

## Kaiser Haq: A Bangladeshi English Poet Writing Dhaka Inside Out

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### Abstract

*This paper seeks to locate Kaiser Haq's poetry in the spatiality and temporality of Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. Kaiser Haq, the foremost Bangladeshi English poet, was born and brought up in Dhaka and saw the rise of this capital city from a polis to a metropolis. Hence the city Dhaka, both as setting and subject matter, is firmly grounded in his whole corpus of poetry written during his long almost sixty years career as a poet. To his longtime Dhaka University colleague Alam (2007), Kaiser Haq's poems are "immersed in the landscape and cityscape of Bangladesh/Dhaka." The poetic persona that is often seen in his poems is a city dweller, more specifically an inhabitant of Dhaka who is fraught with the aspirations, desires, frustrations, loneliness and ennui of an urban man. Like a city flâneur, this persona is a ubiquitous observer and explorer of the mystery of Dhaka. In this way, like Baudelaire's Paris, Eliot's London or Ezekiel's Bombay, Dhaka is the epicenter of Kaiser Haq's personal and poetic self. This paper is based on the critical analysis of Kaiser Haq's representative poems on Dhaka. Here attempts will be made to examine these poems to discover the Dhakaite sensibility present in them.*

**Keywords:** Kaiser Haq, Bangladeshi Writing in English, Urban Poetry, Dhaka.

### 1. Introduction

Urban life constitutes a dominant feature in the works of preeminent modernist poets, e.g., Pound, Yeats, Eliot, Baudelaire, Rilke etc. They mostly "lived and wrote in the capital cities of Great Britain and Europe, using the city as a source of inspiration and research tool" (Shamsi, 2015, p. 81). Inspired by the immense variability and diversity of the rapidly developing modern cities or sometimes frustrated by 'the personal disaster, loneliness, dejection, alienation and spiritual sterility' (Shamsi, 2015, p. 81) of the city dwellers, the modernist

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poets ventured urbanism in their poetry. They felt the truth that the urban environment is man's inescapable destiny in the modern world and hence looked for the ways in which to deal with this environment (Theo, 1988, p. 60). They were often concerned with the physical and psychological states of the modern city dwellers and portrayed "the physical and spiritual blight that characterizes modern man's metropolitan existence" (Theo, 1988, p.60) in their poetry. So, the urban people, their problems and the urban landscapes find ample space in their poetry.

Urban sensibility appealed to the Dhaka based modern Bengali poets too. With the rise of Dhaka as a metropolis, a number of Bengali poets found the city as their true home. Shamsur Rahman, Shahid Qadri and Al Mahmud are famous among the Bengali poets, who lived and wrote in Dhaka during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Of these three poets, Shamsur Rahman is considered to be "a true Dhakaite" (Zaman, Ahsan and M. Amin, 2006) who was inspired by the cosmopolitan and urban sensibility of the early 20th century Bengali modern poets Jibanananda Das (1899–1954), Suddhindranath Datta (1901–1960), Buddhadeva Bose (1908–1974) and Bishnu Dey (1909–1982), and made it one of the dominate features of his poetry. Born and brought up in Dhaka, Shamsur Rahman " was imbued with everything that Dhaka offered positive or negative, and made them stuff for his poems and fiction" (Islam, 2018). So, the portrayal of the urban elements was something new for the Bengali poetry; and it links Shamsur Rahman and other modern Bengali poets with the modernist poets of the West.

## **2. Kaiser Haq and his Connection with the Modern Urban Poets**

Kaiser Haq, who has lived in the Dhaka metropolis most of his life like Shamsur Rahman, is variously described as "the most leading English language poet in Bangladesh" (Askari, 2010); "one of the most brilliant poets in Bangladesh today" (foundationsaarcwriters, 2011); Bangladesh's foremost English language poet or Bangladesh's leading and (sadly) only English poet, all of which are truly appropriate. A freedom fighter and professor of English at Dhaka University, Kaiser Haq truly belongs to Dhaka and hence known its contours and curves, which often find ample space in his poems. Kaiser Haq's depiction of Dhaka urban life, landscapes, characters, and situations in his poetry manifests his association with the domain of the modernist poets Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Baudelaire, Indian modern poet Nissim Ezekiel and his

