

সংশোধনাগার (কারাগার) শাস্তি নয়, আত্মমুক্তি ও আলোর পথ অনুসন্ধানে বিকল্প ভাবনা হয়ে উঠুকঃ প্রেক্ষিত বাংলাদেশের সংশোধনাগারসমূহ (কারাগারসমূহ)

[“Correctional Institutions (Prisons) Not as Punishment, but as Alternative Pathways to Self-Liberation and Enlightenment: A Study of Bangladesh’s Correctional System”]

ড. ইসরাফিল শাহীন, অধ্যাপক, ডিপার্টমেন্ট অফ থিয়েটার ও পারফরমেন্স স্টাডিজ, ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

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Abstract:

This paper explores the existing conditions and philosophical orientation of correctional institutions in Bangladesh, with a particular focus on whether they serve as genuine spaces for reform or remain entrenched in punitive, colonial-era structures. The study reveals that the country’s prisons continue to reflect a legacy of colonial penal practices, where harsh living conditions and systemic inadequacies significantly obstruct inmates' paths toward rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

Instead of fostering personal transformation or social reintegration, the current prison environment in Bangladesh often exacerbates psychological trauma and hinders emotional and moral development. The denial of fundamental human needs – such as access to nutritious food, clean clothing, sanitary housing, and adequate healthcare – compounds the suffering of prisoners and undermines any efforts toward reformation. As a result, the core rehabilitative goals of incarceration remain unfulfilled.

This research proposes a conceptual shift: prisons should no longer be understood solely as institutions of punishment, but rather as environments that enable self-reflection, healing, and social re-entry. In this context, the paper advocates for the integration of performance arts – particularly theatre – as a therapeutic and educational tool within correctional settings. Drawing upon successful international models, the study argues that drama therapy and creative expression can play a transformative role in alleviating the psycho-physical burdens of prisoners and in cultivating empathy, discipline, and emotional intelligence.

The paper concludes by emphasizing the urgent need to humanize prison conditions in Bangladesh through holistic and culturally sensitive reforms. This includes revisiting the jail code, reducing overcrowding, training correctional staff, and introducing alternative pedagogies rooted in art and narrative. Only then can the prison evolve from a space of mere containment to one of light, introspection, and authentic social renewal.