

**Artificial Intelligence, Hyperreality and Virtual World of Games: A Postmodernist Study of *Kundo Wakes Up* by Saad Hossain**Quratulain Ijaz<sup>1</sup>, Azra Ismail<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Sajid Ali\*<sup>3</sup>, Jawaria Sajid<sup>4</sup>

## Original Article

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**Abstract**

*The present study aims at exploring the use of technology and its effects on human beings as presented in Kundo Wakes Up by Saad Hossain using the postmodern lens of hyperreality. The study has analyzed the text through Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality with its four stages of simulacra and simulation that expose the distinction between actual and virtual reality. Kundo Wakes Up (2022) is primarily a political satire that critiques and parodies various aspects of contemporary society, particularly focusing on political corruption, power dynamics, and societal hierarchies. The purpose of this study is to analyze the shenanigans of modern technology and dependency of young generation on artificial intelligence and virtual world of games that control their lives and lead them towards cybercrime. Findings of the study reveal that the main protagonist Kundo undergoes significant transformation from passive observer to an active participant challenging the prevalent oppressive system. Furthermore, through creating virtual world, the writer delves deep into the stark divisions between different social classes and the exploitation of the underprivileged by the ruling elite.*

**Keywords:** Hyperreality, Artificial Intelligence, Virtual World of Games, *Kundo Wakes Up*

**1. Introduction**

Science fiction deals primarily with narratives that describe futuristic literature, which is set in the future. It is now acknowledged as a literary form with its history, custom and conventions. It is commonly abbreviated as Sci-Fi (Science Fiction). It is the result of mankind's achievements in the field of science and technology. "Science fiction and fantasy have been argued to be part of a mutable continuum of speculative genre fiction" (Rieder, 2010, p.191). Its goal is to transform the humans or real universe to explore and learn something new about the nature and universe through projection, extrapolation, analogous hypothesis and appropriate experimentation. It is basically a mysterious genre that mixes hypothesis and imagination, and readers are expected to evoke their imagination through working with the creative faculties of the author. Extraterrestrial life, artificial intelligence, virtual world of games, time travel, Cyberpunk, space exploration, travel and parallel universe are the prominent themes of Sci-Fi fiction. Likewise, Science Fiction greatly provokes hyperreality.

Roots of Sci-fi fiction may be observed in the ancient myths. Some scholars assert that Science fiction has its beginnings in ancient times around 2nd century AD by the satirist Lucian. A few claimed that *Frankenstein* was the first work of science fiction originally published in 1818 by Mary Shelley. Afterward, there are a lot of works appeared on the literary horizon of Sci-Fi fiction.

A variety of tastes and concerns are also evident in South Asian Science. Since 1990, it can be observed that a new wave of South Asian SFF (Science Fiction and Fantasy) spread on the horizon of the literary genre in different parts of the subcontinent. Malik is a speculative fiction writer from Pakistan, who works on horror, fantasy and science, with special emphasis on Middle Eastern fantasy and allegorical traditions. Bina Shah is known as a media professional in Science Fiction. Haris Durrani a US-based Pakistani speculative novelist of Sci-Fi Fiction who won the 2015 Driftless Novella Prize.

Tarun K. Saint, an Indian scholar and author edited the *Gollancz Book of South Asian Science Fiction* (2019). Vandana Singh from India writes about speculative fiction that mostly deals with science and climate change. Anil Menon a famous USA based Indian writer of speculative fiction and tries his luck in cyberpunk stories by writing on international forums. Padmanabhan is known as the pioneer of Indian SF. Her sci-fi play *Harvest* (1997) won the Onassis Theater Award. Divya is a Speculative Science fiction researcher. Her novella *Runtime* (2016), is a part of her collection *Contingency Plans for the Apocalypse and other Possible Situations*, was nominated for Nebula in 2016.

Hossain being the author of many fantasy writings is regarded as the emerging star of South Asia from Dhaka, Bangladesh. His works *Escape from Baghdad* (2015), *Djinn City* (2017), *The Gurkha and the Lord of Tuesday* (2019) and *Cyber Mage* (2021), have been on the horizon of Sci-fi literary genre and earned name and fame. Last but not least, the novel under study named *Kundo Wakes Up* published in 2022, is a fabulous example of Sci-Fi Fiction.