Bangladeshi contemporary Shamsur Rahman. Like Baudelaire's Paris, Eliot's London and Ezekiel's Bombay, Dhaka is the epicenter of Kaiser Haq's poetic and personal self. For Baudelaire, who was born in Paris in 1821, the city Paris served as the location to help shape his aesthetics. His masterpiece *The Flowers of Evil* is replete with ugly as well as beautiful images of Paris, which he personifies as an "enorme catin" (Great Whore) or a decrepit old man. Baudelaire describes the daybreak in Paris as "Dawn, shivering in a pink and green dress, was advancing slowly over the deserted Seine, and sombre Paris, rubbing its eyes, was picking up its tools, a hard-working old man" (Ryder, 2013). To Baudelaire, Paris is the place that endlessly excites and stimulates his poetic mind. Like Baudelaire, T.S. Eliot also manifests urban temperament in his poetry, especially in the poems he wrote in his early life. Eliot has much more varied experience of the urban life than Baudelaire. Eliot has known Boston, Paris and London and equally finds all of them morally corrupt and unhealthy. In his such early poems as, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Portrait of a Lady," "Preludes" and "Rhapsody On a Windy Night," Eliot denounces the degenerated mechanical civilization that has produced a drab, dreary and horrid urban life. These poems depict numerous urban scenes and images that evoke the sense of the futile, soulless existence of human life in the metropolitan cities.

Kaiser Haq's acknowledged master Nissim Ezekiel is also an urban poet. Ezekiel, who was born in Bombay, has tried to capture the diverse elements of the city in his poetry. He is also disgusted by the vicissitudes and mechanical existence of city life. His dislike for the urban life finds a memorable expression in his poem "A Morning Walk." Like Baudelaire's Paris and Eliot's London or Boston, Ezekiel's Bombay is a barbaric city.

Sick with slums,  
Deprived of seasons, blessed with rains,  
Its hawkers, beggars, iron-lunged, Processions led by frantic drums,  
A million purgatorial lanes,  
And child-like masses, many-tongued,  
Whose wages are in words and crumbs. ("A Morning Walk" 1-6)

Kaiser Haq has affinities with these poets in his depiction of the urban life. In many of Kaiser Haq's poems, the speaker is a city flâneur, a concept of the

modern artist developed by Baudelaire in his *The Painter of Modern Life*. A flaneur, who becomes completely immersed in the crowd, is mainly an idle walker and passionate observer of the complexities of the urban life. In this regard, mention can be made of Nuzhat Amin's (2007) remarks in her review of Kaiser Haq's *Published in the Streets of Dhaka* "Back on the streets among the ammoniac air of dark alleys." She writes:

The poems (of Kaiser Haq's *Published in the Streets of Dhaka*) in general have the unhurried and unpretentious air of a flaneur taking a stroll through the streets (of Dhaka) letting things seep in and these seepages later trigger analytic reflections, a juxtaposition here, a parody there.

### 3. Dhaka in Kaiser Haq's Poetry

In his poetry, Kaiser Haq often explores the Dhaka urban life he has known from his childhood. His poetry is the poetry of urbanity, which he has acknowledged in one of his interviews with Ahmede Hussain (2007): "My imagery is mostly urban because I was born and grew up in Dhaka city." Kaiser Haq repeats this special relationship with Dhaka in his famous interview "In Conversation with Bangladeshi Poet, Kaiser Haq" with the Australian novelist Kathryn Hummel:

Maybe I look at the world through my city, as it were. It's interesting how some writers adapt to each other and some can't, or some change. It's about finding your spiritual home. Most modernists wrote in exile. Ezra Pound, Joyce...affirm civil, rather than national identity.

It is understandable from his observation that he has found his "spiritual home" in Dhaka city. It is difficult for a writer to give the authentic picture of a city or society, if he/she is not deeply rooted in that place. Commenting on the Kaiser Haq's relationship with Dhaka, Fakrul Alam (2007) writes that "Kaiser Haq is a certified, born-and-bred Dhaka-ite--St. Greg's, Dhaka College, then student and teacher at Dhaka University, resident of Purana Paltan and Fuller Road". Kaiser Haq writes about the Dhaka urban life and his writing originates from his deep rootedness to Dhaka. Being rooted in the city, he writes poetry that grows out of his familiar city experience and sensibility colored with the beliefs and imagery of this specific location. Many of Kaiser Haq's poems use Dhaka urban geography rather than just urban setting. An urban setting would

merely give a general impression of the urban or the metropolitan atmosphere. But Kaiser Haq's geography is loco-specific, giving the names of the actual streets, places and buildings.

