

REVIEW

‘Roid’: The forbidden fruit and the transcendence of art



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SAEED KHAN SHAGOR

According to Islamic, Christian, and Jewish religious mythologies, the first crime committed after the creation of humankind was Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. But what exactly was this forbidden fruit? There is no specific mention of it anywhere. While the Bible and the Quran refer to a forbidden tree, English literature often interprets the forbidden fruit as a grape, apple, fig, or pomegranate. Ultimately, it remains an open-ended question. According to some historians, it was not a fruit at all, but rather the first instance of physical intimacy between Adam and Eve. Thus, we can also perceive the forbidden fruit without objectifying it.

In Mejbaur Rahman Sumon's *Roid*, when the village saint asks about eating the forbidden fruit, it introduces an open-ended resolution to the story. Shadhu admits he has eaten it. But what is this forbidden fruit? Why did he have to eat it? Is it a physical object or something abstract? By addressing these questions, the film becomes a reflection of living art, where Sumon leaves the audience

with a mental frame much larger than the film's actual visuals. Magical realism ultimately becomes a grander reality than any definitive conclusion.

The story of *Roid*, co-written by Mejbaur Rahman Sumon and Selina Banu Moni, is a simple, fluent, and lean narrative of life. Shadhu, a village shepherd, lives a purposeless existence



until one monsoon—during the time of Durga Puja—he marries and brings home a wife. The film opens with their married life. As they explore the village, they mirror Adam and Eve first stepping into the world. Shadhu's wife has no name; if she does, it remains unknown. Instead of bringing comfort to Shadhu's life, this mentally unstable wife becomes a source of constant

trouble.

The screenplay of *Roid* is extraordinary precisely because it lacks excess. The ambience of the village, the sound of flowing water, and the authentic simplicity of rural visuals deepen the narrative rather than overpowering it. Sumon, Jaheen Faruque Amin, and their team ensure the characters speak like ordinary people instead of philosophical mouthpieces. Free from dramatic exaggeration, life simply moves forward in its own way. Consequently, the dialogue remains deeply grounded in everyday life. We hear Shadhu asking his wife, "You remember nothing, you forget everything—then



why do you keep coming back to my doorstep?" There is nothing formal or forced about it. Even when Panna asks, "Whose child is this?", no one reacts with theatrical discomfort. However, although the film is set in Sunamganj, the characters speak in a southern or Khulna dialect, which feels misplaced and is occasionally difficult to digest.

The cinematic presentation of *Roid* goes beyond mere storytelling; it is an elevated art form. Its strongest and most dazzling attribute is its cinematography. Such powerful visual storytelling has arguably never been seen before in Bangladeshi cinema. The blend of magical realism, mythology, and metaphorical elements from Abrahamic, Indic, pagan, and monistic religions elevates the film to

unique heights. Sumon does not just feed us the forbidden fruit and leave us trapped in a time loop; he repeatedly introduces symbolic presences like Moses' frogs and Noah's ark. He uses cattle as sexual symbols and juxtaposes Durga in parallel motion. Yet, rising above all these metaphors is the multilayered portrayal of the mad woman as Shadhu's wife.

The director gives this character a profound depth. She is mad, yet her madness demands celebration. From within her instability rises the essence of motherhood itself; she tells a doubtful Shadhu, "The child is mine, Allah gave it." This moment evokes the imagery of Mary and Jesus Christ—the greatest historical religious example where a child's identity is defined entirely by the mother. Sumon leaves us beautifully uncertain whether her pregnancy is miraculous or merely reality.

In this role, Nazifa Tushi delivers the finest performance of her career. As Shadhu, Mostafizur Noor Imran completely merges with the screen, his performance perfectly intertwined with the visual movements the filmmaker sought to explore. Meanwhile, Ahsabul Yamin Riyad performs wonderfully as Panna despite the character being under-explored, and Gazi Rakayet remains entirely natural as Mia Bhai.

Ultimately, *Roid* is the triumph of integrated art. Joaher Musabbir's cinematography is the film's greatest strength, sustaining this linear, lean story for 127 minutes purely through its framing. Visually, Sumon seems to pay tribute to iconic filmmakers like Stanley Kubrick, Jean-Luc Godard, and Kim Ki-duk. The handheld and tracking shots make the audience feel as though they are experiencing the story through someone else's eyes.

Sajib Ranjan Biswas's sound design creates an immersive sensation,

making us feel as though we are hearing the scenes through an observer's ears. The rhythmic beats of paddy threshing, cow fights, and muffled conversations pull the viewer deep into the world. Editor Sazol Alok crafts seamless transitions through simple frame-to-frame cuts and authentic location sound. The dark, gritty tone of the visuals creates a sense of discomfort—but a deeply enjoyable one. Music director Emon Chowdhury further traps the audience within an altered sense of time. The cruel sequence where Shadhu's wife is fed *dhutura* flowers mixed with pineapple, followed by Shadhu's chilling smile at the village fair while Kanai Das Baul's "Mon chara ki moner manush roy, roy go?" plays in the background, instantly cements itself as a cult classic moment in Bangla cinema.

