spaces continuously altering their political and civil policies to adapt to the rising socio-ecological concerns of particularly South Asia. Several scholars in this field have highlighted two major themes in Global South SF as a genre, which can then, by default, be projected onto South Asian SF as well. These themes encompass a "decentering of the West as the singular site and progenitor of futurity" and further placing the "original and striking futures [of the Global South] – utopian, dystopian, ambiguous, and/or ambivalent – at the center of its SF worldbuilding" (Connell 682). Hossain's fiction builds upon these themes as he foregrounds the significance of adding alternate voices of the djinns as a species that are 'relevant' to the Bangladeshi mythology and epistemic consciousness as opposed to taking cues from the SF of the Global North. My study entails how this decolonial strategy orchestrates the concept of multispecies justice which is crucial to Hossain's process of envisaging decolonial futuristic spaces in Bangladesh.

In a similar strain, Nuno Coelho's ambitious project, *Ecotopia: A Sustainable Vision for a Better Future*, conceptualized and executed in the form of recording interviews, and documenting 'dissenting' answers from twenty-one experts from different fields like eco-philosophy, social sciences, sustainable development, green economics etc, provides further impetus for analyzing ecotopia as a dynamic "process" and not an "end-state" (76, 137, 154). David Pepper argues, along the same line, that "to be truly progressive, rather than lapsing into

reactionary fantasy, ecotopias need to emphasize heuristic spaces and *processes* rather than laying down blueprints" (18; emphasis added). Thus, the scholarship of such eco-theorists calls for the recognition of diverse versions of ecotopias, grounded in geographically and culturally relevant ideas of imagining an ecologically sound and just society. Hossain's texts engage in such an endeavour as they explore the dynamic and evolving contours of ecotopias beyond the blueprints of Western scholarship that dictate the pessimistic marginalized roles of South Asian cities as acquiescent receptors of ecological degradation in the future. In this study, I explore how Hossain borrows the indigenous mythological concept of djinns as conscious beings, and extends their decolonial agency in manifesting cities grounded in multispecies justice.

Ecotopian thinking, since the 1960s, has proven valuable in shaping and reshaping public policies and political theory. It achieves this through its "function as a useful diagnostic and analytic instrument" that poses the fundamental questionof "how far ecological problems are rooted in the current economic, social, and political structures and whether they are 'inherent' to the very organization and structure of society" (Geus 196). Thus, ecotopias present a multi-faceted and critical view of the policies that shape a society, and their imprint on our ecological futures, and further inspire the creations of communities living in harmony with the environment. Callenbach's ecotopia manifests today in the form of "intentional communities, ecovillages, co-housing, co-living and communes" ("Community Types", n.d.) that value sustainability and harmony over capitalist and liberal progress, ingrained in anthropocentric hubris. The thesis at hand thus takes cue from these ecotopian configurations to posit that Hossain's portrayal of ecotopia is embedded in the afore-stated dynamic liberatory principles as it morphs into a multi-species utopia, opening its channels to all basic rights of survival and thriving for all the species and classes of the society.

2.3 Neoliberal Exclusionary Practices in Ecotopias

In my thesis, I argue that within ecotopias, which were initially configured as a liberatory model of co-living with the nonhuman agencies of our planet, some marginalized classes and species represented in the futuristic societies suffer due to the neoliberal imperialist practices carried out by the state-sanctioned corporations and organizations. In order to explore this line of thought, I map out the connection of ecotopia with neoliberal imperialism with the aim of providing a better understanding into how these two are linked. I further carve out the decolonial retaliatory potential of South Asian ecotopias in countering the exclusionary political practices of neoliberal imperialist ecotopias, configured via colonial comprehensions and aspirations of ecotopian societies.

Raewyn Connell defines neoliberalism as "the agenda of economic and social transformation under the sign of the free market that has come to dominate global politics", and which additionally includes "the institutional [re]-arrangements to implement this project" (22-3). A number of studies have recognized that these free markets essentially gain more potency by seizing control of administrative, political and economic affairs from the hands of the government, and introducing an era of private corporatization in which the rules of trade are solely defined by the wealthy, and particularly, the more informed in the age of techno-orientalism[8].

Prior research in this area suggests that initially accentuating the significance of a non-regulated participation of an individual in the global market, neoliberalism transformed to

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[8]Techno-orientalism, a term first defined in David Morley and Kevin Robins's *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes, and Cultural Boundaries* critiques the "West's project of securing dominance [over the East and especially Asia] as architects of the future", a project Western think tanks carry out "in the wake of neoliberal trade policies that enabled greater flow of information and capital between the East and the West" (S. Roh et al. 2).

become a mechanism of exclusion at different levels of human existence (Bailey 2, 4). It worked as a "Neoliberal Utopia of Exclusion" (10) that advances a worldview predicated on a series of exclusions – intellectual, [politico-]economic and moral. Invoking David Harvey's scholarship on "spaces of hope", Bailey contends that initially, the neoliberal utopia was configured as "a utopia of *social process*" that seeks the realization of a "perfected social order" (3). Viewed against the backdrop of forming a profitable competitive market environment as opposed to the confined marketspace with limited and highly regulated resources offered by the government, this neoliberal agenda presented itself as a harbinger of an ideally peaceful society, utopian in its contours. The idea of a perfect society that neoliberalism ventures to formulate in the name of the free market, however, becomes a profit-driven arena of social activity where atomized subjects, selfish in their resilience and resourcefulness, work for the fulfilment of their own individual goals. As a consequence of this "ontological exclusion", social relations among citizens and ethics that value life over monetary gains are vehemently and unanimously disregarded (4, 5). A "disembedding of market relations from other forms of human social activity" (Polanyi 68, 80) occurs as a result of this ontological exclusion, precipitating a nonchalance regarding all the social relations and social activities, as well as the costs not directly affecting market transactions like ecological damage and environmental disaster. My research builds on this critical scholarship on neoliberalism in order to analyse the exclusionary futuristic marketspaces in Hossain's fiction and their role in laying the groundwork for inequity amongst the citizens and species across varying spectra. In this light, Iscrutinize how the governments in his futuristic cities facilitate the invasion of multinational corporations and biotechnology firms in ecotopian policy-making while capitalizing on human bodies,

hierarchizing cityspaces based on class differences, and dissolving the state of Bangladesh into private city corporations in the name of providing refuge against climate disasters.

Another significant concept addressing my research concerns is imperialism. Vladimir Lenin terms imperialism as "the highest historical stage of … capitalism" in his pamphlet ("Preface" 16). He charts out the key features of an imperialist epoch which include "the concentration of production and monopolies" (20) and "the division of the world amongst capitalist cartels and the great powers" operating in a world market as opposed to a national market(112). Prior research on imperialism demonstrates that it transformed from being a system of military control and sovereignty over foreign territories by an empire to a systematic process of economic exploitation[9]. In the early twentieth-century, imperialism was poignantly deemed as "a product and corollary of capitalism" that "created a need for [European] states [and America] to secure control over foreign territories" (Kettell and Sutton 244) like India and South Africa with the aim of seizing resources for an expanding industrial-capitalist economy in the lands of the colonizers. However, the classic imperial age of Europe and America was shattered by the political, economic, and military upheavals that ensued in the first half of the twentieth-century, and that later paved the way for struggles for decolonization of native lands, economy and political systems[10].

Neoliberal imperialism rises in the backdrop of such historic events and lays the groundwork for new forms of seizing control over the developing and underdeveloped nations,

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[9] This shift in the understanding of imperialism is attributed to one of the pioneer researchers of imperialism, Vladmir Lenin. His pamphlet, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism", provides a detailed account of the shifting trends in imperialism after the First World War.

[10] Lars Cornelissen points out that the process of decolonization or the "end of empire […] had only just started when the neoliberal movement was going through its most formative period", and so "neoliberalism was forged against the background of anti-colonial struggle" (5). He goes on to state that it was "unsurprising, then, that the end of [the] European empire loomed large over early neoliberal thought" (6).

as well as competing with the rising economies of the world. Review of literature on neoliberal imperialism evinces the "intimate ties between the neoliberal movement and the British Colonial Office" (Cornelissen 26), and further investigates "[t]he [neoliberal] trend towards privatization, deregulation and corporatization that … began in the post-colonies after the end of empire" (Koram 225). While invoking Gann and Duignan's spirited defence of Europe's colonial history in their advocacy of neoliberal imperialism, Cornelissen comments that for neoliberal scholars, "[f]rom a neoliberal perspective, the colonial era brought Westernization, which brought marketization, the surest sign that *civilization* had finally taken root" (18-20; emphasis added). In the light of this reported literature, it is conceivable that neoliberal imperialism, in the process of developing conditions for the running of free markets in postcolonial states, framed a strong critique of the idea and politics of decolonization. My study focuses on the antagonistic nature of neoliberal imperialist strategies of ecotopias against the decolonial frameworks of re-envisaging ecotopias in Hossain's work. I unpack this antagonism while engaging with Hossain's depiction of multinational corporations as agents of neoliberal imperialism that supervise Bangladeshi geography after dividing it into smaller, more manageable private city corporations.

The fact that the entire school of thought advocating for this new form of politico-economic liberalism emanated specifically from the publications and ideas of European scholars, and mainly carried out its scholarly analyses in Europe and the United States[11], raises pertinent questions on the fundamental principle of inclusivity in the blueprint of a liberated and free society that neoliberalism advocates for. I take issue with this exclusionary tangent of the history

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[11] The core idea running through Cornelissen's work is excavating the history of the most prominent neoliberals such as Herbert Frankel, Lewis Gann and Peter Duignan, as "advisors to, researchers in, or teachers for the colonial services" (10). Cornelissen posits via establishing this relation between neoliberal thinkers and the British Colonial Office that "the fledgling neoliberal project was not just supportive of but closely enmeshed with the British imperial project" (10).

of neoliberalism and analyse the voices deliberately ignored in its global propagation via my emphasis on Bangladeshi, and by extension South Asian, futuristic fiction in my research. Such neoliberal exclusionary practices, erasing the voices of the majority of common stakeholders in global economic policies, infiltrates ecotopian thinking and theorization, and thus precipitates the lack of narratives from different species, classes and races in imagining the alternative and sustainable futures of 'our' earth (Bagchi 586). My thesis, in this regard, focuses on the neoliberal unjust policies of ecotopias—theorized and conceptualized by global scholars—by foregrounding their scholarly negligence towards the voices in climate-informed policymaking. I trace this discriminatory tangent in the latest contribution of ecological thinkers and scholars to the ever-expanding ecological social theory, via "An Ecomodernist Manifesto", ingrained in a 21st century narrative of environmental protection as "the Earth … enter[s] a new geological epoch: the Anthropocene, the Age of Humans" (6, 31). This manifesto, conceived as a framework of an "ecomodernist utopia" (Arias-Maldonado 9), advocates the process of "decoupling human development [… and] well-being from environmental impacts" and "destruction of nature" (7, 11, 18) to achieve a utopian vision for the society. Making the case for an increased use of "social, economic, and *technological* powers to make life better for people, [and] stabilize the climate" ("Manifesto" 6, emphasis added), the second proposition of the manifesto overlooks technology, or by extension science, via-a-vis its project of "sanction[ing] the domination of … nature" and becoming the root of "our current environmental dilemma" (13). It further glosses over the fundamental queries regarding the ownership, devising and access of these technologies, while simultaneously failing to take into account the history of science as a quintessentially narrow western imperial project of domination over European and American colonies[12].

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[12] A detailed analysis of science, devised and propagated as a colonial tool of obtaining mastery

Conceived predominantly by male white Western scholars, with the exception of only one Indian and one black scholar out of its twenty-seven contributors, this ecotopian manifesto enacts neoliberal imperialist exclusionism by way of its three key propositions. To begin with, the manifesto's proposition of "decoupling human development from environmental impacts" (7) which culminates in its motto of "[n]ature unused is nature spared" (19) drastically ignores the inherent interconnectedness of various life forms on earth, which in turn precipitates an anthropocentric understanding of varying cultures and life forms on our planet. Such a Western conception of ecotopia is a stark contrast to the South Asian utopias, imagined by trailblazing utopian writers like Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and Rabindranath Tagore, that are based on a radical breakdown of "different kinds of hierarchies" (Bagchi 587) as a pre-requisite for an all-inclusive society.

Critiquing the second proposition of the manifesto, I posit that a South Asian perspective, contrarily, is rooted in a harmonious relationship of technology and ecotopian imaginations as evinced in Rokeya Hossain's "Ladyland", a utopian city envisioned in her prototypal story "Sultana's Dream", which deploys "scientific knowledge in order to work *with* nature for society's benefit" (Kamal 20, emphasis added). Lastly, the manifesto becomes counterproductive as it deems the perpetuation of modernization, in terms of its "long-term evolution of social, economic, political, and technological arrangements in human societies toward vastly improved material well-being … [and] personal freedom" ("Manifesto" 28), as a vital component of ecotopias. Consequently, it calls for the "continuation of liberal-capitalism" as opposed to its condemnation and rejection, which lay the groundwork for a just model of ecotopia (Arias-

over the colonized subjects, can be found in the works of Vandana Shiva, Arturo Escobar and Sandra Harding. Roy MacLeod calls this Western enterprise "colonial science" and outlines it as "science *for* empire, science *in* empire, and science *within* the experience of colonial government" (91), operating to dominate the colonial subject.

Maldonado 9). Linking this discriminatory and deficient scholarship to the promising agency of South Asian ecotopias, I look into the contours and aspirations of South Asian ecotopian thinking, how it addresses South Asian concerns in the global debates on climate change, and how it becomes a decolonial tool of resistance by reverting to alternate indigenous knowledge systems.

In a similar strain, I take issue with the lack of inclusion of Asian, and specifically South Asian, voices in Coelho's aforementioned multi-disciplinary approach towards laying the framework for a productive model of an ecological utopia via the deliberations of "experts from three continents, Africa, America and Europe" (10). Coelho's venture is emblematic of the overall scarce number of contributions from the Global South, mainly from South Asia, in the field of ecotopian thinking. I read this discriminatory scholarship as a neoliberal cultural and discursive ploy, deployed by the scholarly practices and policies of the Global North. This exclusion or erasure of South Asian narratives in theorizing a rising contemporary and critically significant field of ecotopian thinking interests me because it succinctly fleshes out two particular questions that this literature review seeks to answer. Firstly, it enquires 'whose' ecotopian vision is acknowledged and acclaimed by the scholars and policymakers, concerned with investigating and measuring the efficacy and agency of ecotopias. Secondly, it analyses what a South Asian perspective has to offer in the global imagination of ecotopias. My research thus explores South Asian ecotopian fiction and its agentic role in positing the importance of South Asian landscape as "a site of political struggle" to "understand [and fight] climate change" (Fiskio 13). This research endeavours to engage with the possibilities of imagining more potent and liberatory models of ecotopias situated in a South Asian landscape.

2.4 Interspecies Alliances for a Multispecies Justice

In the previous sections, I presented an overview of literature on the foundational emancipatory configurations of ecotopias that are undermined by and become complicit with neoliberal imperialist policies, making them uninhabitable for some marginalized groups in a futuristic society. I also focused on the potential of South Asian ecotopianism as a decolonial tool of resistance against the western imagination and politics of ecotopias. In this section, I highlight the studies indicating the decolonial potential of ecotopias that decentres humans in the discourse on climate justice. Postulating that utopias "will include more-than-human others" (457) in their frameworks, Melano highlights that "a range of interactions are possible between utopia and these others, reflecting utopia's ecological and socio-political assumptions, hopes, or anxieties" (457). Eric C. Otto, in his study of science fiction and the green speculations arising from them, argues that '[t]he societies imagined in … ecotopias avow both the intrinsic value of nonhuman nature—its value apart from its utility for humans—and the importance for humans to act within, not outside of, natural dictates" (48). His argument lays bare ecotopia's model of a multispecies just society that is grounded in an acknowledgment of the undeniable value of all species beyond the anthropocentric idea of allocating a consumerist value to nonhuman species. Hence, without a discussion of these more-than-human agents, ecotopian thought subsequently falls short of envisioning a better and more sustainable future on earth for all the species, especially human beings.

Through a close examination of the posthuman encounters across various scales between different species in Hossain's texts, this research calls for the recognition and inclusion of other- and more-than-human species in the attainment of a "more-than-human solidarity" from which "a project of hope, justice, and responsibility can emerge" (Tschakert 15). Climate or

multispecies justice, in this iteration, becomes a decolonial ecological discourse emanating from the Global South, building on the practice of "renewing [indigenous] knowledges" that involve "renewing relationships with humans and nonhumans and restoring reciprocity among the relatives (i.e., the [human and nonhuman] parties to the relationships)" (Whyte 5). Whyte terms this process "*renewing relatives*, as it involves both restoring persisting relationships [between humans and nonhumans, or other- and more-than humans] that are part of longstanding Indigenous heritages…[and] also creating new relationships that support Indigenous peoples' mobilizing to address climate change" (5) which is deemed an "intensified episode of colonialism" (4).