Many of Haq's poems depict the Dhaka urban elements and express his sense of longing and belonging to his birth city Dhaka. The title poem of his anthology *Published in the Streets of Dhaka* (2017) manifests Kaiser Haq's bold statement of his "poetic affiliation" with his country, specially the city Dhaka. The poem expresses his deep love, loyalty, and commitment to his motherland as well as to the city he was born in. Many people find it meaningless to stay and write poetry in Dhaka. There are some cynical Gore Vidals who are of the opinion that the writing poetry in English in "in a city of philistines" (Alam, 2007) and publishing it "Under the bamboo, the banyan and the mango tree/ Is the height of absurdity" ("Published in the Streets of Dhaka" 14-15). But Kaiser Haq is "truly defiant in his stance -- he is a Bangladeshi poet in English, no matter what some of his fellow citizens think about a countryman writing in English, or what the rest of the world says of the state of English-language publishing in the country" (Alam, 2007). The speaker of this poem sarcastically responds to "the caustic American expatriate author Gore Vidal" by saying:

What should we do, Mr. Vidal?  
 Stop writing, and if we do, not publish?  
 Join an immigration queue, hoping  
 To head for the Diaspora dead-end,  
 Exhibit in alien multicultural museums? ("Published in the Streets of  
 Dhaka" 37-41)

There is a tendency among the educated Bangladeshi urban people to leave the country and build their career in the west. They would like to make their home in the first world countries. But the speaker of the poem, who compares himself with Jibanananda Das, expresses his deep bond with his country.

Stay, plumb in the center  
 Of monsoon-mad Bengal, watching  
 Jackfruit leaves drift earthward  
 In the early morning breeze  
 Like a famous predecessor used to.  
 ("Published in the Streets of Dhaka" 42-46)

Many contemporary educated Bangladeshis, who have built their career in the first world countries, sneer at the life in Bangladesh and consider the Bangladeshi society as insecure and unlivable. But to Kaiser Haq the picture of the contemporary world is no better than the picture of Dhaka, because the contemporary world is a world of “flashing knives, whirling sticks, bursting bombs” (“Published in the Streets of Dhaka” 48) and in comparison with the outside world “Dhaka is no worse a location to pitch in together with other flaneurs of the imagination chronicling the absurdities of contemporary existence” (Alam, 2007). He concludes the poem with a satisfactory note that he is “proud to be /Published once again in the streets of Dhaka.” (“Published in the Streets of Dhaka” 55-56)

#### 4. A love-hate Attitude to Dhaka

The modernist poets developed an ambivalent feeling of love-hate towards the cities they used to live in. Like them, Kaiser Haq is also caught in the tentacles of his city, unable to escape from it and subsequently developing a love-hate attitude to it. Dhaka is the city where Kaiser Haq is happy and unhappy at the same time. The speaker of Kaiser Haq’s “Two Paradies: ms bunny sen”, a full-length affectionate parody of Jibanananda Das’s most famous creation, Banalata Sen, is a dweller of Dhaka city. But instead of the beautiful pictures of the historical places and women, the poem “Two Paradies: ms bunny sen” sketches the dark, ugly images of the Dhaka city. The speaker of the poem, unlike the speaker of Jibanananda Das’s “Banalata Sen”, has “been bugging around this goddamn city’ (“ms bunny sen” 1) for many years that feel “like a thousand bloody years’ (“ms bunny sen” 3). In “ms bunny sen,” the speaker is a regular city walker, who is familiar with every important place and every important street of Dhaka like “bongshal’s rancid restaurants”, “gulshan’s toxic lake”, “power outages”, “burra kuttra”, “rayerbazar”, “banglamotor”, and “sangsad bhaban.” Unlike the beautiful world of “Banalata Sen”, the city depicted in the poem gives a vivid impression of a squalid, horrid Dhaka where he opts for a “tête-à-tête/with ms bunny sen of Banglamotor’ in a “dimly-lit fast food joint” (Alam, 2007). The portrayal of the city and the speaker’s plan to visit “ms bunny sen” reminds the picture of the city we come across in T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, which is also set in a dirty city and the speaker of “The Love Song” also walks through the winding, dirty streets of a big city that looks a lot like Kaiser Haq’s Dhaka. In “Published in the Streets of Dhaka” and “ms bunny sen”, Kaiser Haq forges his tie with not only the city of

his birth but also with the literary tradition of his country by comparing and also contrasting himself with his predecessor Jibananada Das.