Yet, even through this spiritual journey, flaws persist. The film never clearly explains the catalyst behind the mob lynching of Shadhu, leaving the audience somewhat bewildered, and the visual execution of certain violent scenes feels incomplete. However, these shortcomings cannot overshadow Sumon's success in transforming soil, water, air, clouds, climate, and agriculture into subtle characters of their own.

The most unsettling element remains the forbidden fruit. Just as history never allows us to definitively discover what the forbidden fruit was, Sumon refuses to give a clear answer. Is it the injustice inflicted upon his wife? Is it the goat, Kulsum? Or is it the wife herself? The film leaves it unanswered. It only reminds us in its final frame that the punishment for tasting the forbidden fruit is an endless loop from which we can never escape. Leaving behind comfort and sparking endless curiosity, *Roid* concludes as a true work of art.

NEWS

UN to add Israel

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General is appointed," the ministry posted on X.

Asked about Danon's comments at a regular briefing on Thursday, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said: "I can tell you from the Secretary-General's point of view, his door remains open to Israeli representatives, as to the other 192 member states and the two observer states."

Guterres' warning in August resulted from "significant concerns

regarding patterns of certain forms of sexual violence that have been consistently documented by the United Nations."

At the time, Danon dismissed the concerns as baseless.

In his warning to Israel, Guterres said he was "gravely concerned about credible information of violations by Israeli armed and security forces" against Palestinians in several prisons, a detention centre and a military base.

Man beaten

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while undergoing treatment.

Md Jahangir Alam, officer-in-charge of Satkania Police Station, told The Daily Star that the victim was beaten by a mob over allegations of theft.

"We are investigating whether the incident was related to theft allegations or if there were any previous disputes," the OC added.

The body was sent to Chattogram Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Selim's father, Abul Khair, filed a murder case with Satkania Police Station yesterday, naming 29 people and accusing more than 100 unidentified individuals, police said.

10 more die

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to hospitals with measles or measles-like symptoms, while 585 were discharged.

Till 8:00am yesterday, a total of 54,798 patients with measles or measles-like symptoms had been admitted to hospitals, while 51,511 were discharged, meaning around 3,300 children were still undergoing treatment.

Health officials and experts said the infection rate is declining as more than 1.84 crore children have already been brought under vaccination coverage.

However, they warned that deaths may continue for several more days as many children have already been hospitalised.

3 Bangladeshis

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debris in southern Lebanon as the area is almost off-limits to people.

Even law enforcers need special approval to enter the area because of security risks, Anwar said.

Lebanon is home to nearly one lakh Bangladeshis. A few thousand of them have been displaced and left jobless because of the war, but charities and the Bangladesh embassy have provided them with food support on needs basis.

Lebanese authorities have granted amnesty to undocumented Bangladeshis to return home without paying any penalty.

Under the scheme, around 500 Bangladeshis have registered to return, and the process is underway, Anwar said.

Tigresses begin T20WC prep

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Cup, helping the team get into shape," Bangladesh skipper Nigar Sultana Joty told The Daily Star in an interview before departing for Scotland.

Bangladesh have already completed a few practice sessions in windy conditions to acclimatise with the conditions ahead of their opening match.

Although Bangladesh boast a perfect record against the Scots in the format, having won all six previous

meetings, the hosts will fancy their chances given their recent form and home conditions.

Scotland made an impressive start to the tournament by defeating the Netherlands by nine wickets in in Edinburgh on Thursday.

Chasing 142, Scotland reached the target in just 14.5 overs, thanks to half-centuries from openers Katherine Fraser (56 not out off 41) Darcey Carter (55 off 37).

The series, which runs until June 4, will see all three teams face each

other twice, with no final scheduled.

Following the tri-series, Bangladesh will travel to England for two official warm-up matches against New Zealand and Ireland on June 6 and 9 in Loughborough, in the buildup to the main event.

Bangladesh, who are placed in Group A alongside India, Australia, South Africa, Pakistan and the Netherlands, will begin their T20 World Cup campaign against the Netherlands on June 14 in Birmingham.

Ex-head of Hong Kong journalist union jailed for obstructing police

AFP, Hong Kong

A Hong Kong court yesterday dismissed an appeal by the former head of the city's largest press union against a conviction for obstructing police officers, issuing a five-day jail sentence.

Ronson Chan, former chairman of the Hong Kong Journalists Association, had been arrested by police who said he refused to show his ID and was "uncooperative" when stopped by two plainclothes officers in 2022 on his way to report.

Hong Kong police have broad stop-and-search powers, and residents have limited legal recourse to object to an ID check.

Chan "was reckless and obstructed other members of the public... affecting public order", a judge wrote in a 2023 verdict.

Deputy High Court Judge Lily Wong upheld the conviction yesterday, sentencing the 45-year-old veteran journalist to jail for five days immediately.