Tracing the roots of multispecies justice takes us back to the conceptions of climate justice, and further back to those of environmental justice. David Schlosberg and Lisette B. Collin's scholarship on the historical transformation of environmental justice movements to climate justice movements provides a thorough analysis of their inception and influence at a glocal level (370). Environmental justice movements entail, inter alia, the ideas of environmental racism—the exclusion of people of colour from the socio-political decision-making sphere— while simultaneously taking cues from the indigenous environmental movements positing "the interdependence of all species" (360-1). Climate justice surges to the front when "disruptions of ecosystems" (367), caused by climate crises, are taken into consideration, especially in the post-Katrina[13] period. Advocating for the "transfer of resources from those responsible for the injustice of climate change to those most vulnerable to it", climate justice movements take cues from the "cultural practices" of Indigenous communities, as evinced in the most recent climate

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[13] Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, a coastal city in the US, in 2005. It is understood as an "influential [factor] in the development of the intersection of environmental and climate justice" which further "laid the groundwork for expanding concerns about climate vulnerability and disaster relief, and helped environmental justice activists make connections with other communities threatened by climate change" (362).

justice conference termed the "Cochabamba conference" (367). By doing so, the discourse on climate justice focuses on the knowledge systems of the indigenous groups or entities which lay the groundwork of my research.

While both the movements of justice advocate the inclusion of the nonhuman voices and ecological concerns in their discourse, they do not explicitly entail the need of a non-anthropocentric orientation of approach towards constructing a just society for all species —the principal theoretical clause of multispecies justice. Krithika Srinivasan and Alasdair Cochrane, while contributing to "Justice Through a Multispecies Lens", propose a move from "anthropocentric to sentientist justice" (489)by dint of which "[h]umans [become] one among many creatures who inhabit this planet, and…share with nonhuman others certain risks and vulnerabilities that underpin [their] embodied existence" (492). Such a perspective diverts the spotlight from an anthropocentric view—tainting the environmental and climate justice discourse—and sheds equal light on the agents, alongside humans, inhabiting the earth and demanding justice grounded in their "shared vulnerabilities", complicating "the implicit prioritization of human interests (or, specifically, the interests of privileged humans)" (492) in environmental and climate justice movements. I intend to engage with this tangent of multispecies justice as I foreground Hossain's vision of Bangladeshi ecotopias as characteristic of overlapping sites of the coming together of different species, sharing flavours of their distinct lifeworlds, but never allowing an anthropocentric mastery of the nonhuman worlds.

Another crucial postulation of multispecies justice is the indigenous-led decolonial approach—ingrained in indigenous knowledge systems—towards forming an equitable society for all forms of life and being on earth. Sria Chatterjee and AstridaNeimanis opine how knowledge, and specifically scientific knowledge, "since the sixteenth century …. has been the

touchstone of western civilization [and] the terms [or constructions] 'western' and 'civilization' … are key to the making of knowledge systems since the enlightenment" (494). Subsequently, they contend that "historians of science among other philosophers and thinkers have all pointed out that modes of 'knowing' were inseparable from broader goals of mastery of nature" (Chatterjee &Neimanis 494), and by extension, all the nonhuman voices surrounding the humans. The argument here is that the strands of socio-politico-ontological knowledge that influence environmental and climate justice movements are tainted by the racist, anthropocentric colonial knowledge that cannot envision and enact what Chatterjee and Neimanis call "intimacy without mastery" (493) in terms of "engagement with other lifeworlds" (494). A move away from the colonially-informed, and hence capitalist-led struggle[14] for formulating a just society in the aftermath of ecological crises redirects us towards a decolonial framework that is rooted in the call for 'unity in diversity' across different indigenous knowledge systems.

A closer analysis of Schlosberg and Collin's scholarship and Celermajer et al's postulations in "Critical Exchange" reveals that couched within their purported claims to justice across all species is their scholarly amnesia towards South Asian contributions to multispecies justice. Schlosberg and Collin's engagement with the socio-political agendas entailed in international and indigenous conferences[15] falls short of agency in multispecies justice discourse as South Asian onto-epistemological configurations of a relational and interconnected world that

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[14] This comment is informed by the compelling argument around the complicity of knowledge, capitalism and colonialism in the project of upholding mastery over the colonized peoples and the nonhuman agencies in our interconnected ecologies that can be studied in Rosi Braidotti's scholarship on "anti-humanism". She posits anti-humanism as a retaliation against the "Vitruvian ideal of Man as the standard of both perfection and perfectibility" in the age of European Enlightenment (16-25).

[15] Conferences and movements noted in their study include US movement's 1991 Principles of Environmental Justice, Corpwatch's 2000 Climate Justice Summit in The Hague, International Climate Justice Network's 2002 Bali Principles, Durban Group for Climate Justice's 2004 Durban Declaration, and World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, in Cochabamba, Bolivia in 2010 (366-7).

all species co-habit are left out of their study. Throughout their research, they repeatedly tease out the connection of knowledges and movements with multispecies justice (360-1, 366) and yet fail to conceive a more wholesale approach towards the role of South Asian indigeneity in envisioning a just world for all species. The contributions of scholars in Celermajer et al's "Critical Exchange" chart a similar South Asian scholarly exclusion even when the contributing scholars underscore that colonial and its concomitant racist legacies impede the pathways towards a just multispecies society (493-8, 508). Piqued by this under-theorized area and guided by Haraway's poignant remark that "effective multispecies environmental justice must be as much about play, *storytelling*, and joy as about work, critique, and pain" (102, emphasis added), I turn to Bangladeshi storytelling to navigate multispecies justice through indigenous South Asian concepts of living together with or caring for more- or other-than-human species.

2.5 Critical Studies on Saad Z. Hossain's Speculative and Futuristic Fiction

Only a few scholars seemed to dare and choose the road less travelled by, dedicating their research to Bangladeshi SFF, especially Hossain's SFF, in analysing the potency and significance of South Asian narratives commenting on a climate-changed world. A key similarity in these limited researches is the dystopian interpretation of Bangladeshi cities in Hossain's work. Indian scholar, Anna Juhi John's research on Hossain's work has in large part focused on the elements of eco-dystopia in *Cyber Mage* which in her view, "mirrors real life challenges faced by Dhaka" and "parallels the city's struggles with the consequences of anthropogenic activities and global warming" ("A CoFuturist Reading" 00:20:50-00:21:03). Further analysing the "contrast between the cardless and the shareholders in the fictional city" as a depiction of the "stark wealth disparity within Bangladesh" in the present day (00:21:25-00:21:34), John makes the case that Hossain's works take inspiration about the configurations of an eco-dystopian

Bangladeshi city from the contemporary socio-political fault lines in his country. Moving beyond an investigation of urban ecological concerns in Hossain's works, Quratulain Ijaz et al's research on *Kundo* shifts its focus on the defining role of artificial intelligence in creating a hyperreality in the futuristic city of Gangaridai which creates a rift between reality and Virtuality in the text. Discussing people's preference for staying within the virtual world built and sanctioned by the corporations regulating the dystopian cities of Bangladesh, Ijaz et al posit that the "lines blending reality and the virtual world" in the text hint on the "colonized view of [a] new system controlling the people [of Gangaridai] and their lives" (548). They argue that artificial intelligence in the city acts as an "autocratic, despotic and tyrannical ruler" paving the way for the functioning of a "colonial and a totalitarian regime where people are bound to live in a set dystopian society … full of corruption, inequality and political oppression" (549). Thus, both the researches ground their engagement with Hossain's fiction in a pessimistic scrutiny of Bangladesh's futuristic cities.

Another key insight that surges to the front in John's study is the political agency of djinn in Hossain's techno-dystopian cities. Evaluating djinns as "metaphors for mega corporations" in corporate-controlled cities of Bangladesh ("A CoFuturist Reading" 00:12:04-00:12:10), John places their involvement in the cities alongside the profit-driven anthropogenic activities wreaking havoc on the ecology and population of the city that they inhabit and regulate. Her acknowledgment of the socio-political potency of djinns in the urban infrastructure and control over urban and ecological resources is upholstered by Hossain's decision of "creat[ing] motivations, social ties, and rivalries for them to become real characters" so that they are not perceived as "static entities" (Quayum 189). The urban ecological mesh sketched by the writer is

read by these researchers as a network encompassing multiple actors and entities that is predominantly framed by class difference.

While these analyses produce interesting insights about the class- and technology-based systems of oppression and divide in eco-dystopian societies, they elide the crucial opportunity of comprehending Hossain's SFF as ecotopian in its configuration and operation. I depart from these studies and argue for the critical need of analysing the selected texts in their endeavour to decode the unjust neoliberal imaginaries of a West-centric ecotopian model of living, and further suggest an emancipatory model of ecotopia, envisioned by Hossain, based on the enactment of a multispecies justice. A pessimistic dystopian evaluation of the texts is not sufficient and there is a need to adopt the lens of an ecotopian framework to understand the potential of a South Asian voice in a climate-changed world. Furthermore, a class-based analysis of Hossain's fiction, highlighted in the aforementioned studies, appears short-sighted in its political message. Instead, an intersectional theoretical framework based on the examination of the politics of species and class in an ecotopia will be formulated to access the various nuances of South Asian futuristic writing. My research also digresses from the reading of djinns as metaphors for mega corporations and neoliberal politics of violence, and instead offers to view djinns as 'metaphors for multispecies alliances' that provide passageways to forming an egalitarian futuristic society. I look into the religious and cultural category of djinn as willing subjects involved in the egalitarian policymaking of ecotopias in Hossain's texts, an insight ignored in the aforementioned researches in this section.Grounding djinns in this indigenous knowledge systems, another world outside the West-centric understanding of djinns as vengeful and greedy is conceived by Hossain. My thesis hence probes into the channels hitherto left untouched by scholars analysing the ecotopian frameworks in Hossain's oeuvre.

Chapter 3

Ecotopian Re-visions: Carceral Cities to Creative Little Worlds

The main questions that govern my research pertain to ecotopian revisions in Hossain's futuristic fiction via a shift from carceral urban structures to dynamic creative co-constitution of the bodies and the cities. Therefore, in this chapter, my focus is two pronged. Firstly, I analyse how a close reading of the selected texts reveals that couched within the shallow claims of establishing ecological havens for their citizens are the discriminatory policies of the neoliberal imperialist forces governing the futuristic cities of Bangladesh. Secondly, I highlight the ways in which

Hossain revises the contours of ecotopias via a redefinition of the relationship between cities and bodies as a dynamic site of mutual co-constitution, opening pathways of formulating alliances across differences.

I examine the ways in which Hossain presents neoliberal imperialist ecotopias as carceral cities, limiting movement and inhibiting an osmosis of information crucial for establishing emancipatory models of ecotopias. A cursory reading of Hossain's ecotopias brings to the fore their promise of building ecological refuges for all citizens, but a deeper insight into the workings of these ecotopias reveals they are indeed ecological 'sanctums' parasitizing over the bodies of the lesser privileged individuals for the benefit of the more prosperous and valuable citizens. In this chapter, I look into the means used by the neoliberal imperialist forces in these texts to capitalise on the bodies and urban spaces of futuristic Bangladeshi cities. My study thus analyses Hossain's selected fictional texts in order to underscore his subversion of the prevalent ecotopian frameworks in the Western corpus of speculative and futuristic fiction. Hossain presents futuristic Bangladeshi cities governed by neoliberal imperialist agencies, providing state-of-the-art bio-engineered tools to survive in a climatically endangered world. While I study the portrayal of merely Bangladeshi cities in a Bangladeshi writer's work, the shared climate concerns within the South Asian region colour my reading of the selected texts as South Asian and not simply Bangladeshi. In this iteration, this research foregrounds South Asian climate concerns transcending topographic barriers and projecting similar issues and aspirations of a climatically endangered South Asia.

Cocooned within these ecotopias, the citizens' anatomies are panoptically monitored and continuously utilised for safeguarding the privileges of the citizens and shareholders marked as valuable in the texts. The urban spaces simultaneously are supervised by these forces to curtail

the citizens' and non-citizens' movements within these walled-in cities and their outskirts. I further examine how temporary alliances formed between the valuable and dispensable individuals within these ecotopias lead to creating channels of osmosis of valuable information amongst them, creating opportunities of revolt against the exclusionary policies of these ecotopias. Anchoring my argument in pertinent textual examples, I thus accentuate the liberatory potential of Hossain's re-vised representations of South Asian decolonial ecotopias in speculative and futuristic fiction.

3.1 Ecotopia As a Futuristic Carceral City

<div align="center">

If you look at the city from here

You see it is laid out in concentric circles,

Each circle surrounded by a wall

Exactly like a prison.

Look at the City from Here, Faiz Ahmad Faiz

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In this section, I scrutinise the exclusionary contours of the ecotopias depicted in the selected writings under study. A closer analysis of the policies of these ecotopias reveals their neoliberal imperialist agendas that Hossain takes issue with throughout his work. As opposed to the promising and agentic theorization of ecotopias detailed in the literature review, the popularised model of ecotopias in Hossain's fictional texts continues to imitate the structures of what Abbot terms as "carceral cities" (93), with confined urban spaces favouring only a few citizens, and enacting a biased and neoliberal imperialist social policy. The prison-like models of ecological utopias, where citizens do not leave the premises of the state as and when they please, without the interference of state officials, have been theorised and widely fictionalised for decadesviable models of ecologically sustainable living for their own societies. A study of the fictionalised

post-apocalyptic, ecotopian underground cities as in Jeanne DuPrau's Books of *Ember* series, Hugh Howey's *Silo* and *Wool* series, or even Callenbach's eponymous *Ecotopia* reveals that such carceral cities are interpreted as plausible and practicable models of ecological utopias by the readers.

Hossain's futuristic Bangladeshi cities—Dhaka, Kathmandu and Chittagong—are presented in his texts as ecotopias which have mastered the maintenance of micro-climes, cleaning the air round the clock for all citizens and hence, offering a buffer against deadly climatic conditions that are present outside the cities. At the surface, these ecotopian havens appear to be the logical solutions to climate despair as the process of scrubbing the air mentioned in the texts does not explicitly involve a further wreckage of the environment, or any direct harm against a certain species on earth. However, a close investigation fleshes out the underlying system of exclusionary practices and policies administering these ecotopias, resurfacing in my analysis as "carceral cities", which the urban historian, Carl Abbott describes as "cities that imprison their residents even with the best of intentions" (94). I read this carceral representation of ecotopias, which eventually fail on grounds of manipulation of all citizens and species, as Hossain's critique on the popular portrayals of successful and viable models of eco/utopias in the works of speculative and science fiction.

The ecotopias in the selected texts provide the citizens with a plethora of ecological benefits, leading to an internalisation and acquiescence of the rules upholding the urban structures, so that ideas of revolt against, or a mere questioning of the nature of the governing systems become entirely non-existent amongst their inhabitants. All the three city corporations in the selected texts under study supply their citizens with a "PMD", short for "personal medical device", which is described as "the little bone-shaped insert they all carr[y] in their spines, …

regulat[ing] all their systems, [keeping] the mutations in check, releas[ing] molecule-sized nanobots to repair damaged tissue" (*Kundo* 35) without any mindful endeavour or realisation on their part (*Cyber Mage* 82). The PMD further operates as a personal "healthcare system" and "form[s] a large part of [one's] augmented immune system" (81-2). Equipping their citizens with personalised bio-engineered tools for survival, the city corporations pose as their messiahs, a statement bolstered by Hossain's remark about the magnitude of the significance of PMD, implanted in every single human, as it became "one of the landmark achievements of humanists, akin to the abolition of slavery, or gender equality, or free love" (82). PMDs thus appear to the citizens as harbingers of biologically enhanced and ecologically safe living experiences.

Utilising presumably unbiased technological or bio-engineered tools to create a survivable micro-climate nonetheless fails to establish egalitarian ecotopias. The cities turn out to be "fortress-prisons … where the residents are their own jailers, bound to the city by its physical comfort and by the security that buffers them from the stress of the outside (Abbott 95, 107-8). The rulers of the cities in all the narratives impose the installation of PMDs within the body as the first and foremost parameter of citizenry, rejecting which leads to an eviction from this 'prison-paradise'. In *The Gurkha*, Gurung, a "zero" living on the outskirts of the city and not recognized by the ruling AI as a citizen of "Kathmandu Inc.", likens the imposition of PMD on every human body with a "tax" for living within the confines of the city, breathing its clean air (8). This model of ecotopia comes at a grave cost for its citizens. With hardly anything valuable to offer to the society apart from their skills whose use have become obsolete in a mechanised and technologized world, the poor citizens of these ecotopias turn out to be "only as useful as the biotech they incubated in their bodies" (*Cyber Mage* 45). In a similar vein, Hossain posits in *Kundo* that "PMD was both boon and tax rolled in one" (36) so that the citizens, carrying it

within their bodies, oblivious of the conditionality of citizenry it functions on, do not endeavour to rip it off their bodies, or demand the status of citizenship accompanying a 'choice' to get a PMD installed within their spines as opposed to its absolute imposition.