### 5. Dhaka Landscapes in Kaiser Haq's Poetry

The phrase "streets of Dhaka" in the title of his collection of the poems *Published in the Streets of Dhaka*, evokes a number of images about the streets of Dhaka: the crowded pavements, long queue of cars, buses and rickshaws in the traffic jam, beggars, hawkers, pavement sleepers, hutment dwellers and slums. The poet lovingly sketches all these bizarre Dhaka urban elements in his poetry. In his poem "Park," anthologized from his early collection of the poems *Starting Lines* (1968-1975), Kaiser Haq, through the use of a number of visual images, gives the city park a life of its own. In the poem, we find the parks in different guises in the different times like morning, afternoon and evening. Park is an inseparable part of a city life. Kaiser Haq shows the relationship between the urban landscapes and the city dwellers. Often the city dwellers feel an unfulfilled longing for the contact with nature within the soulless, mechanical, polluted city landscapes. In the poem "Park" he describes the life of an unnamed city park, which looks like the Ramna park of Dhaka. Everyday many people from various walks of life visit the park for various reasons.

bare feet,  
sneakers,  
leather shoes,  
high heels,  
slippers (14-18)

After the "busy afternoon" darkness descends on the city and the park becomes the "parlour" of the street, homeless prostitutes. Thus, the poem "Park" furnishes a vignette of the Dhaka urban society and its relationship with nature in Dhaka.

The poem "Aubade" manifests a Baudelairian picture of the urban life and landscapes. Originally, aubade is a morning love song often based on the parting of the lover and beloved in the morning. The poem "Aubade" is also set in "a clear cool morning" (1), but instead of the love the poem deals with some disturbing pictures of the morning in the Dhaka city, when "Paintless whores plod slumward to wash./The muezzin calls the devout to pray"(2-3). These

lines are reminiscent of the Paris life we find in Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil*. The existence in Dhaka seems too materialistic and exhausting, because here "The Decibels increase as the man and machines/That make up the infrastructure of politics and murder" ("Aubade" 17-18). Almost a similar image of Dhaka is drawn in the poem "Spend, Spending, Spent," where the speaker, an exhausted city dweller encounters everyday "the murderous decibels /of hucksters, honkers, sloganeers" (18-19).

## 6. Seasonal Beauty of Dhaka

Seasonal Dhaka urban landscapes feature prominently in Kaiser Haq's poetry. Like Rabindranath Tagore, Kaiser Haq has a fascination for the rainy season. His poems "Grishma, Barsha," "Monsoon Poem With Prose Postscript," "Monsoon Rain," and "The Raven" introduce us with the Dhaka urban life during the rainy season. "Grishma" and "Barsha" are the names of two seasons in Bangladesh, which stand for the summer and rainy seasons respectively. In Bangladesh the summer is followed by the rainy season. Every year people of Dhaka eagerly wait for the monsoon to arrive, when the summer's exhaustive heat becomes unbearable to them. People of Dhaka feel relieved when finally "the monsoon's upon" them. The poem "Grishma, Barsha" is based on the city dwellers' waiting for rain. We also find the monsoon urban landscapes in "Monsoon Poem with Prose Postscript," as he says "One could imagine Purgatory/a vast shanty town" (3-4) as torrential rain beats down and "moist air wraps/you like a winding sheet" (11-12). The arrival of the rainy season in the city is beautifully portrayed by Kaiser Haq in his poem "Monsoon Rain":

Over flat rooftops, unendingly,  
Raindrops prick nipples of water.  
Beneath his umbrella, a passer-by  
Crouches like a hard-pressed boxer. (5-8)

But the arrival of the rainy season is not an unmixed blessing for the urban people in Dhaka. The floods caused by the heavy rain disrupt the communication system of the city, forcing the Dhaka dwellers to come to a standstill. The poem "The Raven" captures the sense of the hazards of the urban people of Dhaka during the rainy season. Here the poet says that the heavy monsoon rain "furious with wind and water" (2) sweeps away "telephone poles, wireless installations/paralysing computers, seeping into mailbags" (4-5)



and thus disrupts "communication/between individuals of an unusual sort..." (9-10). Thus, in Kaiser Haq's monsoon poems we get the total picture of the urban experience of the rainy season in Dhaka.

