



Rope-Dancing Appointments and Laputan Projects: Satire, Corruption, and Development

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Abstract

Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) uses sharp satire. It questions social and political excess. It targets wasteful royal display. Swift builds imaginary nations to make his point. This article studies royal excess in Lilliput and Laputa. It links those scenes to the governance Bangladesh of today. It explains Swift's use of irony, allegory, and caricature. It shows how these devices mirror public spectacles, misuse of funds, and entrenched corruption. The method is qualitative. The study combines a close reading of *Gulliver's Travels* with a focused review of Bangladeshi sources from 2010 to 2025. It pays special attention to mega-projects and elite patronage networks. The evidence is consistent. It indicates continuing extravagance, corruption, and abuse of power. Swift's critique remains timely for current governance. The article concludes that satire can act as a civic safeguard. It exposes waste. It sharpens public awareness. It helps citizens demand accountability in Bangladesh. It also points to key arenas where satire circulates today: the news media, public debate, and the classroom.

Keywords: *Gulliver's Travels*, Extravagance & Corruption, Bangladesh Governance, Lilliput and Laputa, Jonathan Swift

Introduction

Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is a landmark of eighteenth-century literature. It mixes sharp humour with a moral aim. Published in 1726, it follows Lemuel Gulliver through invented lands. The peoples of these lands exaggerate familiar human habits. By pushing behaviour to absurd limits, Swift holds up a comic mirror to his society. He targets the excesses of rulers and the careless use of authority. He mocks hollow rituals, lavish displays, and vanity projects that attract attention while neglecting public needs. Through irony, allegory, and caricature, he turns political criticism into a lively story. The ideas still resonate. The themes are broad. They speak to eighteenth-century England and to later

political settings.

This study applies Swift's insights to debates on governance in Bangladesh. Since independence in 1971, the country has faced persistent corruption, clientelism, and showy spending. These problems have stayed visible over the past two decades. They sit alongside strong economic growth and gains in health, education, and infrastructure. The contrast shows the value of satire for analysing how power is used—and misused—in modern states. Flagship projects such as the Padma Multipurpose Bridge, The Karnaphuli Tunnel (formerly The Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel) under the Karnaphuli River, and the Dohazari–Cox's Bazar Railway are promoted as symbols of national pride and modernisation. Reading them through Swift's lens supports a fuller assessment. It prompts questions about symbolism, costs, the distribution of benefits, and accountability to the public.

Yet public debate has also highlighted rising costs, delays, procurement disputes, and doubts about whether the benefits are fairly shared across regions and groups. For critics, some projects look like prestige showcases that crowd out careful planning and long-term social investment. Government statements emphasize strategic connectivity and national capacity. Independent observers, including transparency advocates and policy think tanks, have asked whether tendering, auditing, and long-term maintenance receive sufficient attention. (Transparency International, 2023; Centre for Policy Dialogue, 2024). Swift's invented realms help explain why these debates persist. In *Lilliput*, advancement depends less on wisdom than on the ability to entertain the emperor with arbitrary and sometimes humiliating feats. The episode lampoons systems in which loyal performance and spectacle outrank competence and evidence. In *Laputa*, rulers pursue abstract experiments—famously, schemes to extract sunbeams from cucumbers—while neglecting real needs on the ground. The satire works because the exaggerations are recognizable: leaders can chase novelty, symbolism, and courtly approval while ordinary people face mismanagement and neglect. These humorous episodes prompt readers to ask who gains power, why they are chosen, and how public funds are justified and spent.

Bangladesh illustrates this tension: even in a constitutional democracy, politics can still take on court-like patterns. Signature projects may deliver real gains in mobility, trade, and tourism, yet they can also centralize decisions, weaken checks and balances, and entrench patronage networks. Supporters point to jobs created and markets opened. Detractors reply that budgets expand far beyond initial projections, deadlines slip, and benefits arrive unevenly across communities. Media reporting and policy analysis likewise describe elite lifestyles, celebratory ceremonies, and the use of public resources to build and sustain loyalty, even as pockets of poverty and service shortfalls persist. (Transparency International, 2023; Centre for Policy Dialogue, 2024). Electoral competition can intensify showy spending, while weak institutions make it harder to correct course. Citizens often carry the costs through taxes, service fees, or lost opportunities.