An internalisation of these neoliberal tactics implemented by the governing bodies in the cities instils physical and psychological docility within the citizens where they unanimously fixate on "[t]he goal of safety", which Abbott posits as one of the major aims of the "fortress-prison" (95). Inhabiting the walled city which "strives to survive in isolation, everyone do[es] his or her part by taking assigned jobs, obeying authorities, turning aside doubts" (95), and soon the citizens become docile to the extent that the idea of carving out PMDs from their bodies comes across not only as unnecessary or lethal but mutinous as well. The duty of every human being within the walled cities was "to keep up the good fight" (*Cyber Mage* 82) in maintaining a good micro-climate.

Kundo, himself on the verge of becoming a zero in the society, underscores this affliction of being a slave to this new model of ecotopia as "[w]e're just the numbers that make up the world" a habitable place without any sense of consent or appreciation for our role in fighting climate change (*Kundo* 54). While fulfilling the "assigned jobs" (Abbott 95), Hossain remarks that most of the characters living within these ecotopias did not "actually give [PMDs] much thought at all, since they ran unobtrusively like any other organ, delving below the conscious processes of the brain" (*Cyber Mage* 82). Such an acquiescent behaviour of the citizens in an ecotopia stands in direct contrast to the contours of ecotopianism outlined by David Pepper in his seminal essay, "Utopianism and Environmentalism", where he makes the case for the need of "transgressive ecotopianism" in imagining an ecologically sound society in the future (7). Pepper contends that an ecotopia is concerned less with "what will be in the ideal world, [and]

more [with] *the communicative process* by which it may be *negotiated*" in literary fiction (7; emphases added). I contend that Hossain's ecotopias, depicted at the beginning of the selected texts under scrutiny, fail to provide this heuristic space of negotiation to their citizens by invading and colonising their bodies with the excuse of making a liveable society for all.

Futuristic Dhaka, Kathmandu and Chittagong in Hossain's fiction are portrayed as cities that adopted the theories of "population density" and a complete "corporatization of the modern world" that together premised a utopian model of survival in the aftermath of global climate disasters (*Cyber Mage* 43-4). The theory of "pop den", short for population density, posited that only "high-density areas", with a considerable or required number of people living in saturated urban spaces, could produce enough "nanites" to create a "safe climate" for its citizens (43-5). Since these urban clusters were to be run by private corporations providing the nanotech and climate AIs, ensuring a smooth running of the system, "cities survived … [and c]ountries did not" (44). I read this eradication of nationalism in the aftermath of establishing microclimates in the cities as a neoliberal strategy which determines "prescriptions for the proper role of key [social] actors such as labor unions, private enterprise, and the state" (Boas and Gans-Morse 144) in any society. The private corporations building PMDs or the essential nanotech as well as the rich citizens of these ecotopias make the rules for the allocation of resources in the cities for the entire population. While claiming to ensure a more egalitarian mode of living across all classes, these corporations, in fact, curb individual freedom and limit "individual possibilities [and] creativity" (Abbott 93), that may lead to more egalitarian modes of living across all classes.

The neoliberal tactics adopted by the governing bodies in these cities further shun the ecotopian principles laid out by utopian thinkers via the division of urban spaces based on class and social worth in the city. The urban grid of all these ecotopias reveals prejudiced

compartmentalisations within the 'perfected society' where value granting systems determine the citizens' social status and demarcate places of residence for them within the city or on its outskirts. In *The Gurkha*, *Kundo* and "Bring Your Own Spoon", this system of assigning value to everything and everyone is seemingly overlooked by the ruling AI, Karma, who has abolished money altogether in the city. Yet, the discriminatory neoliberal structure of socio-economic stratification is reproduced through the introduction of "Karma Points" (*The Gurkha* 15). Gurung explains the mechanism of Karma to a djinn, Melek Ahmar, whom he meets on the outskirts of the city, as "[u]nder the rule of Karma, [she] requisitioned everything, it was like a slate being cleaned. Rich, poor, didn't matter. Usefulness. That was the key. Contribution to the system" (15). This core pillar of Karmic rule in the cities rests on a seemingly unbiased AI system which, nevertheless, keeps score of everything and assigns value to it, ultimately deciding the worth of every human being as well. Abbott's proposition that carceral cities "are exercises in social engineering layered on top of physical engineering" (94) holds true in these neoliberal ecotopias where the socio-political purpose of facilitating a select segment of the population at the expense of using the bodies, and by extension PMDs, of the poor is built into the very physical structure of the cities.

Every city described in the selected texts is divided into different zones inhabited by different classes of people. Tied to the city for bare existence, citizens in all these neoliberal ecotopias are subjected to the atrocities of "necropolitic[al] death-worlds" (Mbembe andMeintjes 40), creating unliveable conditions for a select vulnerable segment of the society. The underprivileged citizens of these ecotopias are useful insofar as they keep the rich citizens' microclimates clean and sustainable. In many instances in the selected texts, the air-scrubbing nanites in the bodies of the poor citizens directly power the microclimates in the posher urban

areas while keeping their own zones vulnerable to the hazards of climate change. I argue that bound within this ecotopian façade, such jeopardised groups of people become slaves to the neoliberal system which governs them without their consent. Deemed as dispensable and replaceable numbers for the state, they acquire the role of the "living dead" (40) who can be executed or denied ecotopian refuge at any time of their lives to keep the ecotopia running for the privileged. In this regard, these neoliberal ecotopias mimic the outlines of an "end-state utopia" which Abbott contends is a "buried city [functioning as] a metaphor for a society with its head in the sands … and also for a society that is dead and buried" (94). Such a model fails to support the framework of egalitarian ecotopias, favouring all inhabitants alike.

Dhaka, ruled by "Dhaka City Corporation" in *Cyber Mage* and "Own Spoon", cocoons a certain number of citizens with more "equity" or a better "shareholder" status in the city in well-facilitated zones like the "Tri-State" where the air quality perpetually remains on the "green" or safer level (*Cyber Mage* 15). Presenting a stark contrast to these "privileged enclaves" are the areas like "Mirpur Inc.", "Narayanganj" and the "fringes" beyond the "Black River" which house the "cardless" and "nonpeople" in dilapidated conditions (*Cyber Mage* 15, 96; "Own Spoon" 162). The air quality, despite being controlled by climate regulating AIs, fluctuates in different zones of the city depending on the class of people residing in them. The red zones are depicted as the most vulnerable to climate change; orange zones represent a lesser prone area while the green zones harbour climate-secure areas of residence. Even though areas like Narayanganj and Mirpur house a greater number of people as compared to the Tri-State, their higher population density does not aid in maintaining a green zone. In this light, the theory of pop den adopted by the urban rulers as a subtext for ecotopian cities fails on grounds of being unjust and discriminatory in its execution in these cities. Marzuk's experience of physically

venturing into the areas outside the Tri-State underscores the rift between his idyllic residence in Dhaka and its neglected areas as

> [Marzuk] was intrigued by the scenery outside, how quickly it changed from idyllic suburb to gritty metropolis. The sky itself shifted color from a sylvan blue to the more gray-tinged haze that was typical of unaltered microclimes. No one had the time to make things pretty out here; everything was utilitarian ... The air was tolerable, although the meter crept steadily toward yellow the farther they got away from the posh area (*Cyber Mage* 229).

The structure of the city, bifurcated into the privileged and underprivileged zones of existence, thus puts the basic propositions of an ecotopia to question.

In a similar strain, Kathmandu and Chittagong, ruled by "the God-Machine, Karma" (*The Gurkha* 15), carve up parts of the cities that overtly put to question their ecotopian blueprints. The urban rulers in these ecotopias establish a system that closely resembles a "neoliberal model [which] involves a restructuring of state-society relation" (Boas and Gans-Morse 144). Karma, replacing the national government, becomes the voice of the state, taking over "the market for every human transaction, big or small" (*The Gurkha* 26), one of the key attributes of a neoliberal system of governance. She encloses the zeroes and nonpeople into dense environments with a perpetual scarcity of resources while endeavouring to provide the boons of modernization and progress to her more valuable citizens. This model paves the way for the necessity of the implementation of "enforced conformity and authoritarian rule … [i]n dense environments" as observed in carceral utopian cities (Abbott 107). Highlighting this conformity in zeroes is a conversation between Melek Ahmar and Gurung where the former expresses his rage towards "Humes" or humans as "they're not even revolting [against Karma]" to which the latter replies as

"[s]uch is the problem. Zeroes will be zeroes" (*The Gurkha* 31). Gurung's statement proves pivotal in comprehending how this enforced conformity to rules accentuates the utter absence of democracy in these ecotopias.

The necropolitical conditions in *Kundo*, under the rule of Karma, highlight the desperate living conditions of the citizens who are unable to score good Karma points needed to secure a better and a safer lifestyle. A compromised microclimate in Chittagong results in a situation where "the wealthy had gone underground and left the surface to the freaks and outcasts of the city" to fend for themselves without Karmic supervision or protection (*Kundo* 9). While moving through the streets of Chittagong to find clues leading to the surprising disappearance of his wife, Kundo's comprehension of the innards of the city, inhabited by the zeroes out of desperation or voluntarily, exhibits the dilapidated features of what Abbott terms as "locked-in and locked-down dystopias" (107). Hossain explains the bleak neoliberal contours of this eco-dystopia where "[a]n ill wind blew before [Kundo], clearing the alleys, sending the street people scurrying for shelter. Over the years, Karma had driven most of her valuable flock underground. What came from the sea was not always defensible. Only the *leftover people* stayed above, like ticks on a giant's scalp" (*Kundo* 28; emphasis added). Unable to migrate from this city and bound to its meagre physical comforts, these leftover people experience the urban life as an imprisoned state of being from which there seems to be no escape. This neoliberal ecotopia mirrors Abbott's poignant remark about the purpose of carceral cities as "constructed originally for a material purpose …, but … surviv[ing] as an institutional machine to implement social and political purposes" (94). Initially established as a climate haven for a vast number of people across all classes, Chittagong in Hossain's *Kundo* becomes a machine to safeguard the citizens with a

higher number of Karma points—people who, according to Karma, deserve to be protected and facilitated.

Another key factor upholding the configuration of these ecotopias is the mass and invasive surveillance of the population via a sophisticated anatomical penetration of the citizens' bodies. Abbott's definition of the term, "carceral cities", portrayed in futuristic fiction, is derived from "Michel Foucault's chilling idea of the 'carceral archipelago' of physical and social institutions that constrain individual freedoms in the modern era of intrusive government, prying corporations, and ubiquitous surveillance" (94). Piqued by such a perspective, I discuss the role the tools of ubiquitous surveillance play in maintaining the prison structure of these ecotopias. Hossain's futuristic cities move one step ahead of the popular tropes of a futuristic panopticon society where AI harbours tools of surveillance in the form of CCTV cameras, predicts criminal tendencies in people to regulate crime in time, or manipulates reality to regulate conformity of all citizens. Instead, his eco/utopian cities merge the ruling system's need for constant surveillance with the citizens' desire to be monitored all the time for their own security and wellbeing. The whole population in his fiction is presented with a choice of inserting an Echochip in their bodies which is described as "part phone, part filter, part processor, the ultimate guide in life, [the citizens'] very own customised Virgil, leading every gobbet around their personal hell with a running commentary and useless bits of information" (*Kundo* 1). In *The Gurkha*, Hossain cunningly juxtaposes the praise for an ecological utopia created in Kathmandu with the ubiquity of Echo in its citizens, who "speak with [it] …, see and hear and feel with it too" while ignoring the humans and djinns clearly visible in their way as non-existent entities (14). Reliance on and protection of Echos within their bodies hence becomes paramount in such cities.

The Echos, initially designed for providing humans with an enhanced life experience, are nevertheless portrayed by Hossain as tools of neoliberal imperialism, ultimately answering to the authorities framing every social system. Although Echos pledge the boons of a techno-utopian society to the citizens, they also provide an access to "Virtuality" which "[s]hows [the citizens] what's happening everywhere" (*The Gurkha* 6), as "every Echo [is always] on constant broadcast mode" (*Cyber Mage* 217). This feature resultantly equips the private corporations ruling these ecotopias to map the behaviours of their subjects and regulate their actions to ensure the safety of their own vile intentions. It also echoes the structure of what Abbott calls the "protective city [where] the authorities regulate the details of everyday life to keep the artificial ecology and the planned economy humming" (93-4). This protective city nevertheless functions on discriminatory principles, dismantling any hope for an egalitarian mode of existence in the ecotopias.

In order to safeguard the interests of her rich citizens and her own rule over different cities, Karma assumes absolute sovereignty over her citizens' bodies via Echos. Such an imperialist practice manifests when her sheriff, Hamilcar, investigating a breach in Karmic system in *The Gurkha*, goes "limp as half his [virtual] feed [connected with his Echo goes] blind" as he is at the brink of discovering the that their God-Machine, Karma, herself sanctioned human trafficking for maintaining microclimates before assuming absolute control over Kathmandu (80-1). Hamilcar panics at this virtual blindness as he says, "I can't see the data. She's cut me off from the Virtuality" (81). Such a move succinctly exemplifies the altered purpose of "self-perpetuation" in the carceral city where "[r]esidents embrace [or are forced to embrace] the city's limits as well-ordered participants in hegemonic systems" (Abbott 95). Concerned only with keeping her own systems running and preserving her interests, Karma

manipulates her residents' Echos at any time. Hence the ecotopian cities, created by neoliberal authorities in the name of providing a technologically advanced urban system where markets are not incessantly regulated and all individuals get basic necessities of life simply by being citizens, morph into prison-paradises with "all walls and no gates" (95). Such ecotopias significantly digress from the "open-endedness, […] agency, dynamism and the free play of dream and desire" (Garforth 397) that characterises liberatory and just eco/utopian thinking.

3.2 Re-visioning Ecotopias As Creative Little Worlds

"A city isn't so unlike a person. They both have the marks to show they have many stories to tell.

They see many faces. They tear things down and make new again."

Broken Abroad, RasmeniaMassoud

In this section, I analyse the ways in which Hossain envisages structural rearrangements of Bangladeshi cities after critiquing the neoliberal imperialist policies that they were built on at the outset of his texts. I argue that as Hossain's characters approach the cities as malleable arrangements of smaller and more accessible urban units or spaces, their understanding of these ecotopian cities alters to give rise to the radical demand of the democratisation of these urban spaces. I further highlight how encounters with the dissident lived experiences, desires, and positionalities of different classes and species in Hossain's ecotopias create opportunities of accessing the dynamic emancipatory potential of ecotopias. By investigating these open-ended and fluid re-presentations of ecotopias in Hossain's works, my research offers a critique of the hitherto mentioned restrictive models of ecological utopias engendering hierarchies of class and species, and thus operating as neoliberal concentration camps for all their inhabitants.

In this segment of my analysis, I build upon Elizabeth Grosz's concept of "the constitutive and mutually defining relations between corporeality and the metropolis" (382)

which I read as the relationship between citizens and ecotopias in Hossain's texts. Grosz takes exception to the pervasive models studying the interrelations of bodies and cities that suggest urban designs are entirely and only subject to human desires and the two enact a parallelism in which they reflect the characteristics of one another (382-3). Rejecting these causal and representational models, her work instead focuses on defining this interrelation as an "interface" propounding that cities and bodies are "assemblages, or collections of parts" (385) that, I argue, can be re-arranged and hence re-read to envision and enact different modes of existence within an ecotopia. Informed by this debate, I analyse how Hossain's characters defy the neoliberal imperialist urban grids, inhibiting an osmosis of valuable information between citizens, and how the writer simultaneously makes them question their beliefs about the social and physical constructs of their own bodies. Analysing this co-constitution of the bodies and the ecotopian cities is tantamount to analysing what alleyways of resistance against the afore-reported neoliberal imperialist contours of ecotopias can be forged out of understanding cities as what Abbott terms as "the little worlds" with different "subcultures" (196). The "cultural hybridity" of the city, owing to "the vigor, creativity, ... [and] continual interaction" of the citizens (203) enables this formation of little worlds where valuable information is exchanged between subjects, leading to revolt against the ruling urban parties.

I further propose a decolonial tangent to Abbott's critical term of little worlds by adding to it the extended meaning of decolonial spaces of osmosis, allowing exchange of ideas of revolt amongst the different residents of South Asian ecotopias as they endeavour toestablish liberatory modes of co-living for different species and classes. For this purpose, I borrow Dipesh Chakrabarty's concept of "provincializing Europe" which states that European categories of knowledge are useful yet inadequate to address non-European practices and aspirations. This

framework guides my analysis of Hossain's ecotopian spaces as decolonial South Asian sites of revolt against the underlying neoliberal imperialist structures of ecotopias. And in so doing, it contributes to pitching in a decolonial South Asian voice in the existing debates within the global climate change discourse, mostly sprouting from Western and Euro-centric areas of concern.