The day-to-day urban Dhaka vividly comes alive in Kaiser Haq's poetry. The poem "Trust", for example, is based on a familiar experience of the city people, standing in the queue for paying the electricity bill. The poem throws light on the city people's sense of insecurity that results in their mistrust to others. The city dwellers, who stand "In the queue for paying the electricity bill" ("Trust" 1) are nervous and "can't trust people" ("Trust" 6). The poem "As Usual" introduces another familiar urban scene, the roadside "addha." *Addha* (Chitchat) in the roadside tea-stall is a familiar scene in the urban area, though the similar tea-stall "addha" is not less popular in the rural areas of Bangladesh either. In such an "addha", people chat about all important issues from politics to sex. "As Usual" pictures such a tea-stall "addha", where the speaker's "old friend/The Sage" (2-3) solves all the problems and gives free counsels.

### 7. The Crisis of the Dhaka Dwellers

Sometimes Kaiser Haq, in his own search for the self-identity in the city, represents the self-searching individuals living in the Dhaka urban areas. The people in Dhaka, like the inhabitants of any big city, lead an alienated life. The poem "Windows" in which a couple exchanges their views on their neighborhood buildings, tells about the alienated city people, who live in "buildings like ghost ships/in the gathering dark" (2-3). Fakrul Alam (2007) also finds the poem a deep commentary on the human relationship in the contemporary urban, self-centered world. He wonders:

doesn't the concluding stanza of this brief poem ("...Fragile Slates/On which we may adumbrate/Our unsteady kisses") remind us of the ending of "Dover Beach," where Matthew Arnold, famously confronted with a receding Sea of Faith, exhorts his beloved to understand that they should be true to one another since they were positioned "on a darkling plain/Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight/Where ignorant armies clash by night?"

The poem "Dear Sir", which was written in honour of Kaiser Haq's Dhaka university teacher Professor Khan Sarwar Murshid, is about a lonely urban senior citizen who suddenly finds himself misfit in the new urban world and, therefore, desires to explore, construct and reconstruct his own sense of

identity. The speaker of the poem, a student of Professor Khan Sarwar Murshid now pursuing the same profession, reminisces his olden days with his professor, when they used to navigate "through the maze/Of this old city's streets and lanes/To nudge us in warm intimacy" (5-7). He feels that the past was better than the present for the people like him and his guru Professor Khan Sarwar Murshid, because they engaged themselves in politically and intellectually productive activities and also had a mutually respectable relationship between them which is hardly noticeable in the teacher-student relationship in the present time. The speaker feels that the role of teacher of literature has now been reduced to a "farcical pedagogue."

The younger generation show  
No taste for 'sweetness and light.'  
In a world of texting and email  
Letters are of no avail. ("Dear Sir" 51-54)

It seems that they have become "old fashioned" and are "Making nought of the notorious /Gap between one generation /And the next" ("Dear Sir" 58-59). But ultimately, the speaker in the poem is confident that he is right and the world, in fact, "grows old" and "It's sinking beneath our feet" and takes bow to "to think /And sing of our true heritage" (64-65).

Apart from the respectable senior citizen like Khan Sarwar Murshid, Kaiser Haq's poetry is also rich in characterization of some urban dwellers from the lower strata of the society. His poetry is a vast gallery of portraits representative of the various urban professions and ways of life: city children, snake charmer, beggar, professor, fashionable lady etc. These city dwellers, no matter how poor, degraded or base, are a rich source of poetic inspiration for Kaiser Haq. He has projected his characters in real life situations, attempting to come to terms with their language and their problems. We observe Kaiser Haq's profound sense of compassion, understanding, acceptance and sympathy for the city dwellers from all walks of life. He is so empathetically involved with his birth city Dhaka that he gives space in his poetry to everyone, irrespective of social class, occupation, gender or any other category.

The poem "Street Incident" portrays a fashionable, snobbish Dhaka urban lady. The lady, who is "daintily dressed," looks down upon at her surroundings. She visits from one "air conditioned store" to another. The poet is satirical of the

condescending attitude of the lady, who has got an air of indifference to her surroundings and feels like a fish out of water even if she has to stay outside the air-conditioned room for a moment.

