



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



When Songs Become a Weapon: “Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago” and the Spirit of July 2024 Revolution

Sharif Ratul Hassan *

Department of English, Northern University Bangladesh, Dhaka.

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Abstract

When a song becomes a weapon, it can rally a nation. In the process of the July 2024 Revolution of Bangladesh, the patriotic anthem “Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago” was transformed from a popular hit into a symbol of rebellion. This study examines the song’s role in motivating protesters and shaping the collective identity of participants. Using lyrical analysis, documentation of martyrs’ sacrifices, literature review, and social media content analysis, the research demonstrates how the song became a cultural emblem of patriotism, courage, and unity. The song’s themes resonated deeply with protesters, reflecting their readiness to defend the motherland and mirroring the real-life sacrifices of students such as Abu Sayed, Md. Asif Hasan, and Mir Mugdho. While a song cannot fight a battle, “Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago” cemented morale, unified the collective, and redirected collective action, and it showed that culture and music can actively fuel social and political resistance.

Keywords: Bangladesh; July Revolution 2024; Fascist Government; Gen Z Activism; Patriotic Song; Music and Social Movements; Martyrs and Sacrifice; National Identity

1. Introduction

Music has long served as a powerful force in social and political movements, evolving from a simple art form into an instrument of protest and a catalyst for change. It consolidates the mood of masses, provides a shared language of resistance, and toughens the resolve of peoples facing gigantic odds. This was clearly evident in the July 2024 Revolution of Bangladesh, a turning point uprising fueled by gigantic popular outrage against a fascist regime. Amidst this movement, the song “Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago” turned into a cultural symbol of unity and resistance, strongly resonating with protesters and shaping the emotional landscape of the uprising.

This study examines how “Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago” contributed to the July 2024 Revolution by fostering solidarity, courage, and shared identity among participants. By analyzing lyrical themes, the song’s connection to martyrdom, and its dissemination through social media, this paper explores how music became a catalyst for collective action, bridging symbolic meaning with tangible resistance.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, multi-source approach to explore the role of “Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago” in the July 2024 Revolution in Bangladesh. The methodology is structured to ensure comprehensive analysis of the song’s themes, its impact on protesters, and its reflection in real events:

* Corresponding author: Sharif Ratul Hassan

2.1. Song Analysis

The lyrics of “Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago” were analyzed line by line to identify central themes such as patriotism, courage, sacrifice, and love for the motherland. Emphasis was placed on both the literal meaning of each line and its symbolic significance in motivating Gen Z protesters during the revolution. The analysis also considered the emotional tone, imagery, and repetition of lines.

2.2. Martyrs and Event Documentation

Information about key martyrs, including Abu Sayed (Begum Rokeya University), Md. Asif Hasan (Northern University), and Mir Mugdho (Bangladesh University of Professionals) was collected from credible online sources, news reports, and verified social media accounts. Each incident was documented chronologically to show how individual sacrifices intensified public outrage, escalated protests, and aligned with the song’s themes of devotion and courage. The deaths of these individuals and others, including children, were also noted to highlight the broader societal impact of the July Revolution.

2.3. Literature Review

Journal articles related to the July 2024 Revolution, student activism, and the role of martyrs were reviewed.

2.4. Personal Reflection and Interpretation

The researcher incorporated personal observations and interpretations to bridge the song’s thematic content with its real-life impact. This reflective approach contextualized the symbolic and emotional dimensions of the song, highlighting its role in shaping morale, motivation, and collective identity among protesters.

2.5. Social Media Content Analysis

Videos, posts, and online discussions featuring the song during protests were systematically collected and analyzed. Attention was given to: (a) Frequency of song usage in videos and posts; (b) Context of its appearance; (c) Audience engagement, including likes, shares, and comments; (d) Emotional tone and narrative framing.

This allowed the researcher to trace how Gen Z participants and other citizens adopted the song as a unifying anthem, expressing collective sentiment, solidarity, and resistance.

2.6. Triangulation of Sources

Findings from song analysis, martyrs’ documentation, social media content, and literature review were triangulated to ensure reliability and depth. This allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between cultural symbolism, individual sacrifice, and collective action during the July 2024 Revolution.

This methodology provides a holistic approach, linking lyrical analysis, event data, social media dynamics, and scholarly discourse to explore how “Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago” became a cultural emblem of patriotism, unity, and courage during the revolution.

3. Analysis and findings

“Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago”, composed in 1970 by Nayeem Gahar and tuned by Azad Rahman, became a defining cultural symbol during the July 2024 Revolution in Bangladesh. The song deeply resonated with Gen Z students, the main participants of the uprising, and circulated widely through social media. Its themes of patriotism, courage, and devotion provided both emotional inspiration and a shared cultural reference that unified protesters across the country.

3.1. Patriotism and Devotion:

“Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago”

(My birth has been blessed, O Mother!)

“Emon Kore Aakul Hoye Amay Tumi Daako”

(That you call out to me with such ardent longing)

This line reflects the protesters' deep connection to Bangladesh, expressing that their lives found purpose in defending the nation against a fascist government. The sentiment inspired courage among young participants who had no prior experience in mass movements but felt compelled to stand for their motherland. After all, when the mother calls, her children cannot turn away.