The residents of Hossain's futuristic Bangladeshi cities are compelled to believe their survival in a climatically hazardous world is entirely dependent on the implantation and smooth functioning of the PMDs in their bodies. By default, in the collective social consciousness of these residents, PMDs become a crucial body part or organ for humans in these ecotopias. However, Hossain portrays pivotal characters in his fiction whose bodies not only function optimally but also manifest enhanced physical and mental capacities in the absence of PMDs. I read these characters' reclamation and redefinition of their bodies, and hence their social relations with the urban contours of futuristic Dhaka and Chittagong, as mirroring Grosz's proposition that there is "nothing intrinsic about the cit[ies] which [make] it alienating" for their inhabitants and their aspirations (386). By this understanding, I posit that Hossain's ecotopias, modelled as carceral prisons for the underprivileged inhabitants, turn out to be as malleable in offering channels of revolt and re-constitution of social policies as the bodies that inhabit them.

In *Cyber Mage*, Leto is shown to have "a spinal defect that not only prevented him from walking but even precluded the fitting of a PMD", prompting the doctors to euthanize him on the basis of his physical inability to be taken over by a chip, in his otherwise disposable body, "to keep up the good fight" against climate crisis (133, 82). Leto scavenges for opportunities to not only survive in the fringes of Dhaka to which he and his sister are confined due to poverty, but also redefines his subjectivity and individual agency within the city beyond his deformity. Moulding a "medical exoskeleton" donated to him by a private firm named "Honda", Leto

transforms his "exo into a piece of lethal body armor that could take out half a squad of corporate police", becoming one of "Old Dhaka's best security experts" (132-3). His body is hence reformulated in the wake of defying against the unjust state policies, failing to facilitate his crippled state of being.

In a similar strain, a significant character in *Kundo*, named Hafez, is shown to have a medical condition that mirrors a similar deflection of the neoliberal tools of surveillance inserted into the bodies of the residents of futuristic Chittagong. Hafez is confined to a hospital ward because of "advanced Echo Rejection Syndrome", a condition where he is expected to be unable to retain his regressing memory because his body simply rejects an Echo implantation (53). In *Kundo*, Hossain canvasses an ecotopia where every citizen's body is parasitized by Echo chips. Once a notorious celebrity figure in the Firingi Bazar deep inside an orange zone in Chittagong, the aged Hafez is now unable to continue living a life guided every step by the ubiquitous Echo, and hence is outcast by the ruling AI, Karma. The neoliberal imperialist agencies of the ecotopia impede his natural death so that his body can keep producing the nanites essential for scrubbing the urban air. While commenting on this necropolitical scheme used by the ruling powers of the city and the "equity class" comprising "people up in space who've beaten death", Hafez bitterly states that the patients admitted to this medical facility have "burnt out brains but their PMDs keep them alive like zombies", making them "ward of the state…, [and b]ooked for life" (53-4). Despite this peripheral status within the city and being held as a hostage of the necropolitical schemes of the private corporations ruling futuristic Chittagong, Hafez reformulates his perception regarding his body, and decides to leave the hospital with Kundo to embark on a quest to find his missing wife. By utilising his knowledge of the game, "The Black Road", which Kundo's wife has presumably retrieved to (54-6), Hafez's Echo-rejecting and hence dispensable

body rejuvenates into a retaliatory presence within the city. The city is thus reconstituted for him as he leaves the confines of the hospital that the necropolitical state had condemned his body to, and reclaims his position as a rebel against the forces parasitizing over his bodily functions.

A more vivid representation of this co-constitution of the body and the ecotopia is found in Bhan Gurung's intentional removal of PMD from his body as an act of revolt against the panoptic system of surveillance run by the AI, Karma, in the city. Manoeuvring a personalised healthcare system for himself from scraps, while living on the outskirts of Kathmandu Incorporation, Gurung relies on "a mask and a little canister that produced puffs of emergency nanotech" to travel to the city without facing any biomedical complications (*The Gurkha* 9-10). I argue that his survival beyond the Karmic ecotopian model of living is made possible only when he breaks the Karmic control over his body and re-assembles its constitution via his own wits. The menace this altered physicality, and consequently reformed social position in the ecotopia, poses to Karma, who rigidly charts bodily and urban positionalities in her ecotopias, is captured in a heated conversation between Hamilcar Pande, the sheriff of Karma, and Doje, Number Six on the Karma scale. Hamilcar underscores the desperation of Karma to apprehend Gurung and his aide, a djinn, solely because they evade her panoptic surveillance as "Karma herself cannot predict what they will do . . . Do you understand the gravity of that? Her predictive algorithms do not work on these men" (38-9). Gurung and his aide's treatment of their corporealities and futuristic Kathmandu as assemblages that can be re-arranged and re-defined hence invites confusion and panic in the Karmic rule.

I posit that the characters in Hossain's fiction recognise the revolutionary potential of their bodies and ecotopias as alterable assemblages not in isolation, but in "temporary sub- or micro-groupings" (Grosz 385). These micro-groupings are established when they come in

contact with other humans or more-than-humans, hailing from different classes or species, within the ecotopias or on their outskirts. Here I build upon Abbott's conceptualization of science fiction cities as "mosaics", harbouring "little worlds" and "subcultures" (195, 204) where valuable cultural exchanges lead to re-accessing cities as democratic spaces of sustainable and emancipated ecotopian living. I contend that ecotopian spaces in Hossain's fiction are in a state of "constant flux" because the "little worlds [inhabited by different groups of citizens] do, in fact, constantly interpenetrate" (195) due to the formation of micro-groupings. My analysis highlights how these temporary sub-groups eventually comprehend that "the essence—the essential life—of … cities are where deals go down, ideas blossom, lovers arrange trysts, and conspirators hatch plots" (Abbott 184) as opposed to approaching the cities they inhabit as inflexible physical containers of masses to be exploited by the ruling powers. This insight paves the way for Hossain's characters to revolt against their imprisoned status charted by the carceral policies of the neoliberal imperialist ecotopias that they reside in, and further find their political agency amidst an altering assemblage of city spaces and bodies. I argue that Hossain's characters create their own "little worlds" (205) in the wake of the enlightening realization of their co-constituting bodies and cities as "assemblages" (Grosz 385) and their encounters with one another as in a state of "continual interactions" (Abbott 203). An altering co-constitution of corporeality and cityspaces, together with an osmotic urban model of futuristic cityspaces, leads to re-reading cities and its subjects as re-arrangeable sites of emancipatory co-living.

Crucial to point out here is that my analysis of Hossain's creative futuristic cities highlights a key limitation in Abbott's theorization of little worlds, and in so doing, draws attention to the fact that it needs to be rethought when "imagining urban futures" in the sub-genre of South Asian science fiction (23). Abbott focuses on only the marginal spaces of a city—"the

informal … districts on the fringe;... the marginal neighborhoods" (182)—as he accentuates their potential of fostering 'creative little worlds' of resistance for the residents condemned to these spaces. In contrast, a close reading of the textual instances encompassing the formation of the afore-mentioned micro-groupings in Hossain's texts accents the fact that the "little worlds" (Abbott 195) arising out of these "temporary alignments" (Grosz 385) are scattered across the various zones of the ecotopias. I propose that Hossain, throughout his texts, deliberately keeps shifting between the fringes of the cities and the secluded well-protected zones of existence and entitlement while portraying these "interpenetrat[ing] … little worlds" engendering "sets of subcultures" (Abbott 195-6) that can be utilised for revolt against the exclusionary urban policies. My examination of Hossain's fiction points to the fact that no sector or zone, however shielded by exclusionary policies, in the futuristic cities is impenetrable. The examination of Hossain's narrative choice stands pivotal in my analysis as it extends the concept of little worlds, sprouting out of and thriving in dissident lived experiences of a city's inhabitants, beyond merely the unofficial edges of the city teeming with images of illegal bazars, dilapidated makeshift housing and dark alleyways favouring all possible crimes.

My critique of Abbott's critical term is informed by a decolonial analytical practice rooted in the strategies of "epistemic delinking" and "geopolitics of knowledge" proposed by Walter Mignolo that calls for a re-framing of Eurocentric theoretical concepts based on the material realities and experiences of marginalized non-European peoples (106-9). I contend that Hossain's fiction enables a decolonial re-conceptualization of the term, 'little worlds', which recognizes that within the South Asian context, the interplay between the marginal and the entitled spaces forwards the idea of an emancipatory mode of communal living for all classes and species in a futuristic world while reflecting the material realities of continued structures of

neoliberal coloniality in ecotopias, and also enabling greater malleability and resistance. Such a decolonial endeavour is also attempted in the spirit of Dipesh Chakrabarty's proposition of "provincializ[ing] Europe" aimed at "decenter[ing] [its] imaginary figure" that presides over our understanding and knowledge of the concepts like "citizenship, the state, … human rights, equality before the law, … social justice" (3-4) etc. Abbott merely analyses the corpus of Western futuristic and science fiction, and ends up charting out the concept of 'little worlds' in the wider genre of 'urban science fiction' without even mentioning a key limitation in his work that I point to here. In my analysis of Hossain's fiction, I try to widen the scope of Abbott's creative take on imagining urban futures in cities of science fiction. To achieve this, I take cue from Chakrabarty's scholarship on provincializing Europe which does not outrightly reject European categories of knowledge but asks for "releas[ing] into the space occupied by particular European histories … other normative and theoretical thought enshrined in other existing life practices and their archives" (20). Chakrabarty mainly demonstrates "how the categories and strategies we have learned from European thought… are both indispensable and inadequate in representing … a non-European modernity" (19). I add to this argument the crucial case of the representation of speculative fiction, and more precisely ecotopian fiction. My analysis underscores how European/western epistemological categories initiate a critique of ecotopias represented in South Asian science fiction, but fall short of laying bare the dynamic undercurrents of neoliberal imperialism inherent in them.

Informed by these decolonial perspectives, I load Abbott's term, 'little worlds', with the extended meaning of decolonial spaces of osmosis, allowing exchange of ideas of revolt amongst the residents of South Asian ecotopias as they strive for the establishment of liberatory modes of co-living. And in so doing, my engagement with his term forwards the idea of 'provincialization

of little worlds' as it decentres Eurocentric categories of knowledge via the decolonial practice of epistemic delinking from its European traces. I focus on the various lived experiences of Hossain's different characters, forging these little worlds by dismantling the neoliberal imperialist urban grid of their ecotopias and the resultant co-constitution of their bodies and cityspaces. My analysis of these little worlds brings in "the existing archives of life practices in South Asia … [while] paying close and careful attention to the intellectual traditions present in South Asia" (20)—what Chakrabarty deems is essential in canvassing a decentering of European epistemic thinking and colonialism. It hence brings to the fore a distinctly decolonial South Asian ecotopian framework of futuristic living, hitherto underappreciated and majorly erased in the global climate change discourse.

The most befitting representation of this decolonial proposition is Marzuk's "new team", comprising individuals hailing from either the different ecologically condemned urban spaces within or outside Dhaka, or the ecologically cocooned sectors inhabited by the wealthy members of the society (*Cyber Mage* 226, 245). Marzuk's team bridges the gap between individuals inhabiting the Old Dhaka operating as an unofficial district at the edge of the city like Arna, a human; Leto, a cyborg; Kali, an AI; and Djibreel, a djinn, and the privileged entities inhabiting the well-protected climatic haven of the Tri-State Corp like the richer citizens of Baridhara; the Mongolian, an AI; and Marzuk himself. The entire purpose behind the coming together of these different individuals in the ecotopia is to solve a mystery threatening the fate of the city which is at the brink of a complete authoritative AI governance, parasitizing over the lives and consciousness of the citizens. Assembling such a diverse group in terms of their spatial positioning in the ecotopia is achieved only when they acknowledge that their bodies are a result of social construction and consciousness, and their ecotopian spaces are in a state of "constant

flux" because the "little worlds [inhabited by these different groups of citizens] do, in fact, constantly interpenetrate" (Abbott 195). This diverse team of subjects initiates a precise and an impassioned revolt against the leading security organization, Securex, and its benefactor, Matteras the djinn, in the neoliberal imperialist ecotopia, Dhaka. Marzuk and Arna bring in their keen understanding of the biotechnological tools of surveillance to bring down Securex while the djinn and the AI use their species-specific material realities to support this rebellion. Thus, this little world of revolt that they create for a noble and democratic purpose also empowers them because of the 'cultural exchange' that happens between these individuals from different urban zones, histories and social experiences. I further read their retaliatory alliance as a site of decoloniality or delinking which supposes that "[u]ndoing is doing something … [and] delinking presupposes relinking to something else" (Mignolo 120). The new team that Marzuk forms enacts their undoing of the neoliberal imperialist policies controlling and parasitizing over their bodies by relinking to their bodies, urban spaces and their dissident lived materialities in the ecotopia.

Such a perspective textures my perusal of the Old Town or Old Dhaka as a "little world", a segment of cities that in Abbott's work are understood as "physical and cultural devices for making connections" giving space to "exchanges … that facilitate the swapping of … ideas" (184) between individuals with different backgrounds and socio-political histories. As he ventures into the narrow lanes of Old Town after leaving the sheltered space of the Tri-State in which he is born and raised, Marzuk starts questioning the biotechnological protocols framed by the neoliberal imperialist ecotopian planners for survival in the city. He subsequently realises the sheer injustice done to its inhabitants as he observes his first impressions of the old city as

The press of humanity was immense. The Tri-State had long ago ejected nonessential people from its borders, having achieved independent corporate status… The microclimate here had a different flavor, the nanites coming directly from unsanitized human flesh. Marzuk was slightly disgusted at first by the idea of breathing in the product of this great human horde, but the exhilaration of freely moving among so many people was too much to resist (*Cyber Mage* 229-30).

The transformation in Marzuk's reception of Old Town later proves pivotal in the text when he decides to forge a "new team" (226) of individuals out of both the cardless and the shareholders of the city to rebel against its ruling neoliberal imperialist agencies. Deliberately immersing his body, previously deemed vulnerable to the climatically hazardous zones outside the Tri-State's safe green zones, into the enormous bustling space of Old Dhaka makes Marzuk realise that this is indeed "Dhaka City proper" (229). Left to fend for themselves because of their dispensability, the cardless individuals of this zone build new structures out of the discarded resources, abandoned buildings and their old skills now irrelevant in the age of machines and AIs. The edges of the markets described in Old Dhaka feature little shops that provide "everything from repairs to patches to illegal augmentation" and the means to execute wild fantasies about "cyborgism" (108). The fact that everyone in this sector has started using a new economic system regulated by "sat min[ute]s, that anonymous barter currency that was tax free" (230) complements Grosz's postulation that the "body (as cultural product) reinscribes the urban landscape according to its changing needs" (386). Marzuk's comprehension of the city and team building in this section of the novel echo Walsh's aims of decoloniality embedded in "living decolonially: that is, assuming and engaging decolonial options" (125) of living differently and more freely as a crucial step after delinking from the colonial matrix of power.

Echoing the same perspective, I analyse Marzuk's new team's endeavour of reinscribing the use of "American International School of Dhaka" initially introduced in *Cyber Mage* as "the red fort", a school "paid by corporations to house the children of top executives" (32, 39). Marzuk's little sub-grouping later seeks shelter from these top executives within the same school by the aid of its very own AI security and administrator, the Mongolian. Primarily built to protect the interests of the neoliberal imperialist forces and maintain the exclusivity of their social status, the school transforms into an active site to launch the revolutionary mission of Marzuk's team against Securex and the forthcoming authoritative Karmic rule that it supports and protects. His heterogenous group, harnessing the resources of the school for self-protection and for the noble purpose of "fighting for the fate of the city" (333), resonates with the "vibrancy of the heterogenous city" where differences between the inhabitants lead to valuable exchange of information and ideas (Abbott 196). The contrariety in the "lived spatialit[ies]" (Grosz 385) of these individuals in the aforementioned micro-grouping axiomatically produces a dissidence in their conceptions and information about their corporealities and the ecotopian spaces they move in every day. They continually exploit this varying cluster of information for their own benefit in *Cyber Mage*, reflecting a major route of "decolonial being, thinking, and doing [that] begin from disrupting [the] assumptions [of state institutions] and the naturalization of death" (Mignolo 127) by the private corporations and neoliberal imperialist agencies creating what Mbembe andMeintjes call "necropolitic[al] death-worlds" (40) for the residents of *Cyber Mage*.

Within the same line of reasoning, I interpret the workings of another micro-grouping in *The Gurkha* as it approaches the Doje Tower, a walled-in estate exhibiting looted and priceless luxuries and top-level security in another ecotopian city ruled by Karma, Kathmandu. This alliance comprises of Regi, a djinn presiding over the Garden of Dreams where she deals in

drugs for which she's given immense Karmic points; Melek Ahmar, a djinn from primitive times who maniacally wishes to topple Karma and rule the city in her stead; and Gurung, a soldier in pre-Karmic times, now living in the outskirts of the city in seclusion. Dodging Karma's panoptic surveillance since none of them hosts a PMD in his or her body, the temporary "linkage" (Grosz 385) formed by these individuals provides them with an opportunity to enter the enclosed Doje Tower. Since Karma can only monitor its subjects via the surveillance provided by the PMD, all the different entities in this micro-grouping conveniently evade Karmic surveillance and enter the Doje Tower unchecked, unhalted. This linkage further enables them to investigate and hold accountable the notorious and influential Doje of his large-scale human trafficking for micro-climes before Karma introduced the nanite technology prevalent across the globe (*The Gurkha* 65-6). The argument here is that this tower, despite being a secluded zone of urban luxury in the ecotopia, 'transfigures' into a "little world" of exchange (Abbott 195) where "the interrelations [between the subgrouping's bodies and Kathmandu] involve … a series of disparate entities bringing together … temporary alignments" (Grosz 385). I posit that this micro-grouping successfully makes way through the entitled zones of living in the ecotopia based on their acknowledgement of the malleability of their bodies that survive and thrive without a PMD implantation. It further resonates the decolonial praxis of living beyond the bounds of colonial and imperial forces within a society.