The poem "On a Street" sketches *Nanga Pagla*, a street lunatic.

Nanga Pagala the sky-clad  
 Terror and delight of children  
 Halts the traffic to announce his name  
 Is Badshah Akbar, Henry Ford, Aga Khan. (1-4)

Though he is a lunatic, there is an admirable quality in him. He does not have any attachment to the materiality of the world. He rejects all desirable commodities of the department store saying "From you I will buy nothing" ("On A Street 8"). In the poem "Strange Pleasures" we find the pictures of the political turmoil that frequently interrupts the life of the city dwellers. The poem also introduces a familiar street scene in Dhaka, namely, the ear cleaning beside a pavement. The poem describes the people, who are willing "to have his ear cleaned" (20), sit "beside a pavement near a crossroads" (24) and the ear cleaner cleans the ear of his client with "a thin steel rod."

Street beggars are a familiar scene in the streets of Dhaka. In such poems as "Les Miserables," "Short shorts," "Street Incident," and "Poor Man Eating," Kaiser Haq compassionately depicts the condition of the street beggars and homeless people in the streets of Dhaka. A typical picture of the helpless city beggars is found even in one of his early poems he wrote in the late 1960s such as "Les Miserables." "Les Miserables" was written when Kaiser Haq was still a high school student. In this poem he gives almost a Chaucerian description of a street beggar, whom the speaker of the poem compassionately calls "the poor chap." The speaker of the poem is very sympathetic to the street beggar, whose "right hand was completely missing; both legs were twisted and tortured" (14-15) and the beggar's "sunken gaze reflected want and misery, hunger and thirst, hope and hatred" (16-17). In the poem "Short Shorts," beggars are called the street actors, because "With their woeful expressions, their spectacular deformities, their cruelly maintained sore, their laments, chants, ululations, they depict a broad range of human misery, and thus fulfill the same functions as serious drama" (25-26) of human life. But unlike the stage actors, their demand is only "a few coins" and "they do not crave applause" (28). The poem "Poor Man Eating" also gives the picture of a homeless street man, who under

“the dwindling shade / Of a denuded tree” (9-10) gobbles the foods thrown in the streets by the passersby. “All is Well” portrays the character of a dutiful “blind watchman” who keeps the “thieves and burglars” at bay and ensures the safety of the residents.

In the poem “A Myth Reworked” Kaiser Haq draws our attention to the unhappy childhood of the Dhaka urban children. Sometimes Dhaka children’s dreams are caught in the concrete jungles and their childhood is killed even before they know what childhood is. They have hardly any spare time and open space to play outdoor games. Sometimes, they have to bear the pressure of a huge school syllabus, which kills their childhood. The poem “A Myth Reworked” tells a pathetic story of an urban boy, who was killed when he was flying a kite. “His father bought him a kite, a kite in Tri-colours”(1) and when he just started flying the kite, he “was dragged away to be washed for school”(6). The boy is forcefully kept in the classroom, which he does not enjoy. As soon as the bell rings, he goes home and creeps away with his kite to “the rooftop after tea”. The boy, who thinks himself smarter than Icarus, is confident that he will not fall down from his cornice of his house. But unfortunately, the cornice of the building breaks down and he falls “drunkenly downward to earth.” Had the child enough space to fly his kite, he would not have to meet this tragic fate. Thus, the poem draws our attention to the wretched condition suffered by the urban children in Dhaka.

## 8. Contemporary Dhaka Issues

Kaiser Haq also writes about the contemporary Dhaka issues in his poetry. Sometimes, some unexpected events cast shadows on the city life of Dhaka. The poem “New Year Bagatelle” is based on such an incident. The Dhaka metropolitan police banned the public celebrations on New Year’s Eve in 2005. The celebration was banned in Dhaka in order to preempt so called rowdyism. The poet is much disturbed by this ban and expresses his dissatisfaction in the following way:

A fine time  
we are having  
when a year passes away  
unwaked  
and a new one slips in  
untoasted. (“New Year Bagatelle” 1-6)

The poem "A to Z, Azad," is based on another pathetic, brutal incident in the street of Dhaka. Dr Humayun Azad, a non-conformist author and a professor at Dhaka University was butchered with knives and machetes by unknown terrorists on a Friday night in late February 2004 after he had left the *Ekushey Boi Mela* premises. It is believed that he was attacked by the religious fundamentalists, who criticize Dr Azad for his free thinking. Kaiser Haq writes the poem on Humayan Azad and "registers" his solidarity with writers who are audacious enough to speak out (the Bengali poet's surname means 'to be free'), and affirms his kinship with writers everywhere who use poetry to protest against tyranny and the forces of evil (Alam).