*Kundo Wakes Up* is the techno dystopian fiction. The author artistically plays with the words in this fiction and builds a world of technology with all its menace. The story revolves around the main protagonist Kundo, a famous artist, who explores a dystopia of magic and technology in searching for his lost wife. In the dying city of Chittagong, Karma representing Artificial Intelligence acts as an omnipotent deity, not only regulates the environment but also provides suitable living conditions for the stability of the city. But gradually Karma lifts its responsibilities leaving this dying city's inhabitants on their own with the technological devices. Briefly speaking, Kundo's wife was addicted to video games. He thinks that he can find her through these gaming technologies. His search for his wife leads him from the carefully utopian constructed world of Karma (Artificial Intelligence) to the virtual world of Gangaridai that is constructed by Djinn through the medium of virtual world of games and this world is more sophisticated in its fabrication than the Karma's Artificial Intelligence world. During his search, Kundo finds that beneath the underworld of virtual reality of game, there is another murkier game *The Dark Road*. This is a special game and only a few can find their way to play with this game. The player has to be fully immersed in a system of artificial intelligence of a special gaming bed. With the assistance of dying criminal overload, Kundo after all discovers the secret behind his wife's sudden and mysterious disappearance.

This study highlights the scientific shenanigans of modern technology in the form of artificial intelligence and the virtual world of games and the impact that they cast on the lives of the inhabitants of Chittagong. This study probes deep into the emerging genres of postmodern Sci-Fi fiction through the theoretical perspective of Baudrillard's hyperreality with particular lens of simulacra and simulation as represented in Hossain's novel *Kundo Wakes Up*. This study is qualitative and employs Belsey's method of textual analysis for the interpretation of the text.

### 1.1 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is:

- To explore the shenanigans of modern technology in the form of artificial intelligence and the virtual world of game through stages of simulacra and simulation as presented in Hossain's novel *Kundo Wakes Up*

### 1.2 Research Question

This study attempts to find the answer to following research question:

- How do Artificial Intelligence and the Virtual World of Games blend and create the effect of hyperreality through different stages of simulacra and simulation as presented in *Kundo Wakes Up*?

## 2. Literature Review

Modern and advanced technologies have changed the perception of human beings to look at the world differently. The existence of psychological discursiveness has an impact on perception (Ramzan et al., 2023). With the emergence of technological development, the general attitude of the young generation towards reality and artificiality has gone under great change. On the whole, the young generation has much attraction toward fake realities like artificial intelligence, cyberspace, and games. In the postmodern era, the loss of reality and dependence on the virtual world are in vogue.

Glennon (2022) examines Pynchon's novel *The Crying of Lot 49* with special reference to the concept of hyperreality and imaginary station. Baudrillard in his essay *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994) originally published in 1981, proposed his theme of Park Station, a fictional Disneyland in California that obscures the fact that the world outside Disneyland is hyperreal. Glennon related his concept to Umberto's Eco California in *Travels from Hyperreality* (1986). Glennon here depicted Fangoso Lagoon as a copy of Baudrillard's example of Disneyland and is presented as an amazing, fantastical and bizarre spectacle. Virtual Stations do this by infusing a hyperreal environment with real energy.

Hermann (2021) explores that science fiction emerges as a credential for moral, social and behavioral menace regarding artificial intelligence (AI). Hermann paints a distorted picture of the technology's current possibilities and cautions against AI's real-world impacts. Actually, these fears, probabilities and risks are not about humanoid robots or conscious machines, but about how corporations, governments and businesses can assess humans and how humans are being discriminated, exploited and monitored through AI technology.

Khan, Anwar and Yasmin (2021) explore the concept of hyperreality in the selected fiction of Cargill. They investigate how simulacra and simulation create a hyperreal environment in two very famous fictions of Cargill named *The Sea of Rust* and *Day Zero* published in 2017 and 2021 respectively and how this world of simulacra is totally different from the actual reality of the human world. They are of the view that due to modern technology; reality has undergone a change and the world of hyperreal has become totally a new reality. The advancements in technology have given birth to new meanings to the world.