3.2. Courage and Sacrifice:

"Tomar Kothae Hashte Paari"

(By your words I can laugh)

"Tomar Kothae Kaadte Paari"

(By your words I can cry)

"Morte Paari Tomar Buke, Buke Jodi Raakho Maago"

(I can even die in your embrace, if you keep me close to your heart, O Mother!)

This line mirrors the courage and sacrifice of martyrs such as Abu Sayed (Begum Rokeya University), Md. Asif Hasan (Northern University Bangladesh), and Mir Mugdho (Bangladesh University of Professionals), along with others, including children. On 16 July, Abu Sayed remained at the protest site in front of Begum Rokeya University when most students dispersed; he was shot multiple times by police and died. His death ignited public outrage and intensified the movement. Two days later, on 18 July, Md. Asif Hasan and Mir Mugdho were killed in Uttara (Dhaka), further amplifying the protests and demonstrating that the song's themes of devotion, courage, and readiness for sacrifice were enacted in reality.

3.3. Voice and Expression of Protest:

"Tomar Kothae Kotha Boli Pakhir Gaaner Moto"

(I speak by your words, like the song of a bird)

"Tomar Dekhae Bissho Dekhi Borno Koto Shoto"

(I see the world through your sight, with hundreds of colors)

"Tumi Amar Khelaar Putul, Amar Paashe Thako Maago"

(You are my plaything [doll], just stay by my side, O Mother!)

This line positions protesters as the voice of Bangladesh, expressing grievances against corruption, injustice, and quota discrimination. The 'bird' (*pakhi*) metaphor emphasizes their voices reaching beyond local boundaries, while the 'doll' (*putul*) imagery reflects care, protection, and responsibility toward the country. "*I see the world through your sight with hundreds of colors*" conveys the vision of a free and inclusive Bangladesh, where the sacrifices of protesters open the path to a brighter future. Protesters saw themselves as defenders of Bangladesh.

3.4. Love and Spiritual Bond with the Motherland

"Tomar Preme Tomar Gondhe Poraan Bhore Raakhi"

(In your love, with your fragrance, I fill my soul.)

"Eito Amar Jibon-Moron, Emni Jaano Thaaki"

(This is my life and my death, May I remain just like this)

"Buke Tomaar Ghumiye Gele Jagiye Diyo Naako Magoo"

(If I fall asleep in your heart, never wake me up, O Mother!)

This line emphasizes the spiritual and emotional bond between martyrs, protesters, and the nation. The “fragrance” represents courage, energy, and mental strength, while the reference to eternal rest signifies that the martyrs’ lives and deaths are inseparable from the motherland. It highlights how love for the nation sustains and empowers protesters in the face of danger.

3.5. Inspiration and Collective Action (Contextual Use):

The song became a unifying anthem for protesters and general people, reinforcing solidarity, courage, and determination. Patriotic songs like this one do not directly win struggles, but they cultivate morale, fortify collective identity, and guide participants’ actions. “Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago” effectively bridged personal emotion, public sentiment, and social mobilization, becoming an enduring emblem of the July 2024 Revolution.

4. Discussion

“Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago” was an important cultural and motivational influence in the July 2024 Revolution, particularly for protesters who were at the forefront of the movement. This study indicates the emotional and symbolic power of patriotic music in influencing collective action.

The connection between the song’s lyrics and real-life sacrifices, such as those of Abu Sayed (16 July, Begum Rokeya University), Md. Asif Hasan, and Mir Mugdho (18 July, Uttara), reinforced its symbolic power. These deaths, along with other participants including children, intensified public outrage and strengthened protest momentum, showing how the song’s messages of devotion, courage, and sacrifice were enacted in reality.

Social media amplified the song’s influence, transforming it into a unifying anthem. Videos, posts, and shared content facilitated rapid dissemination of the movement’s emotional narratives, enabling coordination, inspiration, and sustained collective action. The song’s imagery, such as the “bird” (*pakhi*) metaphor for voices reaching beyond local boundaries and the “doll” (*putul*) imagery reflects a powerful sense of care, protection and responsibility toward the country, positioning the protesters as both the nurturers and defenders of the motherland.

“Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago” gained strength, built unity, and guided collective action. Its themes of love, devotion, and sacrifice helped participants stay committed despite risks. The song shows how cultural artifacts can turn symbolic meaning into real resistance.

5. Conclusion

“Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago” was not only a patriotic song during the July 2024 Revolution but also a cultural and emotional bond. By linking lyrical material to protesters’ experiences, glorifying the sacrifices of martyrs, and being widely circulated through social media, the song consolidated solidarity, courage, and mass resistance. This study illustrates that music and culture can have an essential part to play in recent protest movements, not only reflection but active agents of resistance. The enduring impact of “Jonmo Amar Dhonno Holo Maago” illustrates how symbolic and cultural expression contains the ability to start, mobilize, and sustain movement for social and political change.

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