In continuity with the previous discourse, I contend that, in *Kundo*, the protagonist similarly manages to find avenues of understanding the discriminatory workings of the futuristic Chittagong as he comes across citizens from the "forgotten commercial district" in the "more dilapidated parts of [the] town" (9). Kundo's search for his missing wife occasions the formation of a sub-grouping including Fara, a "zero" living in an almost abandoned building in a flat where

"[t]he air-alert level was permanently on yellow" (13-6); Hafez, a terminally ill man living in a state hospital with no Karmic points; Gola, a coder lost to drugs now; and Regi who becomes their "backup" in this quest (89). Making their way through the different zones of the city to find any clues related to the disappearance of Kundo's wife, this group eventually reaches "Tulsi Hill compound, an enclave so well protected that under normal circumstances they would not have dreamt of knocking on the gate" (95). Kundo's alliance forges channels of investigating the alarming case of the rapidly increasing number of missing people indulged in playing a game run by Horus, a djinn living within Tulsi Hills. I argue that for this alliance to concertedly approach Tulsi Hills and modify its enclosed positionality in the city into an open space of negotiation between Horus and Kundo's group, it needs to be situated through the optic of Grosz's 'bodies-cities', alert to the multiple configurations of their co-constitution, hitherto outlined in my analysis.

In conjunction with the theoretical model mined through Grosz and Abbott's scholarship on corporeality vis-a-vis urbanity, I argue that Hossain's ecological utopias echo the outlines of what Leonie Sandercock terms the multicultural "mongrel cities" where "difference, otherness, fragmentation, splintering, multiplicity, heterogeneity, diversity, [and] plurality prevail" (1-2). Sandercock's quintessential question "how can we live together?" (85)—guiding the entire purpose of my research—is arrived at after careful consideration of the political, technical and environmental elements of a utopian city offering "the possibility of a togetherness in difference" (2). It also provides impetus to her emphasis on dealing with "the politics of difference" as a "necessary condition of peaceful coexistence" in mongrel cities (86). I posit that the splintering and difference of these mongrel cities channelize pathways for reading "[c]ities … [as] creative [spaces] because they hold a critical mass of people who can share and critique one another's

ideas" (Grosz 205) in the selected futuristic texts under study. I follow this discussion with readings of Hossain's texts that model this logic of finding 'creative' ways of living and revolting against the exclusionary ecotopian planning and arrangement of the cities and the bodies they use or discard as per the commands of the rulers. A proliferation of 'little worlds' in Hossain's fiction moreover draws attention to his South Asian re-envisioning of ecotopias as dynamic spaces of dissident lived spatialities and corporealities. I argue that these 'creative little worlds' open pathways of decolonial thinking and living for the ecotopian subjects as their creative appeal supplements the idea of comprehending "the decolonial … as an option" built by people and institutions according to their own assumptions and interests … [like] conviviality, harmony, creativity and plenitude" (Walsh 109). These little worlds thus provide the ecotopian citizens with 'options' that reflect their varied decolonial interests.

In the final part of this section, I analyse two distinct 'creative little worlds', operating as decolonial South Asian sites of revolt against the underlying neoliberal imperialist structures of ecotopias, out of the many represented by Hossain. In his short story, "Bring Your Own Spoon", Hossain features the first instance of representing futuristic cities of Bangladesh in the wide corpus of the genre of speculative and futuristic fiction. Hanu, a cardless resident of futuristic Dhaka, and the djinn, Imbidor, venture out to establish a restaurant in the "Fringe" in Narayanganj, a semi-abandoned and ecologically unsafe town by the fatal river ("Own Spoon" 165-6). Although the river is described as a reason for the citizens "carrying deformities" (166), Hanu grills a fish caught by Imbidor from the same river for their customers. Their makeshift restaurant, where "the Cardless, ... the homeless, the drifters, [and] the thrill seekers" of the Fringe (165) do not pay with any real cash or sat minutes, thus becomes the perfect example of a creative little world altering their conception of their bodies' relationship with the city. It also

functions as a hopeful site of togetherness for all kinds of citizens and species, presenting the neoliberal urban authorities their own idea of ecotopian co-living. The restaurant, though eventually forcefully shut down by the private security from "the high city" on grounds of illegally "[g]athering in a red zone" (172), works for six whole months, feeding the people of the Fringe, upholding a mesmerising atmosphere of unity in diversity and despair. Hanu keeps concocting new recipes out of the herbs, livestock and ingredients found by the people and djinn of the Fringe in this time, and yet no one dies of his food despite the urban forces having declared anything surviving in the red zone as poisonous for all the residents.

Another distinct representation of a creative little world is the game, FF9000, discussed profusely in the selected texts. Played via an exclusive access to Virtuality, this game transmutes into a site of exchange between the diverse sets of players and teams playing it across the globe. Informing my analysis of this game as a virtual space of resistance against Securex and the imminent imposition of Karmic rule in Dhaka is Abbott's poignant remark at the end of his essay, "Markets and Mosaics", stating "[a] city can be a creative milieu even when it looks its worst, and sometimes because it looks its worst" (209). At the brink of losing their family and the city that they call home, Marzuk's afore-stated alliance with Arna, Leto, Djibreel, Kali and the Mongolian ventures into the world of FF9000. It is imperative to recognise here that Marzuk is only able to carry out his plan of saving the city by winning the game against Regi by immersing merely his consciousness in this virtual game through a special VR cowl. While he plays the game to save the city, Arna, Leto, the Mongolian and Djibreel protect the school, and by extension his very physical presence inside the school. So, while Marzuk's consciousness fights for the city and its autonomy in Virtuality, his body is defended by his team in the physical world. Exploiting his body as a "collection of parts capable of crossing the thresholds between

substances [or different spaces of reality] to form linkages" (Grosz 385), Marzuk is able to forge the means of reshaping the ecotopia as a negotiable site of creative little worlds.

Analysing urban spaces and the bodies they inhabit, control, guide and compartmentalise, in this iteration, becomes a decolonial endeavour aimed at bringing to the fore the diverse ways of being together in an ecotopian world divided by class and species. Hossain's revised ecotopian frameworks, rooted in representations of South Asian urban futures, point to the fact that the active and dynamic nodes of a city where actors from different lived realities and aspirations unite, albeit temporarily, provide fissures for revolt against the exclusionary policies of carceral walled-in ecotopias. Introducing channels of revolt in these little worlds of osmosis becomes a crucial element of contributing to the wide corpus of ecotopian writing and imagining in speculative and futuristic fiction.

Chapter 4

Multispecies Justice and Decolonial South Asian Futurisms

A key concern of my research is to underscore the ways in which Hossain's fiction represents the role of interspecies alliances in striving for establishing multispecies justice in futuristic societies, and how this becomes the core principle of Hossain's re-envisioned ecotopias in the genre of speculative and futuristic fiction. This chapter fleshes out two crucial points of focus. Firstly, it analyses the metaphorical role of djinn as a species in the wider network of different species interacting with and influencing one another in the selected fictional texts as they collectively envision more egalitarian and liberatory ecotopian spaces. Secondly, it underscores how the varying yet entangled species-specific knowledges are utilised by Hossain's characters to renegotiate the terms of co-living in futuristic urban spaces.

Hossain's fiction features futuristic cities where humans coexist with nonhuman actants like djinn, AIs, cyborgs and other 'mutants' coming to life through successful or unsuccessful biotechnological experimentations carried out by either the neoliberal imperialist rulers or the marginalised populations of the cities. Today more than ever, speculative and futuristic fiction abounds in representations of more-than-human entities. While adding to this scholarship, Hossain's portrayal of djinns as showcasing their unique epistemic histories, rooted in the cultural mythology of Bangladesh, concomitantly paves the way for his pivotal contribution in the newly emerging field of "South Asian futurisms", which Nudrat Kamal contends is

concerned with "[f]inding utopias within dystopias" (27). I extend Kamal's concept, and strive to portray Hossain's ecotopias in the light of spaces of 'decolonial South Asian futurisms'. My research thus posits that Hossain is able to home in on the decolonial re-visions of ecotopias, leading to the 'rebirth of the society' in his texts, through the portrayal of interspecies alliances and multispecies justice. A close reading of the texts chosen for this project foregrounds the ways in which the djinns deploy their unique alternate ancient knowledge as a species within the world, their distortion field as a tool of resistance and forming alliances, and their own understandings of ecotopias in the fight against the exclusionary urban policies of the eco-dystopias that they cohabit with humans and nonhumans.

I follow this discussion with readings of the texts that model the logic of revising ecotopias on the principles of "intersectionality", "inclusivity" and "response-abilities", which according to Petra Tschakert et al's scholarship, are embedded within the "multispecies justice (MSJ) lens" that attempts to view all beings as relational instead of individualistic on earth (4-6). It is here that I highlight the distinct voices of AIs and djinns as socio-political beings working alongside human characters and bringing in their unique positionalities and lived experiences in re-constituting the futuristic Bangladeshi cities via their interspecies alliances. Borrowing Jane Bennett's concept of "thing-power" ("The Force of Things" 348) and Anna Grear's reading of Bennett's scholarship in the light of "decolonial new materialism [or] possibilities" (60, 75), I analyse how Hossain's ecotopias transform into utopias of multispecies justice as different species shirk their exclusionary ontological status within their ecologies, and find the revolutionary potential inherent in practising "relational ontolog[ies]" (Tschakert et al 5). What surges to the front as a consequence is an intertwined web of multispecies "co-feeling or sympathy" ("The Force of Things" 361) whose aim, I suggest, is establishing justice for all

species in a climatically endangered South Asian landscape. I argue that Hossain's specific portrayal of multispecies justice, MSJ, grounded in Bangladeshi epistemologies and cultural myths echoes Christine J. Winter's perusal of "decolonial MSJ" encompassing the lived histories and relational aspirations of the "human and nonhuman, living and elemental, material and spiritual" within its framework (50). Therefore, Hossain's depiction of South Asian multispecies justice is a decolonial endeavour in re-imagining ecological utopias.

4.1 Djinn as Decolonial Metaphors

"The djinn were smokeless fire; now they were bone and blood. Thousands of new bodies,

needing thousands of new homes."

"The Spite House", Kirsty Logan

This section is primarily concerned with the radical decolonial potential inherent in Hossain's distinctive illustration of djinn as a metaphor for Bangladeshi folklore, and in the broader sense, the indigenous knowledge systems of South Asia. In this part of my analysis, I argue that investigating djinn as decolonial metaphors in Hossain's texts sets the stage for a valuable contribution to not only the genre-defining corpus of what Kamal terms South Asian futurisms, but also the category of nonhumans widely researched in the multispecies worldviews portrayed in ecotopian fiction. Kamal's research, highlighting the different representations of South Asian "imagined futures" in the past two centuries and the present time (20), lapses into the post-colonial critiques of the genre of science fiction and fantasy. She continuously refers to the colonial and imperial outset and current tangents in the genre of futuristic fiction in an attempt to underscore how South Asian futurisms today are breaking free from the colonial imprints as they exhibit a strong "utopian impulse" grounded in "connection" as opposed to "individualism and segregation" (26). While many of Kamal's arguments reverberate the propositions made in this

part of my analysis, they do not specifically deploy the significant term, 'decoloniality', and its inherent political praxis. I endeavour to add the vibrant substance and politics of decoloniality to her definition of South Asian futurisms paving the way for a distinctly South Asian imaginary of the futures re-envisioned as a canvas of interspecies alliances and decolonial multispecies justice.

It is incumbent upon me here to clarify that the usage of the term, decolonial metaphor, in my analysis does not in any capacity share the accusations made by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's against the scholars using decolonization as a metaphor. The crux of their argument in their essay, "Decolonization Is Not A Metaphor", propounds that "decolonizing discourse (making decolonization a metaphor)" leads to "settler moves of innocence [that] attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all" (3, 9). Tuck and Yang advocate for a "demetaphorization of decolonization" as they explain how using a metaphor for decolonization turns it into an "empty signifier to be filled by any track towards liberation" (9-10). I digress from such a narrow usage of the term, decolonization, and side instead with Christine Hauskeller's potent declaration that "[d]ecolonization can abide no narrow definition when faced with a multifarious colonialism" (741). The neoliberal imperial power structures imbricated with Western colonial powers manifest in different shapes, narrative choices and tropes, and at various scales throughout the genre of speculative and futuristic fiction. I engage with Hossain's djinn characters as 'decolonial metaphors' in hopes of advocating a South Asian decolonial mode of resistance against the Western or Eurocentric portrayal of djinns, jinns or genies, that in no manner undermines "the political applicability, the strategic force, and the theoretical potency of decolonization as a politico-linguistic term" (Hauskeller et al. 741). 'Djinns as decolonial metaphors' thus becomes a vantage point for me to analyse how different species use their

specific ancestral knowledges and positionalities within the wider network of humans and nonhumans in an ecotopia.

Borrowing Bennett's concept of "thing-power" featuring the "recalcitrance or moment of vitality in things" ("The Force of Things" 348), I look into the textual instances in which Hossain allocates this agency of vitality to djinns, bringing them into the category of "(nonhuman) vibrant matter things" contriving their differential positionality and power (348, 355) in the ecotopias depicted in the fictional texts under scrutiny. I engage with the corpus of the so-called canon of Western theory here with the hopes of enacting what Chela Sandoval terms as the "methodology of the oppressed" which forges out her aims to "reconstruct theory and method to create a new vision and world of thought and action, of theory and method, of alliance" (5). Sandoval boldly remarks that "no canonical Western thought is free of de-colonial effects" as she engages in the study of Western theories of race, identity politics, gender etc (4-5). Guided by her proposition, this part of my analysis endeavours to envision the decolonial methodology of envisioning djinns as nonhuman actants with their distinct knowledge, lore, and vibrant materialism in Hossain's corpus. Taking cue from Kamal's scholarship on "dreaming futures" for South Asia (17), my research contends that the differential agencies of nonhuman actants— precisely djinns in Hossain's fiction—decentre the Western gaze, dictating the category of djinn, while centring the "indigenous philosophical thought, scientific knowledge and cultural mythology" of South Asia (19). These philosophical prisms provide a theoretical framework for the analysis of the 'nonhuman decolonial category' of djinn in Hossain's fiction.

An overview of the treatment of the category of djinns, jinns or genies by Western writers in the tapestry of speculative and science fiction genre brings to the fore either the djinns' regression to the role of notorious tricksters lurking in the dark and demonic spirits possessing

human bodies, or mere wish granters subservient to human commands. The ghost of Aladdin's archetypal genie still reigns supreme in the speculative fiction from the Global North. In the course of my analysis, I look into how Hossain's re-conceptualisation of djinns intervenes as a decolonial metaphor in not merely the scholarship of speculative and science fiction genre predominantly steered by the Global North, but also within the re-envisioned ecotopian spaces detailed in his fiction. I further use this re-conceptualisation to add the 'South Asian category of djinn'—enriched by the cultural mythology and indigenous knowledge systems in Hossain's fiction—in the various beings brought under the ever-expanding concept of 'nonhumans', or what Bruno Latour terms and later Bennett addresses as "actants" as they endeavour to comprehend "the multiple modalities and degrees of [their] agency" ("The Force of Things" 355, 365) within an ecology.

Hossain's djinn characters manifest different facets of "thing-power" or "actancy" (354) which makes them more than mere objects or static beings, serving only as the age-old tropes in speculative and futuristic fiction, as they navigate the urban spaces in futuristic Bangladesh. It is important to note here that Bennett's scholarship on vibrant materialism "explicitly rejects the language of the 'object' for the nonhuman thing" (Grear 67) which could undermine the agency and actancy of nonhuman entities in our ecology. Her conscious usage of the term 'things' encapsulates the idea that vibrant matter or lively things are "quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own" ("Preface" viii) pushes for a non-anthropocentric comprehension of the world that humans and nonhumans occupy together. It is this potential of vibrant matter as 'quasi-agents' that encourages my reading of Hossain's djinns as more than an abstract philosophical category of the nonhuman, passively existing in a world ruled by neoliberal imperial forces. These djinns, with their specific 'propensities and

tendencies', hence enact what Grear postulates as the decolonial possibilities of Bennett's vibrant materialism. Grear's work finds an affinity between Bennett's concept of vibrant materialism and "the indigenous onto-epistemologies that are richly responsive to multiplicitous open-ended interrelational flows of becoming by inter/intra-action with multiple others, in a richly entangled more-than-human 'world of worlds'" (77). This attention to indigenous onto-epistemologies, encompassing the distinct knowledges and thing-power of humans and nonhumans, is embedded in the decolonial aims inherent in Bennett's work which views the world as a canvas of multiple "bodies [that] become more than mere objects, as the thing powers of resistance and protean agency are brought into sharper relief" ("The Force of Things" 360). I hence read Hossain's category of djinns as entities manifesting decolonial thing-power that strategically intervenes in the neoliberal imperial fabric of his ecotopian cities.