Patra (2021) discussed virtual reality in Ernest Cline's novels *Ready Player One* and *Ready Player Two*. Patra aims to highlight the hyperreal environment with real and fake worlds created in both novels. He is of the opinion that this virtual world surpasses the real world artistically. Chukhin and Chukhin (2021) explore the impact of Simulacra on the civic society of Russia with special reference to Russian children. The researchers delineate the current scenario of Russian Political changes and due to this change not only the constitutional democracy is

affected but also the social network of society. They observed that adult and youth are affected more in a society because of the multifaceted civic lives in society which enhanced not only confusion in their mind but also baffled their immature brains.

Amoretta (2020) explores hyperreality in James Dashner's novel *The Eyes of Minds*. According to her, simulacra are the game itself while simulation is an intermediary process of how reality and creation are blurred. She is of the view that the virtual world of the game is not the reality itself but rather the representation of reality. The researcher tends to inspect the protagonist of the novel Michael as a leader both in the virtual and real world. Amoretta finds that the Coffin is a negotiator between the players against the simulated gaming world. Here the line between real and virtual world is blurred.

Antony and Trambo (2020) proclaim that hyperreality casts its impact on media and literature including films, advertisements, news and social media. By the representation of artificial realities, hyperreality hides the truth and originality. The researchers examined that young brains are highly articulated with digitalization. Information technology adds fuel to the fire in the imaginative world of youngsters. They explore that the world supported by technology produces a new utopian world of artificiality where human beings are more comfortable to live in. They are of the view that people are moving towards chaos and confusion due to hyperreality and this resulted in the identity crisis. This is solely due to the confusion between the realities and artificialities of technologically advanced societies. The false realities are the cause of attraction for the people and they are lost in that virtual world in such a way that they took these fake realities as original and real.

Wanodya (2015) finds out the hyperreality in the *Free to Fall* by Lauren Miller. According to her, this novel deals with the technology and the effects of this technology are linked with hyperreality. The researcher uses the Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality with special reference to the changing images of the technology. She is of the view that technology has blurred reality and paves the minds of human beings according to a set pattern of creative reality. Similarly, Hossain (2022) from Dhaka, explores fantasy and speculative Sci-Fi fiction and articulates irony, black humor, virtual reality, Eastern myth and fables. The novella under study *Kundo Wakes Up* (2022) highlights the concept of hyperreality, simulacra and simulation through the world of artificial intelligence, cyberspace and the virtual world of games. The present study is basically a blend of combat between Artificial intelligence and the virtual world of games.

### Theoretical Framework

This study analyzes the text by applying Baudrillard's perspective of hyperreality. Baudrillard is known as a French philosopher, sociologist, and cultural theorist. In this technologically sophisticated postmodern society, people are bewildered by reality and its simulation, and consequently, they cannot discriminate between what is real and what is artificial. Baudrillard's concept of Hyperreality helps us understand the absurdities of the postmodern world. Baudrillard (1981/1994) in *Simulacra and Simulation* tends to explore the interconnectedness between reality, symbols and society. He exposes the following four successive phases of the image in his book *Simulacra and Simulation*,

- It is the reflection of profound reality;
- It masks and denatures a profound reality;
- It is the absence of profound reality;
- It has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum. (p. 6)

Actually, Baudrillard elaborates four orders to define an image. At the first stage, the image reflects a true reality. This stage is referred to as reflection or a faithful image or copy and termed as the

*sacramental order*. At the second stage, the image distorts the original reality purposefully by subverting the truth and thus, it hides the truth. This stage is referred to as the mask or perversion of reality and termed as *masks and denatures* or as an "evil appearance—it is of the order of maleficence" (Baudrillard, 1981/1994, p. 6). When it reaches the third stage, the image acts like a concealer or the absence of basic reality. At this stage, the signified has disappeared and the signifier tries to disguise this absence. This stage masks the absence of a profound reality, here the image pretends to be an original copy but in reality, it is a copy with no original and termed as *order of sorcery*. Lastly, the fourth stage propounds that the sign has no longer any connection to any reality and it becomes self-referent. Thus, it becomes its own simulacrum. This stage is referred to as pure *simulacrum* or *simulation* and the simulacrum or simulation has no relationship to any reality.