The goal of this article is to use Swift as an interpretive lens for the present. It asks a clear question: How do the critiques of extravagance, corruption, and misuse of power in *Gulliver's Travels* illuminate leadership practices in contemporary Bangladesh? The method is qualitative. It pairs close reading of episodes from Lilliput and Laputa with analysis of studies on Bangladeshi governance from 2010 to 2025, including research on infrastructure finance, procurement procedures, and political patronage. By bringing literary criticism into dialogue with policy evidence, the study shows how a classic text can clarify current dilemmas. Evidence is drawn from published reports, academic articles, and policy briefs. The analysis does not claim to judge the technical merits of each project; instead it studies how rhetoric, symbolism, and incentives shape choices.

Findings show continuity. Across centuries and across institutional forms, vanity, favoritism, and prestige chasing can erode rational planning and the fair use of public funds. Swift's satire remains valuable because it turns complex failures into memorable images that invite skepticism and public discussion. The article concludes that satire can function as a civic check. By exposing waste and staging contradiction, it supports demands for transparency, restraint, and accountability in Bangladesh's political life today. This civic role can work in classrooms, news outlets, and community forums, where satire creates safer settings for thoughtful, critical discussion.

Literature Review

Swift's Satire and the Critique of Extravagance and Corruption

Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is not just an entertaining travel story; it is a clear, lasting analysis of how power can indeed fail. Using irony, exaggeration, and allegory, Swift reveals vanity, corruption, and abuses of authority that grow behind empty spectacle and courtly ritual. The travel frame lets readers watch politics from a safe distance, where everyday habits appear larger and easier to judge. Critics note that Swift makes human follies deliberately grotesque to spark reflection and reform (Rawson, 2001; Frye, 1957). His aim is moral as well as comic: to show how showiness and empty ceremony can distract from public welfare.

Lilliput offers the most vivid early case. In this miniature kingdom, candidates for office compete by tightrope-walking, a spectacle that rewards balance tricks over judgment and character (Swift, 1726/2002). The scene is funny, but it stings because it feels true: advancement often depends on pleasing a patron rather than serving the people. By turning flattery into a circus act, Swift shows how rules drift away from the common good toward private favor. The rope-dance becomes a simple, memorable image of favoritism, ritual loyalty, and political ambition untethered from competence. As scholars observe, Swift heightens the absurdity on purpose so readers will recognize similar patterns in their own institutions and time (Rawson, 2001; Frye, 1957). Swift's portraits of ceremonial display

reflect his first-hand view of court patronage (Damrosch, 2013). As Ehrenpreis (1962) argues, Swift's early-eighteenth-century context—where preferment often hinged on spectacle rather than merit—animates the rope-dancing satire and its critique of arbitrary advancement.

Swift extends the critique in *Laputa* and at the Grand Academy of Lagado. The rulers of the flying island obsess over abstract systems and grand theories. They sponsor schemes like extracting sunbeams from cucumbers or building houses from the roof down—projects that swallow resources while delivering little to ordinary people. The Academy's endless, impractical experiments parody intellectual vanity and wasteful extravagance. Higgitt (2013) interprets *Laputa* as Swift's warning about leaders who substitute spectacle and pseudo-progress for effective governance. Their detachment mirrors a wider habit among elites: chasing prestige projects that polish image while neglecting basic needs.

These episodes explain why Swift travels so well. The satire targets habits, not names, so it fits new places and periods without strained analogy. Swift's wit is sharpest when it touches court ceremonies, arbitrary appointments, and lavish spending by rulers who prefer display to service (Williams, 1968). The point is not to ban ambition or ceremony but to ask whether symbols are crowding out substance and whether offices reward the loyal rather than the capable. Farrell (2017) shows how these insights illuminate post-colonial settings, where new elites can reproduce the vanity and exploitation Swift attacked in his day.

The critique also widens from individuals to systems. Swift suggests that institutions without strong checks tilt toward manipulation, favoritism, and misuse of resources. In such settings, ambitious actors learn the wrong lesson: perform for patrons, not for the public. Satire therefore becomes a civic tool. By turning complex failures into memorable scenes, it invites awareness, discomfort, and debate. That discomfort is useful because it opens space for scrutiny, oversight, and practical reform.

Seen in this light, *Gulliver's Travels* offers a clear lens for contemporary politics. When leaders chase symbolic prestige, stage elaborate ceremonies, or pour funds into unnecessary mega-projects while basic services lag, they replay the absurdities Swift mapped so plainly. The tightrope dancers of Lilliput and the theorists of *Laputa* endure as archetypes of extravagance and corruption (Rawson, 2001). They remind readers that vanity-driven governance is not confined to the past; it adapts and returns in new forms. Swift's satire endures because it is simple, sharp, and usable: a literary check on excess that encourages citizens to ask what serves the public—and what merely serves the powerful.