Chan sat quietly in the courtroom dock as Wong delivered the verdict.

His lawyer Steven Kwan told reporters they will consider appealing.

Hong Kong was once a hub of

independent news outlets, but critics say press freedoms have been restrained since Beijing imposed a national security law on the city in 2020, with some newsroom managers charged or jailed for violating it since.

Last month, watchdog Reporters Without Borders ranked Hong Kong 140 out of 180 countries and territories in its World Press Freedom Index.

Authorities said the media landscape in Hong Kong has "remained vibrant" since the implementation of the security laws, highlighting that "freedom of the press and speech are not absolute".

Before entering the courtroom yesterday, Chan, who was wearing a black shirt with the writing "Press Freedom" on it, told reporters that he was feeling anxious and had prepared mentally for imprisonment.

"I personally believe that Hong Kong enjoys freedom of the press under the Basic Law, yet time and again, in practice, I have seen that the status of press freedom is truly very low," Chan said, referring to the city's mini constitution.

"I hope I'm the last person to get into legal trouble for these reasons when conducting interviews."

Rawhide traders' woes

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(16-20 square feet) should fetch Tk 990-1,200, a medium-sized cowhide (21-30 square feet) Tk 1,300-1,850, and a large cowhide (31-40 square feet) Tk 1,900-2,600.

The morning after Eid-ul-Azha presented an unpleasant scene in Chattogram's Muradpur and Aturar Depot areas, where hundreds of rawhides lay dumped along roadsides and beside drains.

The rotting hides emitted a foul smell, with residents saying traders abandoned them overnight after failing to secure expected prices.

Seasonal trader Enamul Haque from Hathazari said he collected around 230 cowhides at an average cost of Tk 300 each, but warehouse owners offered only Tk 50 to Tk 100 per hide.

"At that price, I could not even recover transport costs," he said, adding that he was eventually forced to dump the hides.

Another trader, Mohammad Rahim Mia, said he bought hides at around Tk 350 each but managed to sell only 255 hides at Tk 100 apiece on the night of Eid (May 28). He said he could not sell the remaining hides even by Friday morning.

Md Muslim Uddin, president of the Chattogram Greater Rawhide Merchants' Cooperative Society, said warehouse owners bought good hides for Tk 400 to Tk 500, but damaged hides found no buyers, forcing seasonal traders to abandon mostly low-quality hides.

In Khulna, large cowhides sold for Tk 400 to Tk 450, while smaller hides fetched Tk 200 to Tk 300 -- 5 to 10 percent lower than last year, according to traders.

Abdus Salam Dhali, president of the Khulna District Rawhide Traders' Association, said exporters offered better prices only for export-quality hides.

"Buying lower-quality hides at higher prices would lead to losses," he said, adding that a lack of preservation facilities was also troubling traders.

In Barishal, rawhide prices caused frustration among madrasa representatives and small traders.

Mirajul Islam, who brought hides from a madrasa to a wholesale market, said large cowhides that sold for Tk 600 to Tk 700 last year were now fetching only Tk 400 to Tk 450.

In Netrokona, Mohammad Mazharul Islam, an assistant teacher at Jamia Miftahul Ulum Madrasa, said teachers and students collected more than 400 cowhides and over 100 goatskins on Eid day, but could not find any reliable wholesaler or major buyer even late at night.

Shaheen Ahamed, chairman of the Bangladesh Tanners Association, said large-scale procurement had yet to begin, as most buyers were waiting for the hides to be salted before purchasing them. He said prices were not particularly low earlier in the night, but the situation changed after midnight as many hides remained unsalted, which affected pricing and slowed trade activity.

Tannery owners aim to collect 7.5 million to 8 million sacrificial animal hides this year, with around 80 percent expected to be purchased directly in Dhaka. Last year, they directly bought around 750,000 to 800,000 hides in the capital.

[Our Netrokona correspondent contributed to this report]

N Korea 'not keen' on engaging with US, South: S'pore FM

AFP, Singapore

North Korea does not seem keen on diplomacy with Washington and Seoul, instead choosing to strengthen self-reliance and military deterrence, Singapore's foreign minister has said after a rare trip to the politically isolated nation.

Pyongyang has repeatedly shunned peace overtures from the South Korean government while throwing its backing behind Russia in its invasion of Ukraine.

The comments by Singapore's top diplomat Vivian Balakrishnan late on Thursday followed his first visit in eight years to Pyongyang, marking half a century of diplomatic ties.

"At this point in time, they... appear to not be keen on any engagement externally, either with America or even with the ROK," Balakrishnan told local media in Seoul, using South Korea's official acronym.

"Instead, they are focusing on building up their own self-reliance as well as their own military deterrence," he said after the two-day working visit to the nuclear-armed state.

In recent months, North Korea has stepped up its invective against the South, labelling it the "most hostile state" and cutting all references to uniting the divided peninsula from its constitution.

Balakrishnan said he too had observed a hardening in North Korea's stance on unification.