Baudrillard (1981/1994) quotes the saying of Ecclesiastes as "The simulacrum is never what hides the truth it is the truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true". (p. 1). He is of the view that Simulacra are imitations or copies and Simulation is no longer a replica, a copy or an imitation. It converts a reality of its own. This stage thus becomes a hyperreality. Baudrillard (1991) also suggests that there are three orders of Simulacra in his two essays as:

- I. The first order is based on the imitation of reality. At this stage, a perfect copy of the image is built. It is known as naturalistic simulacra.
- II. The second order is the misrepresentation, falsification or deviance from reality. It builds the untrue image of the reality or we can say it is the masked reality of the image that distorts the original image. It is called productive simulacra.
- III. The third stage represents the absence of extreme reality. It is basically copy with no original. It is basically a link with the original but without connecting with it. It stands with its own original meaning.

These three stages of simulacra pave the way for simulation. It is the stage where simulacra have no connection with the original reality. This stage leads toward achieving pure simulation.

#### 4 Textual Analysis

##### 4.1. The Reflection of Profound Reality or Naturalistic Simulacra

Baudrillard (1981/1994) explores that the first stage of simulation is the reflection of profound reality, "In the first case, the image is a good appearance - representation is of the sacramental order" (p. 6). This idea is further strengthened by him in his article published in 1991. In this article he says that the first order of simulacra is based on imitation of reality which creates a perfect replica of reality and is known as naturalistic simulacra.

Here in the construction of the plot of the novella, we observe a powerful and omnipotent system of Karma, representing Artificial Intelligence is employing complete control over society. "Maybe they were picked to colonize a new system," Farah said. "Maybe Karma has a spaceship and she's sending only the best, and we're like the shit left behind!" Kundo smiled, you like sci-fi, huh?" (Hossain, 2022, p. 15). These lines blending reality and the virtual world present the colonized view of new system controlling the people and their lives. These lines imply that the exceptional superstructure of power subordinates the masses under her impotent control. The people are in a continuous sense of agitation and vulnerable condition due to this suppression in the name of technology. The young generation is bewildered about where the missing people have gone. This situation implies irony for the political subjugation of the masses.

There are many traces of the reflection of profound reality in the novella *Kundo Wakes Up*. The reflection of reality is when Kundo sees gamers who lay straight in the gel of the couch with their eyes twitched. The surrounding of the game room is adjusted through micro climate and

Nanotech technologies. The couch is the link between reality and the virtual world through high tech of Artificial Intelligence. "About twenty gamers lay prone, eyes twitching, slathered in gel...This place was clinical high tech, completely at odds with the shabbiness outside" (Hossain, 2022, p. 35). The players playing the game in couch is the reality of what happens to them in games. The feelings attach to the games and a battle with two weapons in both hands is the true reflection of reality. These sensations are actually felt by the players but for the viewers it is the virtual world. The same is endorsed by Ashari (2018) who asserts that the basic reality emerges from the reflection of profound reality.

The gaming couch is a high-tech organic instrument for lifting the gamer to the virtual world. For example, in reality, the couch accepts Fara's biometric impression as a key and Kundo follows all the necessary details of the game. And even in reality, he sets the atmospheric condition suitable to play game that is almost antiseptic green "This couch sticks needles into you," Fara said, her eyes wide. "You want needles stuck in your dick, you get in it" (Hossain, 2022, p. 43). In reality, before entering the couch Fara feels that the gaming bed has needles that stick in the body of the gamer. She feels the sensation of fear of being pricked by the needles. But Kundo removes her fear by telling his experience of seeing the gamers in the den. They lay completely comfortable. "It's not needles", Kundo said. "It's more like cilia hair. And you can't feel anything. I have seen the pro gamers in the den. They seemed perfectly comfortable" (Hossain, 2022, p. 43). Here Kundo constructs the reality of the gaming bed. The gaming bed is not going to harm the gamers. The needles are not needles in reality they are hair like cilia that attach to the body of gamers to prevent immune system response. Actually, these cilia are reflections of the reality of needles.