I argue that Hossain's re-envisioned category of djinns, grounded in the Bangladeshi lore as opposed to the Western or Middle Eastern conceptualisations, adds a South Asian tangent to Bennett's theorisation of nonhuman actants displaying a distinct thing-power. Resultantly, the 'nonhuman djinn actant' emerges as a decolonial category of beings in Hossain's futuristic fiction. I read this categorisation by Hossain as a praxis of decoloniality in that it resonates with Catherine Walsh's comprehension of decoloniality. Walsh states that decoloniality as a praxis, practice and action, apart from simply being a theoretical perspective, "seeks to make visible, open up, and advance radically distinct perspectives and positionalities that displace Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis, and thought" (17). Hossain's nonhuman djinn actants have their own "history, ... culture, ... laws and rules" (Dhaka Sessions" 00:23:11-00:23:27) that are distinct from humans or other species, and are portrayed as predating humans in his texts. By writing a vast epistemic history of djinns as a species, and

further allocating major roles to djinn characters in his fiction as they participate in the re-visions of ecotopias in his texts, Hossain practises a decoloniality contributing to Kamal's South Asian futurisms, "envision[ing] futures for South Asia that draw on our own histories and cultures without necessarily centering the Western gaze" (19). The emerging category of the ''nonhuman djinn actant' thus initiates conversations around re-envisioning decolonial South Asian ecotopias.

Hossain's djinns, as decolonial nonhuman actants, exercise the powers of what he terms the "distortion field", "the ubiquitous power source running through the universe, accessible, detectable *only* to the djinn, the foundation of their superiority. All djinn could manipulate the field, distort and bend it within their circumference, use it to change the very nature of matter and energy (*The Gurkha* 1). As djinns make their way through the city spaces, they display their distortion fields in varying magnitudes, for motivations that are either selfish or communal. I argue that as they use their distortion field or effect, and physically and epistemically touch and penetrate the material world around them, these djinns attempt to invade and re-canvass the neoliberal imperial policies framing the socio-political fabric of the ecotopian spaces that they live (in). Tellingly, the distortion field disrupts the genre of speculative and science fiction making way for the djinns of South Asian futurisms to voice their own ecological concerns in the capacity of nonhuman actants.

Throughout the four texts under study, the distortion field is exploited by the djinns as a tool of resistance against the unjust neoliberal imperialist policies, sketching social hierarchies and geographic grid systems separating the cardholders from the cardless, or simply the valuable from the dispensable in the futuristic cities of Bangladesh. This resistance to the structure of the unjust regimes in their ecotopias using their species-specific knowledge becomes a manifestation

of their 'decolonial thing-power' or actancy which concurs with Michael Angelo Rumore's assessment that Bennett's work "provides a stepping off point for decolonial work on the subaltern" (Grear 79), particularly the species of djinns in Hossain's fiction. In "Own Spoon", the djinn Imbidor uses his distortion field to shield his human friend and business partner, Hanu, as they both make their way through the dilapidated part of Dhaka called "Narayanganj", lined with sick Cardless people, suffering from physical deformities due to "the [perpetually] bad air" that is never scrubbed clean for the residents by the urban authorities (166). Imbidor exercises his "power of resistance", sprouting from his position as more than a mere object, echoing the agency of "vibrant matter", inherent in Bennett's idea of "thing-power materialism" ("The Force of Things" 360). Hossain narrates that Imbi, short for Imbidor, "extend[s] his distortion field around Hanu like a ragged cloak, keeping out the bad stuff in the air" ("Own Spoon" 166). His distortion field, specific to only his own species, comes into direct contact with the matter of the futuristic world he moves in, rejecting the ecological pessimism that it is built on. In this capacity, Imbidor's thing-power, his distortion field, reflects Rumore's critical statement on Bennett's vibrant materialism which, according to his assessment, "offers a theoretical starting point by demanding that we take seriously the ability of nonhuman matter to resist the demiurgic ambitions of the imperial gaze" ("Provincializing Humanism" n.d.) of the rulers that dictate their status within a system.

Reverberating a similar use of the distortion field is the djinn, Regi's evasion of the Karmic surveillance system in *The Gurkha* as she operates her drug business in the Garden of Dreams in her city. Surprised at Karma's ignorance of Regi's drug business, Melek Ahmer and Bhan Gurung enquire of this strange occurrence under the panoptic rule of Karma, unable to detect and curtail the drug dealership in her cities (*The Gurkha* 48-9). To this, Regi responds by

saying that the djinns' "distortion fields cause interference. The predictive functions [of Karma] don't work with djinn, especially ones with very strong fields. Apparently, the distortion sphere causes so much basic quantum uncertainty that mathematically it is debatable whether [they] even exist or not" (48). This self-realisation, rooted in the thing-power of djinns, "emphasiz[es] their powers of life" outside, "resistance" against, and "even a kind of will" ("The Force of Things" 360) beyond the socio-politically penetrating governance system of Karma. Regi's distortion field in this regard enacts what Bennett calls "a relational effect, a function of several things operating at the same time or in conjunction with one another" as she further describes the contours of thing-power (354). I argue that Regi's distortion field as a species-specific tool is utilised by her to perform several functions. It protects her drug business, allowing her to earn a lot of Karmic points; helps us channel her distinct social position as a djinn within futuristic Kathmandu, and transforms the Garden of Dreams as a space of harmonious interaction between djinns and humans where they share the urge to shrug the pessimism of the eco-dystopia that they all live in. I posit that Hossain's portrayal of Regi's presence or body as a djinn hence emerges as an "ecological strategy … in powerful alignment with decolonial aims" (Grear 78) that include practising her distinct thing-power in various modes within an ecotopia and resisting the imperialist contours of the city as a nonhuman actant.

The djinns in my selected texts boast of a history predating humans on earth. This is not to say that they are exotic beings, whose image as other-than-human beings is magically preserved in deep time. I posit that Hossain sketches their long history by weaving their presence in the different aeons on earth as well as Bangladesh to assert the significance of their indigenous knowledge as well as their ecological concerns as they navigate the exclusionary and discriminatory urban spaces of futuristic Dhaka, Chittagong and Kathmandu. A key

representation of such a perspective is the djinn, Melek Ahmar's role in *The Gurkha*. Throughout his adventures and struggles alongside his human and djinn allies in this futuristic city, Melek Ahmar keeps adding the unique flavour of his knowledge emanating from djinn lore, history and sensibilities evoking what Walsh calls "decolonial cracks ... contribut[ing] to the fissures of the dominant order" (24) within the wider scheme of affairs in futuristic Bangladeshi cities. Evincing this proposition is Melek Ahmar's bewilderment as he awakes from a rival djinn's spell "after millennia", and finds himself in the vicinity of the ecotopian Kathmandu Incorporation, which "reminded him of ancient Gangaridai, the first city of the djinn, now gone from [the] world" (*The Gurkha* 1-6). I read his act of equating an ecotopian city which Gurung introduces as "a most beautiful one" with Gangaridai (*The Gurkha*6) as a "decolonial crack" (Walsh 24), ushering in a djinn's novel perspective in understanding an ecotopia, and participating in its re-shaping as is evident in the course of the novella. For Gurung, his own epistemic reference points are crucial in understanding anything new that he encounters. This succinctly underscores Hossain's adherence to depicting djinns as a category of nonhumans or vibrant matter showcasing a radically different onto-epistemological worldview alongside human beings.

Further highlighting the decolonial potential of Hossain's South Asian indigenous depiction of the djinn's knowledge and power in his texts, I look into another one of his djinn characters, Horus, in *Kundo*. While Horus makes a physical entry in the text only in the last part of the novella, his presence as an intruder in and a reformer of the eco-pessimistic city of Chittagong looms large throughout the text. He, in fact, turns out to be the reason why humans have been disappearing from the city in mass numbers as he provides them a channel to forge new lives for themselves in the first city of djinns, Gangaridai. By using his own knowledge of the city, Horus offers both humans and djinns a passage, a doorway, via a video game called the

Black Road, to seek a different facet of ecotopian living in a future marred by climate disasters and neoliberal imperialist forces feeding off of human bodies. While narrating the history of this city, Horus remarks

> Millenia ago, in the age of djinn and man, … there was the first city, made by djinn and human hybrids… Gangaridai was the best and most glorious… When the High King looked into the future, he saw his precious city falling, and … chose the insane path of removing the city from this realm altogether. What he did, exactly, no one knows, but this place on the other side of the door is more fundamental, more real than our own universe, and there is no time and no decay, and all things exist in their perfect form (*Kundo* 107).

In so doing, Horus offers, without any hint of imposing, what Walsh calls the "other reflections, other considerations, and other understandings … [concerning] decolonial thinking-doing" (21), heralding the possibility of catering to different aspirations of ecotopian living, removed from Western underpinnings. Horus offers the possibility of an ecotopia in a space-time continuum far removed from the world that the helpless, closely monitored and docile populations occupy in a drowning Chittagong. Hence, I posit that Horus's act of establishing a channel into Gangaridai from within Chittagong's underground gaming zones is yet another instance of making way for "decolonial cracks contribut[ing] to the fissures" (24) within an eco-pessimistic social order. His carefully built and guarded 'passage' to the other world promising eternal peace and fulfilment is an expression of his positionality within the drowning ecotopia as a nonhuman djinn actant who retains his individual thing-power as well as his relational ontology within a world inhabited by humans and nonhumans.

Hossain's djinns, as argued earlier, are not fixed outdated beings preserved in a timepredating humans in the universe. His category of djinns exhibits the marvels of evolution as their sentience develops in line with modern technology, space travel and unprecedented animal husbandry that consolidate their unparalleled potency and decision-making status in the wider web of different species in the universe. In the second part of *Cyber Mage*, Hossain sketches the insides of "ISS Djinnstar", a djinn-controlled "International Space Station" where "most of the [d]jinn[s] … were exiled members of the Royal Aeronautics Society" (173-4). Establishing a djinn kingdom in space, supervised by djinn aeronauts, points to their technologically advanced sentience, and this, in turn, accentuates Hossain's deviation from the Western representations of djinns in speculative and futuristic fiction. I propound that this technologically advanced portrayal of djinns aligns with Walsh's concept of resurgence of indigenous knowledges crucial in the praxis of decoloniality as well as Grear's decolonial reading of vibrant matter. Walsh asserts that her interest in the project of decoloniality is with the knowledges "resurging and insurging from below (that is, from the ground up) within and through embodied struggle and practice, struggles and practices that, in turn, continually generate and regenerate knowledge" (19). In this respect, my research foregrounds how Hossain's positionality as a Bangladeshi speculative and science fiction writer advocates a 'resurgence' of South Asian indigenous knowledges in reformulating liberatory ecotopias situated in South Asian cities while adhering to the local epistemological understanding and presence of djinns in South Asia.

The most pronounced thematic thread running through the afore-stated textual references is a spirited re-imagining of a future coloured by the dissident yet relational decolonial ontologies of djinns, exhibiting their agency as nonhuman actants and indigenous populations within ecotopian spaces. This, in fact, follows the foundational principle of South Asian

futurisms, "offer[ing] a vibrant poetics and vocabulary to explore questions of risk and reward which arise out of the impacts of … [increasing] climate change on the subcontinent" (Kamal 20). I offer that the djinns' onto-epistemic situatedness, and the decolonial manifestations of their unique thing-power within futuristic Dhaka, Chittagong and Kathmandu become the basis of this vibrant djinn poetics and vernacular, non-Western centric vocabulary to investigate novel channels of approaching ecological utopian policies for South Asia.

4.2 Multispecies Justice Leading to Ecotopian Revisions

"There is nothing out there as dark as our doubts, nor as dangerous as our inaction. Go out. See for yourselves. And if what you find there is broken, know that together we can fix it."

The Silo Saga Omnibus, Hugh Howey

In the final section of my analysis, I return to a vital concern of my research which has succinctly motivated this study since its inception. Here, I look into Hossain's representation of interspecies alliances laying the foundation of multispecies justice which in turn paves the way for enacting decolonial multispecies justice. Central here is that which Petra Tschakert et al's scholarship defines as a "multispecies justice (MSJ) lens", understood as a framework of "inclusive", "intersectional" and "response-able" relationalities, aimed at imagining more just and liberatory ecological co-futures that humans and nonhumans build together (5). Investigating the encounters between different species in my selected texts, I highlight critical moments of their acknowledgment of their suffering and "griev[ing] together" (Tschakert et al. 7) at the hands of the discriminatory policies of ecotopias in the futuristic cities based in Bangladesh in Hossain's fiction. In the course of the final section of this chapter, I underscore another vital concept of thing-power, "conjunctions" or "the property of an assemblage" which, according to Bennett, leads to re-addressing our ecological thinking by foregrounding that all material bodies have

relational ontologies ("The Force of Things" 353-4) that keep overlapping in the wider web of the world. Analysing how Hossain's human and nonhuman characters exhibit this aspect of thing-power is crucial in that it echoes MSJ's attempt of enriching the narratives of climate justice by delineating "how to prefigure and enact alternative and just futures" (Tschakert et al. 7) for different species and lifeworlds.

My analysis foregrounds Hossain's portrayal of interspecies alliances leading to the crucial praxis of what Christine Winter calls "decolonial multispecies justice" according to which "justice resides in the relationship [between humans and nonhumans], not the individual or species" (46). Winter's research engages with the emerging field of multispecies justice in an attempt to bring in the critical voices of indigenous philosophies and epistemologies that have the potential to widen the scope of MSJ, and hence bring forth its decolonial potential. While her scholarship exclusively takes inspiration from the Maori indigenous philosophy to build the political landscape of decolonial MSJ, my research highlights the need to include the indigenous knowledge systems and political consciousness represented in the Bangladeshi/ South Asian speculative and futuristic fiction in order to enrich the field of decolonial MSJ. Winter's profound slogan, "all matter matters" (47), encourages me to analyse Hossain's bold usage of Bangladeshi mythology in sketching the varying histories and characteristics of different species showcasing multiple modes of decolonial thing-power and actancy, leading to his re-envisioned ecotopias situated in South Asian cities. I find connections between Winter and Tschakert's concept of multispecies justice as my analysis is centered around the ideas of reciprocity and response-abilities in the daily interactions of humans and nonhumans.

Such a conceptualisation of decolonial multispecies justice, rooted in South Asian speculative and futuristic fiction, aligns with the framework of 'decolonial South Asian

futurisms', an extension of Kamal's term of South Asian futurisms. Kamal highlights the tapestry of South Asian futurism beginning with portrayals of optimistic utopian futures in the texts produced in the 19th and 20th century, shifting to the "dark futurity" of the 21st century, and finally the contemporary imaginings of multifarious and ambiguous futures ingrained in "local forms of struggle and resistance" providing the readers with glimmers of hope for a better future (28). However, it does not necessarily entail the promotion of decolonial multispecies justice as a crucial note in theorizing the emerging and politically charged field of South Asian futurisms. It is in the light of this lacuna in her research that I intend to extend her definition of futurisms to the more radical and multifarious conception of decolonial South Asian futurisms rooted in the interconnected triad of "all time/space/matter" (Winter 52). Winter suggests that "the boundaries of MSJ's description of 'species' needs to be nonexclusive [and that] … [p]orous boundaries might then accommodate multiple ontologies without hierarchical ordering or domination" in order to achieve a decolonial MSJ praxis (42). This conception perfectly aligns with my proposition of viewing human/nonhuman entanglements, illustrated via Bangladeshi local epistemologies and delinked from the Eurocentric/Western gaze, as a manifestation of Walsh's idea of decoloniality as an option. I argue that Hossain's revised ecotopias envision futuristic spaces that are rebuilt on the idea of radical decolonial multispecies justice that offers many ways of achieving a more egalitarian pluriversal mode of living for all species.

The protagonist, Marzuk's crucial dialogue in *Cyber Mage*—"*We* are fighting for the fate of the city" (333; emphasis added)—informs my reading of Hossain's selected texts in the light of a multispecies justice lens. This dialogue perfectly reiterates the principles of intersectionality across different species and lifeworlds, recognition of which stands pivotal in envisioning an inclusive and response-able decolonial multispecies justice contributing localised and hence

more beneficial configurations of living in the climatically endangered South Asian futuristic cities. An MSJ lens stipulates viewing the world as a dynamic and mutually configuring ecological space, which, in Bennett's words, displays an entangled "kinship between humans and things … [as] actants" ("The Force of Things" 360) and "quasi agents" in the world that they co-habit ("Preface" viii). Such a view textures my comprehension of Hossain's futuristic fiction as an indigenously crafted site of forwarding the idea of decolonial MSJ from the Global South, while re-centring South Asian concerns and worldviews in the vast scholarship of climate justice.