Dhaka is an inseparable part of the memory of the glorious war of liberation of Bangladesh. The city came under a sudden, heinous attack on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1971 by the Pakistani military. Kaiser Haq, then a second year undergraduate student of Dhaka University, took up arms against the Pakistani occupation army. He is still haunted by the war memory of 1971 in Dhaka. His poems "Dateline, Dhaka 25 March 2006," "Crackdown' and "Bangladesh '71" express his haunting war memory of Dhaka. After the crackdown in Dhaka by the Pakistani army Kaiser Haq was, as he himself puts it in his interview with Kathryn Hummel, "faced with a choice, either lie low or resist." He did not flee away and he took up arms for the cause of the liberation of his country.

The poem "Bangladesh 71" is based on the traumatic war experience of many Dhaka citizens who got trapped in the city during the Bangladeshi liberation war in 1971. "Bangladesh 71," which begins with the line, "Venturing at last to go out/ I blink at the guilt in the eye..." (1-2) and ends with "Dawn stirs like a mouse; whose knock is it on the door?" (13) graphically portrays the fearful, horrifying condition of the people who got trapped in Dhaka after the crackdown by the Pakistani army in the night on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1971.

## 9. Conclusion

Thus, Kaiser Haq, like his senior contemporary Bangladeshi and Indian contemporaries Shamsur Rahman and Nissim Ezekiel and other modernist poets, thrives on urban dreams, disillusionment and landscapes in his poetry. He uses the Dhaka urban subject matters, settings, characters and situations in his poems. In his writing, he mentions the actual places and persons of Dhaka city like "bongshal's rancid restaurants", "gulshan's toxic lake", "burra kuttra',

“rayerbazar”, “banglamotor”, and “sangsad bhaban” Professor Khan Sarwar Murshid etc. and in this way, builds up a very vivid picture of Dhaka city. To conclude, as a poet Kaiser Haq is deeply committed to his country Bangladesh and also to his birth city Dhaka. Being born and brought up in Dhaka, Kaiser Haq has traversed the streets of the city and got deeply acquainted with its urban milieu, which often find an ecstatic expression in his poems.

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Dr. Md. Masudul Alam, a poet, writer, and publisher, has written the poem "Bangladesh" and "Inglorious" his solidarity with writers who are not afraid to speak out (the Bengali poet's streams course in his free), and affirms his kinship with writers everywhere who use poetry to protest against tyranny and the forces of evil (Alam).

Dhaka is an integral part of the history of the glorious way of liberation of Bangladesh. Dhaka was under a sudden, heinous attack on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1971 on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the 1971 East Pakistan War, then a second year undergraduate student at Dhaka University, took up arms against the Pakistani occupation army. He is still haunted by the war memory of 1971 in Dhaka. His poems, "Venturing at last", "Crackdown" and "Bangladesh 71" express the haunting war memory of Dhaka. After the crackdown in Dhaka by the Pakistani army East Pakistan was no longer a part of it in his interview with Kathryn Hummel, "Dhaka with a choice: either be free or resist." He did not flee away and he took up arms for the name of the liberation of his country.

The poem "Bangladesh 71" is based on the traumatic war experience of many Dhaka citizens who got trapped in the city during the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971. "Bangladesh 71," which begins with the line, "Venturing at last to put a mark of the guilt in the eye..." (1-2) and ends with "Dawn sits like a woman whose knock is at the door" (13) graphically portrays the fearful, agonizing condition of the people who got trapped in Dhaka after the crackdown by the Pakistani army in the night on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1971.

### Conclusion

Thus East Pakistan was the scene of contemporary Bangladesh and Indian contemporary Shamsur Rahman and Niloufer Ishtiaq and other modern poets, writes on urban dramas, disillusionment and landscapes in his poetry. It was the Dhaka urban subject matters, settings, characters and situations in his poems. In his writing, he mentions the actual places and persons of Dhaka like "Bangladesh's famed restaurants", "Gulshan's toxic lake", "Harna Khatun",