Anyhow Fara has to lay naked in the bed and has to put the blue gel all over her body. As soon as she prostrates in the couch, the fat centipedes start excreting from the couch in reality, begin to cover her body randomly and take control over her body. Resultantly, she slightly shudders and turns her eyes that rolled back and softly settles in the couch. Actually, this couch seems to be the liberator from the crucial realities of life for gamers. The players of the games are fed up with the Karma world. Karma is like an autocratic, despotic and tyrannical ruler of Chittagong society where there is no need for freedom of choice by people. This city is the portrayal of colonialism and a totalitarian regime where people are bound to live in a set dystopian society that is full of corruption, inequality and political oppression. The inhabitants of Chittagong fall into trap through these sophisticated technological devices. The couch simply takes the players toward a world that is virtually constructed and seems a suitable place to live in. Secondly, the couch is reality and the functionality of the couch is the reflection of profound reality. Hossain (2022) describes the expectations of Kundo "He expected her to start convulsing but instead she settled gently into the couch after that, the tension completely draining from her limbs" (Hossain, 2022, p. 44). So, the young generation seeks refuge in the lap of the virtual world to free themselves from the bondage of the cruel realities of life. It implies that the players who play this game struggle against the dynamics of power. They try to liberate, resist and challenge the oppressive system.

During the full session of the game, Fara feels that she is a real warrior fighting in a war. Hossain (2022) explores that she is lying in the playing gaming couch and she feels like a warrior of combat and has a Mughal-styled sword and a shield in her hands. She has the sensation of strong powers and is dependent on speed. She fights with a Japanese fighting player named Malam who is adorned with dual katanas and wearing Japanese samurai armor. Fara fights with him bravely like an ideal fighting soldier and cuts her opponent-fighting soldiers in blocks. Fara's style is like a real soldier and she moves like a lively fluid while the opponent soldier Malam is in

herky-jerky style. All this is the reflection of profound reality, as the gamer in the couch is not fighting in reality rather fighting virtually while lying in bed.

Kundo was observing the fight and was fascinated by the life like fight as he observes "Each blow drew gouts of blood" (Hossain, 2022, p. 46). In the end, Fara being a true fighter chopped Malam into bits methodically, she screamed out, "That was amazing, this couch is amazing" (Hossain, 2022, p. 46). This is her feelings about the couch. The fight is the true reflection of the reality in a battlefield. And she was totally immersed in that game with no thought of the real world around her. No fear, no tension just one thing in her memory to kill her opponents and this is the real purgation for her. As Baudrillard (1981/1994) endorses that the simulacrum never conceals reality rather reality itself conceals the fact that there is none.

Fara relates her feelings about the fight to Kundo. "Damn, that was the most realistic fight I've ever been in. I could feel the sword shaking in my hands, every time it spilled his armor. I think I could taste his blood in the air" (Hossain, 2022, p. 47). This is the portrayal of the reflection of profound gaming reality in which the player feels the happening as original and is so deeply involved in it that confuses the reader about real and virtual. This is the beauty of the virtual world of gaming. She further says that "Once you're in there, it is like a trance. You don't want to come out" (Hossain, 2022, p. 48).

#### **4.2 The Mask of Profound Reality or Productive Simulacra**

In Baudrillard's point of view, the second stage is masking one which is termed as productive simulacra "In the second, it is an evil appearance - it is of the order of maleficence" (Baudrillard, 1981/1994, p. 6). It is the blur representation of reality. At this stage, the original reality is distorted subverted intentionally.

When Fara enters the gaming world, she feels that a strange supernatural trick is being played on her. And Kundo who is with her also sees her appearances as Hossain writes, "He could see her log in with her avatar, stripped down to a basic skin and standard weapons. Her character was a witch queen, similar to her in build and look" (Hossain, 2022, p. 45), Here the real and virtual being of Fara is represented. Like a witch queen, she is adorned with a log and avatar skin like a supernatural being with weapons in her hands like a fighter. This is the blur or mask representation of reality. As she is in the character of a fighter in the game, Fara feels like a fighter as in reality she is lying in the couch but feels like a fighter. Here reality is mixed with the virtual or masked world.

The scenery all around the gaming screen is of the black, fainted and starless sky. Here Kundo sees deeply into the background of the game and feels the optical illusion and hallucination of a city where the black road ends. As Hossain writes, "After his eyes adjusted, he thought he could see, far away, a mirage of a city, a promise of horror and abandonment" (Hossain, 2022, p. 45). He was fascinated by the hallucination of the city. Kundo is entangled in the mask or blur city of the gaming world. Kundo feels it is the real city as it is basically the reflection or mirage of the city and Kundo is lost in its beauty. Here the copy of the image is masked with reality. Hossain writes for Kundo, "He knew instinctively that this was a real place that this darkness was rendered just as faithfully as the most spectacular realm of the game" (Hossain, 2022, p. 45). Here even the protagonist feels the blurriness between reality and the virtual world. Contrary to Karma's supreme world, there is another world that is a utopian world controlled by Horus, a Djinn. Here Horus being a supreme political deity entangles and baffles the protagonist. By projecting the utopian city in the gaming screen, Horus wants to attract the players to join the eternal city of Gangaridai. This situation implies the true picture of the dirty political systems of the current era.