In *Cyber Mage*, Marzuk's campaign against Securex forwards the possibility of devising new channels of co-existence with nonhumans that were previously unthought of in a Dhaka ruled by the neoliberal imperialist policies of privately-owned corporations like Securex, and later the impending collaboration of ISS and the AI, Karma. As evinced in the previous chapter, his campaign comprises djinns, AIs, cyborgs and other humans which echoes the foundational parameter of striving for a multispecies justice that is 'intersectionality'. Tschakert et al postulate that their MSJ lens "recognizes the simultaneity of identities and categories of difference and inequalities [particularly in the form of different] species and beings, … and their interlocking in structures and processes of injustice and oppression" (5). All the species coming together in their fight against the exclusionary and necropolitical schemes of Securex recognise this 'interlocking' as the core issue of their suffering in the futuristic world of Dhaka. Marzuk, a human, wishes to save his family being held prisoner by the officials of Securex. He simultaneously endeavours to protect the infrastructure and the populations of Dhaka, and its marginal neighbourhoods that the fast approaching AI, Karma, is targeting in order to take complete control of the city's assets and administer them entirely on her own. All the species are hence interlocked in an oppressive

system controlled by foreign corporations, pharmaceutical firms and a small group of wealthy shareholders making all the decisions for the ecotopian policies in Dhaka. In his noble fight of saving the city and its varying populations, Marzuk finds djinns, AIs, fellow humans and cyborgs working together as allies to seek justice in a world at the brink of climate chaos and a more lethal social injustice. Their intersectionality, sprouting from their practising the different modes of being vis-a-vis their distinct species, paves the way for the establishment of a just multispecies ecological consciousness and worldview.

This recognition is achieved in the text when all the members belonging to different species in Marzuk's team unanimously subscribe to an appreciation of the multispecies world that they inhabit as a "natural-cultural-technological assemblage" ("The Force of Things" 361). Bennett postulates that the agency of different actants within the space that they live in flows as an "assemblage" in the world (353-4) instead of being an attribute of individual possession. This line of thought resonates with Grear's discussion of the decolonial potential of Bennet's relational assemblages as enabling a radical ontology of environmental justice crafted via the "indigenous modes of knowing [which] never assumed the humanist subject to start with" in their activism for decolonial multispecies justice (77). Grear elaborates the decolonial possibilities of Bennett's concept of "intra-becoming" of different species and lifeworlds as she points to the advocacy of "indigenous cosmovisions" towards decolonial relational assemblages (73). This, I posit, paves the way for re-imagining decolonial ecotopian representations in South Asian speculative and futuristic fiction.

The nexus, built between Grear and Bennett's scholarship on decolonial relational ecology of matter and Tschakert et al's postulation of a relational MSJ, which I employ to read Hossain's multispecies alliances is further bolstered by Winter's crucial remark about decolonial

MSJ. Winter excavates the indigenous philosophical and epistemological systems of a community to underscore that a call for environmental or climate justice in the wake of climate disasters underscores the non-anthropocentric and hence relational framework of decolonial MSJ. She boldly asserts "[t]hat the subject of MSJ is something more than an individual [that] permeate[s her] discussion of what matter matters — which … is all matter, as none may exist without the other" (Winter 51). It is in the light of these discussions that I forward the politically charged term of 'decolonial South Asian MSJ' which illustrates the hope for a better future for all kinds of vibrant matter—human or nonhuman, physical or spiritual, living or nonliving—via its foundation in the local South Asian forms of knowing and living.

In the light of the aforementioned nexus leading to the conceptualisation of a decolonial South Asian MSJ lens, I now analyse the different kinds of assemblages converging in Marzuk's team to topple Securex, ISS and Karma's hold over the city. The AI, Kali, uses her agency as a distinct AI species in the virtual world, specifically in the game FF9000, alongside Marzuk, and against Regi and Karma to fight for justice in Dhaka. Critical to point out here is that Kali is considered to be a species different from other nonhumans in *Cyber Mage* as evinced by Marzuk's statement, "AIs are like fully individual minds. You can't really control them. They're not like property or assets. You have to treat them like people" (320). I argue that Marzuk's statement underscores Kali's individual agency and differential sentience, and thus advocates for her rights as a species that deserves justice in a multispecies world. Thus, Kali finds herself situated within the "natural-cultural-technological assemblage" ("The Force of Things" 361) in futuristic Dhaka as she wilfully joins the fight for multispecies justice. Hossain's clever projection of the AIs as a separate sentient species is important in that it situates South Asian speculative and futuristic fiction amidst the ongoing post-humanist literature advocating and

acknowledging the rights of the more-than-human technological beings. It further underscores that localised narratives of futurism are a manifestation of Winter's decolonial political theory of MSJ which she postulates "should not foreclose thinking beyond spans that reflect [merely] human life spans" (49). Thus, South Asian imaginings of a posthuman world bring in crucial voices of their own locally re-imagined aspirations and characteristics of the nonhuman species, like AIs, proliferating the wide corpus of futuristic fiction as they de-center the Western postulations of such species.

Utilising her differential sentience, or her species-specific knowledge system, in the virtual world as an expression of her agency's conjunction with other species and beings, Kali joins forces with Marzuk in the game FF9000 to keep Karma and ISS from taking full control of the city. Kali and Marzuk's interaction and alliance within this decisive game accents their "closely-knit relational ontologies", another key concept within the MSJ lens (Tschakert et al. 5). As they make their final moves in the game, Hossain comments on their alliance as "[t]hey had fought well together, showing a trust and understanding that bespoke some kind of natural *kinship*" (*Cyber Mage* 351; emphasis added). I argue that the word 'kinship' here succinctly signifies how their alliance sets the stage for their victory against the nearing Karmic rule as they exercise Bennett's concept of thing-power which states that anything or actant "has power by virtue of its operating in conjunction with other things" within the interlinked web of species in the world ("The Force of Things" 354). Thus, the future of the city they fight for and successfully secure is weaved together as a canvas of multispecies justice.As they finally win against the Karma-Regi alliance, Marzuk and Kali find themselves in the key position of being in charge of "thirty million people" (367) and the more-than-human species within and on the outskirts of Dhaka. I contend that their victory, rooted in their fight for decolonial multispecies

justice, sets the ground for a more liveable and just ecotopia envisioned in South Asian futurisms.

Favouring their fight is also their belief in what Winter radically presses for in her study—the "local/present/all space/all time/all matter interweaving spiral" of decolonial MSJ (49)—in which all kinds of species/matter eventually contribute with their distinct knowledges. These knowledges, I argue, are a product of a temporality that is distinct from the human concept of time. Kali is an AI made out of djinn spells and their technological expertise, and groomed to fight against the neoliberal imperialist forces of Dhaka within days by her human friend and some gamers in FF9000. During this time that she spends in the human world and the virtual game, FF9000, equips her with critical tools of resistance against the Karma-Regi alliance. She learns to use new spells, forms alliances, wins useful score and equipment in the game which come in handy when she begins fighting alongside Marzuk in a bid to win the fate of the city against the imperialist forces comprising djinns, humans and AIs (*Cyber Mage* 300-2). Her temporal presence in the human world vividly deviates from any human understanding of a species of nonhumans. Yet, it stands pivotal in fighting against the exclusionary and necropolitical policies of Dhaka's rulers. Her time, matter and story as an AI species matter equally in the noble fight for decolonial multispecies justice.

In a similar strain, the nonhuman actancy of the djinns, Djibrel and Indelbed, becomes involved in the "inclusive" multispecies justice framework which "offers an inclusive and relational ontology, ethics, and politics that acknowledges the vast relational web of co-existence … across species" (Tschakert et al. 5). Djibrel, a skilled warrior with a djinn-made *talwar*, joins the campaign against Securex and the ISS-Karma alliance, and protects the humans and nonhumans seeking asylum in the American International School of Dhaka. He uses his skill

with his "invisible-edged sword" (*Cyber Mage* 305) "forged in dragon [djinn] flame" and cast in his fellow djinn, Bahamut's djinn "incantations" (47), together with his body's ability to heal his major wounds within minutes in order to fight Securex's "Major Karmon" (305-6), deployed to destroy the school, and murder its asylum seekers.

My reading of Djibrel's showcasing of his species-specific ontology against the Securex army, including the notorious Major Karmon, contends that it is, in fact, rooted in his "conjunction" ("The Force of Things" 353) with other actants, working in concert with the idea of inclusivity in a multispecies justice framework in *Cyber Mage*. Djibrel consciously enacts his djinn-specific power to fight for justice alongside other humans and nonhumans. Indelbed's role in this novel follows suit as he uses his distortion field to save Leto while fighting against Securex's army within the school compound. Using his distortion field to project "a red scalpel line of power" from his finger, he "bisect[s] the bullet, then the barrel of the gun, and then the arm of the sniper" aiming directly at Leto, and further secures his body by lifting him off the ground to transport him to a safer site (*Cyber Mage* 304-5). Although he abstains from commenting on his urge to save the boy, Indelbed actually subverts his fame as a murderer of humans and djinns in the past, and re-casts his actancy within the inclusive multispecies justice framework.

Such potent and rebellious representations of djinn characters fighting for securing the human and nonhuman populations of the city against the impending AI slavery and dominance is testament to Hossain's localised endeavour of re-formulating the fabric of South Asian ecotopias. Hossain reframes the category of djinns as nonhumans via Bangladeshi mythology and indigenous knowledge systems that makes it distinct from the Western portrayals of genies. By doing so, Hossain enacts what Mignolo calls "epistemic disobedience" as he presses for

"decolonial liberation" (114) from the vocabulary and conceptualizations of Western scholars specifically in the field of futuristic fiction. I argue that Indelbed and Djibreel, as nonhuman djinn actants and as bold illustrations of Hossain's decolonial South Asian futurism, use their relational ontology for the sole purpose of protecting their interspecies alliance with humans, cyborgs and AIs in the text as it strives for a more egalitarian mode of living for all the urban residents. In this iteration, this alliance serves again as a pathway for decolonial multispecies justice.

As Marzuk's team's fight proceeds in the final part of *Cyber Mage*, it is joined by other such groups and actants from different parts of the world to combat the injustice lurking in the wake of a complete Karmic control over Dhaka, and later different cities of the world. Marzuk records the reach of their advocacy for multispecies justice when he comments, "[m]ore people have joined our effort … [t]here are hundreds of people helping us" (*Cyber Mage* 281). I posit that their 'effort' becomes a tactic of "inclusive and relational … ethics and politics" (Tschakert et al. 5) which extends its potency and fight for alternative just futures beyond South Asia in the texts. In one instance, Arna states that a multispecies "crew from Uruguay" (*Cyber Mage* 281) has joined their retaliation against the unjust neoliberal imperialist forces. Although a brief remark in the extensive discussion of this multispecies retaliation, it lays bare the crucial potential of South Asian futurisms in re-imagining the global corpus of ecotopian fiction by foregrounding indigenous voices and epistemologies. Such a remark also reflects Kamal's hopes regarding South Asian futurisms according to which they "might offer us … perhaps a roadmap into a radically different future: one that connects localized forms of struggle and resistance into a broader, transnational and potentially global way of being" (28). Marzuk's localised form of struggle, which is based on bringing in the power of relational ontologies and the decolonial

possibilities inherent in the retaliation of 'all matters', is hence able to offer a transnational way of including all life-forms and worldviews into the mosaic of decolonial multispecies justice.

In Hossain's short story, "Own Spoon", Imbidor and Hanu envisage a multispecies space, a restaurant called "Bring Your Own Spoon" (165), where everyone gets free food without any discrimination of class or species. I argue that the very title of the short story is emblematic of an inclusive and intersectional multispecies justice, creating an interlinked web of knowledges, aspirations and retaliatory tactics specific to the characters' 'own' species. It further highlights how Hossain urges his characters to 'bring' in their distinct identities, material realities, and species-specific knowledges and aspirations in re-envisioning an ecotopia, grounded in South Asian cities, where the "simultaneity of identities" (Tschakert et al. 5) is celebrated as a stepping stone of decolonial multispecies justice. Their restaurant, in this capacity, addresses what Winter calls "the scalar problem [that] MSJ now confronts [which entails] … that the subject of justice is something more than the individual; perhaps it is a community of like beings, or perhaps communities of multiplicitous relationships" (48). Hossain's representation of this restaurant serves as a configuration of the "entangled human/nonhuman/spiritual continuum" which Winter posits as an expression of decolonial MSJ (48-9). Imbidor and Hanu's restaurant successfully functions for "six months", and during all this time Imbidor keeps "his field up like a tent, [keeps] the bad air at bay, visibly exhausting himself, burning surveillance drones out of the sky" ("Own Spoon" 171).

In order to run this microclime, Imbidor contributes the boons of his vibrant matter as a djinn by protecting the customers with his distortion field while Hanu offers his knowledge of the old methods of cooking and ancient Bangladeshi recipes which bring people from all backgrounds together to marvel at the idea of hope and joy in the midst of a dilapidated city.

Their contributions hence register Mignolo's proposition of decoloniality as a praxis which involves the radical processes of "undoing and redoing" (120). Mignolo elaborates these two critical facets of decoloniality as he remarks that "[u]ndoing is doing something; delinking presupposes relinking to something else" (120). In the light of this proposition, Hanu and Imbidor's efforts to run this restaurant are acts of undoing the necropolitical policies of the state which cordones off the less valuable and dispensable humans and nonhumans from the boons and comfort of an ecotopia reserved for the valuable citizens of futuristic Dhaka.

They also simultaneously rebuild a sense of unity and hope for a just multispecies future as they provide food to all the customers without any demand for money, services or sat minutes. Their customers become their sole appraisers as they delink themselves from the fate assigned to them by the big corporations and pharmaceutical firms experimenting and presiding over them. Highlighting this decolonial praxis performed by Hanu and Imbidor, and later by their customers, Hossain states that their restaurant, feeding humans and nonhumans, "started up the conversation, rounds of introductions, stumbling praise for the food, old recollections of when they had last seen food like this, of the myriad turns of their lives that had left them Cardless and desperate on the streets" ("Own Spoon" 171). The community acknowledges its various interspecies entanglements and relational ontologies within their urban spaces as it strives to build a small yet potent space of decolonial multispecies justice. I read Hanu and Imbidor's collective envisioning and establishing of a "micro-climate" within the dilapidated city slums (173) as an endeavour to introduce the possibility of a future framed in decolonial multispecies justice. In the light of this argument, I offer that one could easily read the title of this story, and the name of the restaurant, "Bring Your Own Spoon", as a slogan for an ecotopian reimagining,

calling all the species to 'bring their own ontology' within the vast relational network of ontologies to envisage a decolonial South Asian ecotopia.

Additionally, the envisioning of a decolonial multispecies justice in *The Gurkha* offers the image of a just ecological future echoing the concept of "response-abilities" towards "others" in the "more-than-human worlds" that we humans and nonhumans collectively build and live in (Tschakert et al. 6). Decentring anthropocentric and thus colonial claims of superiority in the world, this concept entails consciously "learning to live together and across differences", and striving to "see and listen [the ecology around us] differently" (Tschakert et al. 6). Such a view textures my reading of the last agreement detailed in *The Gurkha* between the ruling AI, Karma, and the interspecies alliance between Regi, Gurung and Melek Ahmar. Although the alliance is unable to completely overthrow the cruel and unjust Karmic rule in Kathmandu, the collective efforts of the individuals in this alliance foster novel ways of living in the city, making way for a multispecies just future. In the aftermath of acquiring significant secrets of the inception of Karmic rule in the city, the alliance strikes three consequential deals with Karma.

Firstly, Hamilcar Pande is made "the sheriff … the conscience" of Karma (*The Gurkha* 88) with the power of providing valuable insight and judgments to her so she may evolve her AI sentience vis-a-vis human sentience. This is not to say that Hossain promotes an anthropocentric concept of sentient evolution. Rather, I argue that he envisages an ecotopia where, if the urban infrastructure and administration is given over to sentient AIs, AIs and humans collectively formulate the principles of morality and governance which safeguard the rights of all species by taking cues from species-specific knowledge systems. Hossain, in this regard, thus promotes "see[ing] and listen[ing] differently" (Tschakert et al. 6) the ecotopias inhabited by different species. This collaborative endeavour of framing the future via human and nonhuman sentience,

existing and nurturing together in the world, further stands as a critical moment of striving for decolonial multispecies justice in a futuristic world. I offer this analysis in the light of Winter's assertion that "[i]f MSJ is described such as to exclude any element of the complex, creating an artifice of separation, it rends the whole. To dismiss or discount a component is eventually to do an injustice to the whole and all elements within that whole" (52). Here, 'the whole' or 'the complex' may be understood as the futuristic city of Kathmandu which, in view of Winter's statement, cannot guarantee to uphold a decolonial just multispecies society if it excludes even humans from the machinery of its administration and policy making. Hossain's characters hence transform the neoliberal imperialist city into the framework of a decolonial South Asian ecotopia that reflects the decolonial vibrant materialism of "richly entangled more-than-human 'world of worlds', *multiply* understood" and represented (Grear 77; emphasis added), as in a South Asian context in this study.