Kundo also observes the feed links that are provided to Fara in the game. Hossain writes, "He could see three bars on Fara's feed, for armor, hit points, and stamina, reflecting her physical condition" (Hossain, 2022, p. 46). In these lines, the real and the virtual beings come parallel with each other resulted in blurring the line between reality and the virtual world. As Baudrillard (1994) delineates that the copy of the image is masked with reality. The feed links are masking reality and are related to the real physical conditions of the gamers. These feed links control the heartbeat, breathing process and the hormonal balance of the body of the gamers (Hossain, 2022). Ernawati (2017) endorses the same as in the start, the image is the reflection of reality but gradually the constructed reality blurs the line between reality and artificiality.

Human beings in daily life use facial expressions and body gestures to express any emotions but, in the novella, the people use their echoes to convey their feelings. As Hossain writes, "He would have sent her an emoji, a burst of psychic warmth, but her Echo did not work...." (Hossain, 2022, p. 76). It is the mask of profound reality as in the present era people use the electronic gadget of cell phone to convey their emotions and sending emojis through cell phones. But here Hossain artistically masked it with the new technological device named Echo. Kundo shows the warm emotions of greetings by sending an emoji through his Echo to Dead Gola. This situation implies that Karma has full control over her people that even the personal messages are controlled by her through advanced technology of artificial intelligence. This situation highlights the follies and absurdities of the people that are to be done in the name of technology by the political omnipotent deity.

Hossain writes, "Fara closed her eyes and attacked with reckless abandon.... The Vulpine armor winked out his face crumpled in shock and then agony, as whatever rig he using abruptly flooded his pain receptors" (Hossain, 2022, p. 82). The simulations of shock, agony and pain that are to be seen on the face of the opponent player after being beaten by Fara, mask the copy and give original feeling of loss. The feelings of lost battle can be visible on his face. All these are the feelings of real life situations but here masked with a tinge of reality and originality. Baudrillard (1991&1981/1994) is of the view that the second stage is the blur representation of reality and termed as the masking stage.

#### 4.3 Absence of Profound or Extreme Reality

In the third, it plays at being an appearance - it is of the *order of sorcery* (Baudrillard, 1981/1994, p. 6). The first stage is the reflection of reality which leads to the masking of reality, the second stage. But at the third stage, the connection between reality and the virtual world loses and develops its own reality that is totally different from both realities. Now it is no more an image. It is a mere copy. The third stage is the concealer of the original reality. This stage is known as the absence of profound or extreme reality (Baudrillard, 1991). At this stage, the signified disappears and the signifier conceals this absence. The purpose of this stage is to make sure for the readers that the copy is original.

Hossain in the novella *Kundo Wakes Up* portrays the disconnection of reality through the highly developed technology of gaming couch and even by making the body of the gamers suitable to play the game. The great disconnection from reality is produced through PMD, a great artificial Intelligence technology. The gamer's bodies are set through the PMD which is abbreviated for *personal medical device* through which tiny bone like structures are to be inserted in the spines of the gamers. Sehran told Kundo that if the gamers want to stay for days in that couch, they have to use that technology. This technology regulates the body's systems. Here Hossain totally depicts the copy of another world that looks to have its own reality. Through PMD, the body of the gamers can control not only their own biological needs but also regulates the environment by contributing particles to the air and producing equilibrium to stable the environment suitable to live in.

Hossain (2022) in the novella utilizes the technique of absence of extreme reality with its full potential as Sehran's gaming world controller explains to Kundo that these PMD are a kind of gaming virus that controls the body of the gamers. PDM are sound enough to cope with the worms of the couch. Moreover, the hair on the arms is thought to be the microscopic hair that acts as a telescope and sees beneath the skin and forms a complete nervous system. The hairs are supposed to discharge viral molecules in the blood to slow down the immune system and represent a complete alliance between the body of the gamer and the couch. Moreover, the worms feed the gamer's body with nutrients. They leach waste material from the gamer's body and the waste material is recycled by the couch. The biological process of eating and excreting wastes is not done by human beings rather it is done by the centipedes 'the worms'. So the whole natural process is replaced by the unnatural one through the artificial technology. Islam (2017) endorses the same by employing that it is a stage when the copy becomes a copy without an original.

The character of Dead Gola is the exact example of the absence of profound reality. She is the perfect model of sorcery. As for as her physical appearance is concerned, her face is disordered with red squinted eyes and a yellow complexion looking like an addict of signal user. "Signal was a little scarab-shaped chip that rode your spine and lit up your brain all day long, no fuss, no organic mess" (Hossain, 2022, p. 66). Her condition is like an addict but she is not the addict rather she is the simulacrum of software like structure as her brain is activated by a signal chip like Sophia, the first humanoid robot. She is basically an erased coder of software of the Karma world. She is behaving like a human being but programmed like software of a machine. As her image is no longer a reflection. She is a true copy without reality. Hossain (2022) artistically fabricated the programmed human being of the postmodern era for the futuristic world but for the present age, her appearance is an example of the absence of profound reality.

Hossain blends the two stages of simulacra here. When Dead Gola is alive, she is a coder. She reflects herself as a mask of software of a machine and it helps Karma to run its programs. Here she is represented as a mask of profound reality. A human being can not be a software coder so her physical and practical being is totally representing mask of profound reality. When she dies and helps the hackers win the Dark Road games by cheating and practicing Black Magic on dead bodies. So Dead Gola is the representation of such a being that has no relation with living human beings showing an absence of extreme reality.

#### 4.4 Pure Simulacrum or Pure Simulation

In the process of simulation, simulacrum is the fourth order. Baudrillard explores that the copy (simulacrum) faints and reality appears as a reality of its own without the representation of an image. In short, Baudrillard asserts that the original is lost and coping becomes originality without any connection to reality. So Baudrillard is of the view that hyperreality does not exist but in this process, original is lost and the virtual world exists as its own. "In the fourth, it is no longer of the order of appearances, but of simulation" (Baudrillard, 1981/1994, p. 6).

The pure simulacrum in the *Kundo Wakes Up* is the description of the Gangaridai. Hafeez explains to Kundo that the FF9000 leads to another game, The Black Road and the winner of this game may enter the legendary city of Bengal. As Hafeez said, "The Black Road leads to Gangaridai.... The legendary city of Bengal, ruled by men and djinn" (Hossain, 2022, p. 56). This is the place where all disappeared people are said to live in peace and in utopian conditions. This is the place Fara predicts in the novella as "Kind of like they found some magic wonderland huh? All the cool kids are there and they won't give you the key poor Kundo" (Hossain, 2022, p. 21). Actually, it is the city that runs in the background of the game and Kundo feels attracted to it. But the way Horus appreciates the traits of the city of Gangaridai is the true simulacrum. It is a place where there is no death; rather it is an eternal city with no fear of decay and destruction of life. This description is basically a copy of paradise but logically has no relation with reality rather it is the

masked copy with no originality. We can term it as the true simulacra or simulation. As Nursamsami (2017) explores that the originality of the copy is simulacrum itself.

Hossain (2022) also blended fantasy with the fable of South Asian countries and produces a true simulacrum body of ReGi in the form of a Djinn. The way ReGi possesses Kundo's body and his feelings after ReGi's full control over him represents no connection with reality. The feelings of drowning in the cold icy water and taking water through the mouth and nose are the representation of false reality. Secondly, after ReGi's control on his body, Kundo feels Karma's world is no more around him especially when the system of Echo disappears. The sensations of Karma's world in which his brain is overloaded with lots of information are removed as deleted from a computer system. In other words, the schema of his brain is washed away by the spell of (Djinn) ReGi. This all is a false representation of original reality.

The physical being of Horus is another simulacrum body. Hossain (2022) portrays him in the novella as, "When he came, the room shrank. The sun seemed to dim down. Here finally was the monster they expected. He was abnormally tall, as he walked on someone else's legs..." (Hossain, 2022, p.102). This depiction of the Devil is unreal as the room shrunk when he came in, even the sunlight becomes dull, abnormal in size like a monster of fairy stories. But it seems as an accepted reality more real than the actual one. Baudrillard (1981/1994) says the unreal reality that looks to be more real is called hyperreality. In other words, it is the true condition of simulacra.