Secondly, Regi is able to acquire "a ninety-nine-year lease" on her "Garden of Dreams" without any Karmic surveillance or penetration (*The Gurkha* 88). Regi's striking remark, "[o]nehundred percent privacy for me and my people" (88), underscores her attempt to include multiple species in her vision of altering the contours of the neoliberal unjust ecotopian spaces governed by Karma and her allies in the city, Chittagong. It is important to point here that by calling the humans and nonhumans, who visit her Garden of Dreams for acquiring "herbal drugs" that provide them access to the "ancient traditions and culture" (48), as "my people" (88), Regi does not impose her power over them. Instead, she offers them protection from the wider network of Karmic surveillance spread across the city. Her deal with Karma hence reiterates Bennett's concept of "co-feeling or sympathy with suffering" as a vital component in the mutually embedded ecology of things ("The Force of Things" 361). I posit that Regi's deal

echoes her sympathy with the suffering of all species at the hands of Karma and her invasion in their anatomies, urban spaces and interspecies bonds, and resultantly paves the way for establishing a "response-able" (Tschakert et al. 6) multispecies justice framework in Hossain's re-envisioned ecotopia. She understands the desperation of the residents of this exclusionary model of an ecotopia as it subjugates her own free will and desires too. It further offers the citizens with a crucial facet of decoloniality which Mignolo calls "the decolonial … as an option" to live otherwise (109). Mignolo contends that options are "built by people and institutions according to their own assumptions and interests [which] … are not bad in and of themselves" (109). The fact that Regi proposes an option of making the Garden of Dreams as a surveillance-free zone for all the multispecies citizens is testament to Hossain's attempts of concocting decolonial re-visions of South Asian ecotopias where multiple species can offer multifarious models of co-living based on the principle of co-feeling and sympathy.

Finally, Melek Ahmar, the "Lord of Tuesday", strikes the last deal with Karma as he demands "everyone [in the city] to be a zero" (*The Gurkha* 89). While commenting on the ethical motivation behind enacting thing-power materialism, Bennett offers a unique and delightful insight stating that the ethical motivation behind envisioning an ecology of overlapping ontologies draws upon "a certain love of the world, or enchantment with it" ("The Force of Things" 360-1). Melek Ahmar is positioned within the novella as a djinn visitor in the decades-old ecotopian city of Kathmandu, ruled by Karma. While on his brief stay in the city, the djinn becomes enamoured of Gurung, a zero, and endeavours to embark on a fatal journey of Gurung's personal vendetta against Doje instead of prioritising his own safety and plans of conquering the city. Upon being asked by Karma about the reason behind his wish for everyone to be a zero, Melek Ahmar replies, "I like zeroes … They know how to party" (*The Gurkha* 89). This playful

statement succinctly captures Melek Ahmar's enchantment with the world that he co-habits with the zeroes on the outskirts as well as inside the ecotopian city, and wishes to protect by offering a pathway to creating a better and just future for all the species. I posit that his deal with Karma brings to the fore the crucial role of his experiences and actancy as a djinn within the re-envisioning of an ecotopia on the model of a response-able and inclusive multispecies justice. Hossain's last statement in the novella, "[o]n Karma Day 14,633, everyone in the city woke up a zero" (89), is a vivid testament to the potency of acknowledging the relational ontologies of multiple species, laying the foundation of just liveable futures for all. The deal is sealed, and Karmic rule is altered in the favour of a just multispecies society. And so, Hossain once again portrays that entanglements between different species, re-framed via a South Asian epistemic lens, provide us with narratives of re-envisioning South Asian science fiction as a site of decolonial multispecies justice.

Hossain's re-configurations of ecotopias do not advocate an absolute migration from or abandonment of the neoliberal imperialist ecotopian spaces in order to find secluded Edens of prosperity and protection against climate change. Rather, they highlight novel and sometimes very subtle ways of thinking about remodelled ecotopian policies and hopes, embedded within decolonial multispecies justice. His characters stay within these unjust ecotopias and endeavour to reframe them according to their ideas of multispecies justice. Tschakert et al's scholarship postulates that "[b]y scrutinizing how we live, consume, and interact with and care (or not) about and for fellow beings and ecosystems, an MSJ lens acknowledges individual and collective entanglements and complicities in the crisis that all beings are facing" (5-6). I argue that Kundo's apparently despondent discovery of his wife living wilfully and contentedly in Gangaridai, the first djinn city, at the end of *Kundo* (119) is in truth an opportunity of acknowledging his and the

other species' complicity in the climate crisis that all beings are facing in Chittagong. The futuristic city, ruled by Karma, becomes unbearable to live in for a huge segment of the population that chooses "another road" outside the confines of Chittagong to a better future for the purpose of "be[ing] useful again" (117-8). In this crucial moment of seeing his wife living happily in the djinn city, Kundo acknowledges that the ecotopian promises of Chittagong's administration are mere shams as he navigates the orange and red zones of the city where the air quality remains perpetually injurious or lethal. Simultaneously, he makes note of people, including himself, who still keep the city running, people "dressed in fashionable suits … [with] some kind of executive job" in an "expensive neighbourhood" (8). Kundo finally decodes the biased administrative schemes of the city that boasts of being an ecotopian haven for all its citizens.

I argue that this moment of realization occurs in his life only when he finds himself within an interspecies alliance working to solve the mystery of his wife gone missing. I argue that just this mere acknowledgment, according to the afore-mentioned statement of Tschakert et al, reiterates thinking about ecotopias via an MSJ lens. It simultaneously makes him realise that he needs to return to the now drowning city of Chittagong, and give Fara's baby a chance to grow up and live albeit in a miserable ecotopia. His decision to return and hope for a better future for Fara's baby in Chittagong resonates with Winter's statement that if all matter/vibrant matter is of significance in the advocacy for MSJ, then "all time matters" too (52). Winter remarks that "decolonial MSJ will be able to respect and do justice to … the living and future generations — human and nonhuman" (52). Not limiting their fight to achieving a multispecies just future to their own present aspirations, Kundo and his team return to Chittagong to re-frame their own ecotopia for the future generations which may give an equal or better chance of

liveability to Regi and Fara's baby, the future generation of humans and nonhumans respectively. The last chapter envisages their multispecies group on Kundo's rooftop where they reminisce their love for the city and the little interspecies alliance they had formed to resist the vile indifference of Karma towards people like Kundo's missing wife. Regi, a djinn, joins their group and spends most of her days with the "zeroes" and "scavengers" who stayed as Karma withdrew from the city (*Kundo* 121). Tellingly, he allocates the last dialogue in this novella, aimed at imagining a decolonial egalitarian multispecies society to two characters from different species: djinn and human. When Regi, reflecting on their decision to come back to Chittagong, asks Kundo, "[y]ou regret it?" (121). To this, Kundo honestly states: "[s]ometimes … [b]ut not today" (121). The last dialogue that Hossain incorporates in this novella succinctly captures his revision of an ecotopia as a space nurtured by a profound sense of understanding and co-feeling that paves the way for multispecies justice.

Kundo's little team, that ventures out to find his missing wife, instead finds pathways of striving for a just liveable future ingrained in the ethics and politics of decolonial multispecies justice. The aim behind their resistance against the neoliberal imperialist policies, which fail to protect their lives and interests, or account for their loved ones gone missing, later morphs into fighting for the fate of the city they all call home. At the beginning of the text, the curry lady, from whom Kundo buys food on a regular basis, advises Kundo that if he opens his eyes, "[he] will *see* more than [even] Karma" (8; emphasis added), which poignantly points to Tschakert et al's MSJ lens that urges us to "see and listen [the ecology around us] differently" (6). This call for a differential view of the world entails that to achieve multispecies justice in the society, humans need to resign their anthropocentric hubris and understanding of the world, and welcome the truth of human-nonhuman entanglements in the ecology that surrounds them all. Once Kundo

acknowledges the complicity of fellow humans and nonhumans in the literally and symbolically drowning Chittagong, and further comprehends the relational ontologies of different species within his city and Gangaridai, he does begin to see beyond his own limited human knowledge and aspirations for a better future for only humans.

The final chapter of *Kundo*, titled "Memorial", issues a slight glimpse of an ecotopia, re-envisioned on the foundations of a response-able and inclusive multispecies justice lens, where the citizens now live on rooftops as the water level exponentially rises after "Karma had withdrawn" (*Kundo* 120-1). Hossain's re-imagined ecotopia is now populated by "scavengers" and the djinns like Regi, who do not leave with Karma, but stay to rebuild a city that is theirs to protect and live in. Hossain comments that these scavengers find "a treasure trove" in the city (121). The image that Hossain creates here is not to be misread as a virginal garden of Eden abounding with food and resources. Hossain writes that these scavengers "plucked their fruit from orchards on the hills, … grew their own plants on rooftop gardens, … scavenged air and water and food from a million dispensers gathering dust, making a new skin on the city, a new tribe, pitifully few but living" (121). Instead of falling into ecological despair at the abandonment of the god AI, they accept the crumbling condition of the climate around them, and moving forward, make endeavours to take the reins of the city within their own hands. I contend that the writer carefully uses the word, 'live', instead of survive to indicate a more just liveability of ecotopias rooted in multispecies justice and collective entanglements of being and living. It concomitantly echoes MSJ's delineation on "how to live with inevitable and possibly intolerable losses, and … prefigure and enact alternative and just futures" (Tschakert et al 7). I argue that this revised ecotopian model simultaneously arises in tandem with Grear's proposition regarding a decolonial MSJ which calls for "creat[ing] space for all time/space/matter. That is, it must

adopt openness as an ontological starting point" (52). The starting point for a revised framework of an egalitarian ecotopia thus becomes a multispecies comprehension of the ecology that humans and nonhumans share.

Hossain's revised versions of ecotopias initiate debates regarding the inclusion of all time/space/matter in the endeavours to create the praxis of decolonial multispecies justice. I have, in this section, uncovered in detail how Hossain's texts deploy the politics of inclusivity, response-abilities and co-feeling to fight the false promises and exclusionary schemes of the ecotopias run by neoliberal imperialist forces. His revised models of ecotopias envision subtle ways of rebuilding the future as a space of options and alternatives for all species across the spectrum. In this manner, his speculative and futuristic fiction greatly contributes decolonial perspectives in the wider field of speculative and futuristic fiction as it pans focus on indigenous epistemological views and philosophies, and on the characteristics of nonhuman species and their entanglements with humans in this world. What surges to the front as a result of this analysis is my reading of Hossain's fiction as a site of decolonial South Asian futurism, claiming its way into the global discourse on envisioning ecotopias in the wake of climate disasters.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This study contended that the selected fictional texts of Bangladeshi writer, Saad Z. Hossain, foreground ecotopian revisions in speculative and futuristic fiction by firstly rejecting the neoliberal exclusionary policies that parasitize over the bodies and lives of the citizens seeking shelter in these ecotopias, and then engaging with their liberatory potential emanating from an osmosis between different species within the urban spaces that they all occupy. The present research endeavoured to outline how the selected speculative and futuristic fictional narratives,

by incorporating the decolonial strategies of taking cue from alternative and indigenous Bangladeshi knowledge-systems and worldviews, reimagine the frameworks of sustainable and egalitarian co-futures for all species on earth. This was executed by critically analysing the osmotic sites of resistance leading to possibilities of interspecies alliances and decolonial multispecies justice within the Bangladeshi futuristic cities that Hossain imagines in his works. In this iteration, his work succinctly contributes to the emerging scholarship of 'decolonial South Asian futurisms', highlighting the scope of South Asian fiction in decolonial studies as well as the global corpus of futuristic fiction.

My first research objective was to examine the ways in which the selected South Asian fictional texts generate resistant discourse on ecological utopias, challenging their exclusionary neoliberal practices that can be uncovered by an analysis of their popular models represented in the global SFF discourse. I analysed the speculative and futuristic fictional narratives of Hossain by examining his depiction of ecotopias within these texts as carceral structures for their residents that utilize their bodily functions for maintaining a breathable air quality within these ecotopias without their consent. The citizens are confined within the different urban zones in these ecotopias based on their value and worth, assigned to them by the neoliberal imperialist forces ruling over them. In this regard, it can be viewed that couched within the promises of safeguarding these citizens against climate crisis is a discriminatory system putting the lives of the less valuable citizens at perpetual risk. My research reveals that no model of ecotopias can ensure a just societal structure if it parasitizes over its residents' bodies, and imprisons them within a strictly regulated urban grid system.

Furthermore, by analyzing the structural rearrangements of Bangladeshi cities in Hossain's fiction, I have shown how a mutually defining and constituting relationship between

cities and corporealities functions as the basis of establishing an egalitarian mode of living in a climate endangered world. Hossain's characters form alliances due to such a co-constituting dynamic between cities and bodies, which further challenge the discrimination to which they have been subjected in their cities. I have underscored some key limitations in Abbott's work which solely analyses the Western corpus of futuristic fiction representing urban futures, and the marginal neighbourhoods of a futuristic city when commenting on spaces of revolt within an urban future. My study has extended his idea via the employment of the critical term, 'provincialization of little worlds', that takes inspiration from Chakrabarty's scholarship on provincializing Europe via decentring Eurocentric categories of knowledge, and Mignolo's decolonial ideas of epistemic delinking. I have underscored how Hossain's fictional texts can be read as a means of provincializing, and thus, decolonizing Abbot's theoretical articulation of little worlds. When inspecting the potency of creative little worlds in bringing about opportunities of revolt in an ecotopian city, my research has highlighted Hossain's inclusion of all kinds of spaces, the impoverished neighbourhoods as well as the privileged centres of the cities, and all kinds of species imagined and re-imagined via a Bangladeshi epistemology. I have thus highlighted how Hossain's little worlds of revolt within a neoliberal imperialist ecotopia are in fact decolonial spaces of revolt, distinct from the Western imaginings of egalitarian urban futures.

My second research objective was aimed at highlighting the role of decolonial multispecies justice in building a climate-just society in the future. In the selected fictional texts, Hossain presents instances of interspecies alliances where different species wilfully come together to subvert the necropolitical frameworks of futuristic societies aimed at disposing their bodies and lives for the sake of facilitating the more valuable and wealthier populations within

the ecotopias. These species resist the discriminatory practices of such death-worlds as they acknowledge their interconnectedness and relational ontologies within the wider network of different species living and surviving together on earth. My study has foregrounded the analysis of decolonial South Asian futurisms in relation to the inclusion of djinns as 'decolonial non-human actants' within Hossain's ecotopias. These djinns exercise their distinct actancy, based on their species-specific knowledge systems and hopes for the future, within the interconnected web of multiple human and nonhuman relationalities in a futuristic society. In so doing, interspecies alliances pave the way for a harmonious mode of existence that has the potential of combatting climate crisis in a more efficient and egalitarian manner.

My research highlighted how these alliances bring together the varying consciousnesses and subjectivities of different djinns, humans and AIs as they plan to dismantle the unjust urban structures in the ecotopian spaces that they occupy or are denied access to in the selected fictional texts. For this purpose, I have underscored the positionality of djinns as more-than-human actants and Bennett's quasi agents within the relational ontological web of existence in the world that Hossain displays in his works. These djinns serve as decolonial metaphors in that they bring in their distinct histories, mythologies, worldviews and hopes for the future within the debates surrounding the re-building of ecotopias in Hossain's fiction. I have highlighted how Hossain's djinn characters become metaphors of practicing decoloniality from the Global South or South Asia as their actions and positionalities in the selected fictional texts resonate Winter's slogan stating that all matter matters in a world brought about and sustained by relational ontologies. This idea stands as Hossain's pivotal point of departure from popular Western understandings of djinn species, and his re-configuration of these nonhuman actants as participants in the re-envisioning of egalitarian ecotopias situated in South Asian cities.

Throughout my research, I aimed at providing critical ways of imagining alternate and decolonial futures for South Asian cities which have been the subject of either derogatory amnesia or ecological pessimism in popular speculative and futuristic representations. Hossain's ecotopian models deviate from such representations, and channel more potent decolonial imaginings of the urban futures of the Global South, rewritten in local folklore and via representations of indigenous mythological characters. His revisions of ecotopias reveal how South Asian writers are better equipped in offering more just and liveable portrayals of South Asian ecotopias that challenge Western conceptions regarding the role of South Asian thinkers, artists and policymakers in the global climate change discourse.

Recommendations:

1. An ecotopian study of Pakistani science fiction can be conducted to investigate how similar neoliberal or imperialist systems of oppression are contested via interspecies alliances in futuristic representations of Pakistani cities.

2. A research on the representation of djinns or other local mythical creatures in South Asian or indigenous fiction can be conducted to analyze their significant positionalities in the reframing of socio-political policies aimed at imagining more just futures and life systems for all species.

3. A critical study on AIs represented as separate species within futuristic fiction, contributing their distinct ideas in restructuring an ecotopia, can be carried out to explore how their lived experiences within the world have the potential of establishing liberatory designs of co-living in the future.

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