Here Hossain creates an imaginary world that looks to be natural from the outside. For Baudrillard (1981/1994), the purpose of the imaginary world is to create such a world from the outside that appears as a real one. Baudrillard's (1994) example of Disney Land is applied to the city of Gangaridai. The city of Gangaridai is an imaginary city in a hyperreal world that is made by the Djinn Horus. He made the simulacrum of paradise for the people in which they can live as per their own will. It is the perfect city similar to Fangoso Lagoons an imaginary station in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966). Likewise, Hossain artistically creates a model of an imaginary city Gangaridai that is the perfect place to live in.

The way Kundo and his crew enter the city is like the depiction of the fable *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1969) by Carroll. Alice went down to the wonderland by entering the hole after the rabbit and enjoyed many adventures there. In the same way, Kundo and his crew enter the city through the door that is not an actual door but a virtual hole to enter the wonderland of Gangaridai. "Each one stepped through this door of their own accord. Every single one wished for a new life, a new existence, and I have delivered" (Hossain, 2022, p. 108).

Moreover, the beauty of the city is strange enough for the protagonist to distinguish between magic, artificial intelligence and technology. The tall towers, copper domes, flowing fountains, ethereal sunlight realm and the blackness of the road all are matchless and flamboyant. There is a kaleidoscope to peep into the past and through that window Kundo sees his lost wife. This is the window to the world where all disappeared people are living an eternal life without decay or death. All these are descriptions of the imagined city of Gangaridai, the pure simulacra station.

## 5. Findings & Conclusion

The stages of Baudrillard's simulacra and simulation are artistically embedded in the novella by Hossain (2022). The findings of the study reveal these stages as:

1. The first stage is of reflection of reality that represents closeness with the real life like situation. The way players lay prone in the gaming bed, fight like real fighters with swords in their hands and the ecstasy of the gamers to kill their opponents to win the battle are the true representations of reality. We can say that physically they are in the actual world but mentally they are in the virtual

world. The analysis of *Kundo Wakes Up* depicts that Hossain has represented the gaming couch and its technology as a replica of reality.

2. The second stage of simulacra is the masking stage or the blurring representation of reality. Kundo being a hacker observes the optical illusion of the city which is the masked or blurred city of Gangaridai. The analysis reveals how Hossain produces the lifelike sensation of agony, pain, and shocks on the losers and the ecstasy of joy on winners of the game and these sensations explain the masked reality of the virtual world of games.

3. The third stage distorts the original reality intentionally. The way PMD works in the body of the gamers that regulates the body systems and the hair on the arms acts like a telescope beneath the skin that formulates the nervous system. The analysis reveals that the character of Dead Gola is the true representation of disconnection from reality being blend of humanoid robotic being.

4. The fourth stage is termed as pure simulacra or simulation. The analysis of *Kundo Wakes Up* reveals that a copy of the universal simulacra and simulations becomes the real world for the viewers and readers. It seems that Hossain (2022) deliberately infuses and fabricates the spirit of simulation and simulacra in the novella. The analysis reveals that Hossain delineates the character of ReGi as the depiction of pure simulacrum. The analysis reveals all supernatural traits of ReGi are implosively referred to as distorted images of reality. Hossain's description of the window to the world in the novella reveals that this is the true description of the pure simulacra and simulation where all the disappeared people of Chittagong are living a life of their own choice without being dead as they are living eternal life there.

In sum, *Kundo Wakes Up* by Hossain is the true picture of the stages of Baudrillard's hyperreality. It not only portrays the basic trait of science fiction but also evokes the image of the most recent concept of the universe in which the postmodern humans reinvigorate, fortify and strengthen the visualization of simulation and this visualization leads to a simulated world that is no more the real world. Hossain exposes the difference between the real and artificial world through hyperreality with basic tenants of Artificial Intelligence and the virtual world of Games. Using the postmodernist dystopian technique, Hossain seems to employ an insight into the country's social, political, and cultural aspects highlighting the dangers of unchecked power, political corruption, and the potential consequences of societal apathy.

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