Corruption in Bangladesh: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

Bangladesh's political history since independence in 1971 has been shaped by weak institutions, pervasive patronage, and long-standing corruption. Scholars often describe national politics as clientelist, where access to state resources and opportunities flows through personal loyalty and political ties rather than clear rules. Sakib (2019) argues that cultural norms of gift-giving, loyalty, and reciprocal obligation have helped normalize corrupt exchanges, to the point that many citizens view them as part of everyday politics rather than clear violations.

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) reflects this pattern. In the early 2000s, Bangladesh was ranked the most corrupt country for five consecutive years (The Daily Star, 2005). Although scores improved later, the 2022 index still placed Bangladesh 147th out of 180 countries, signaling persistent governance failures (Transparency International, 2023). The problem reaches far beyond petty payments. It includes large-scale misappropriation in infrastructure procurement, banking scandals involving weak oversight and insider favoritism, and illicit wealth accumulation abroad. Together, these practices erode trust, raise project costs, and reduce the fiscal space available for social services, especially for rural and low-income communities.

A 2024 "White Paper" by economist Debapriya Bhattacharya compiled evidence of systemic corruption in development projects. The report details cost inflations, procurement manipulations, and the misuse of foreign loans that produced losses amounting to billions of dollars (Centre for Policy Dialogue, 2024). These findings echo Swift's satire: leaders who chase spectacle and prestige often divert attention and money from public welfare.

Mega-Projects and Prestige Politics

Large infrastructure projects in Bangladesh, frequently promoted as symbols of national pride, reveal how extravagance and corruption can work together. The Padma Bridge, inaugurated in 2022, required enormous public spending and was celebrated for its promise of regional connectivity. Yet it was also engulfed in the Padma Bridge graft scandal. In 2012, the World Bank withdrew a \$1.2 billion loan after uncovering evidence of a conspiracy to solicit bribes involving SNC-Lavalin executives and Bangladeshi officials (World Bank, 2012; bdnews24.com, 2022). Although courts later acquitted the accused in Bangladesh and Canada, the episode exposed gaps in accountability and fed arguments that proceeding with domestic funding reflected prestige politics more than fiscal prudence.

The Karnafulli Tunnel, South Asia's first underwater tunnel, opened in 2023 at a cost of about \$1.1 billion. It has faced criticism for underuse, with traffic well below

projections and maintenance costs reportedly exceeding revenue (Prothom Alo, 2024). Analysts suggest its value is largely symbolic, showcasing technological achievement rather than meeting urgent transport needs. Similarly, the Dohazari–Cox’s Bazar Railway, a \$2.2 billion line aimed at boosting tourism, has experienced delays and cost overruns (Business Inspection BD, 2023). Critics argue that elevating Cox’s Bazar as a global tourist hub reflects elite preferences more than the immediate needs of rural communities. Taken together, these cases illustrate how prestige-driven planning can inflate budgets, weaken scrutiny, and divert scarce resources from essential services.

Political corruption in Bangladesh reaches beyond state contracts and into private enrichment by powerful actors. A 2025 investigation reported that senior politicians and business leaders had acquired more than £400 million in UK property (Financial Times, 2025). Reporting the same pattern, The Guardian described these offshore assets as part of a wider siphoning of public money abroad (The Guardian, 2024). Together, these accounts point to a persistent kleptocratic logic in which public office becomes a route to personal wealth rather than public service.

Accountability efforts remain uneven. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has at times reopened major inquiries—such as revisiting the Padma Bridge graft case in 2024–25—but critics question its autonomy and capacity to follow through (The Financial Express, 2024). This dynamic aligns with what Rose-Ackerman (1999) terms systemic corruption: a self-reinforcing cycle in which political elites shape and use institutions to secure their own power.

Cultural Dimensions of Corruption

Corruption in Bangladesh cannot be explained only by institutional weakness or opportunistic leaders. Cultural norms matter too. Scholars such as Sakib (2019) argue that practices of patronage, gift-giving, and kinship obligations have normalized exchange relationships that blur the line between social reciprocity and political graft. In such contexts, loyalty to family, hometown, or party often outweighs merit or the law. Favoritism is not only tolerated; it is expected. Elections usually heighten these pressures, as candidates hand out targeted favors or channel resources to build and keep support networks. The pattern echoes Swift’s Lilliput, where showy loyalty and ritual performance decide promotion more than competence or justice. Viewing corruption inside this cultural setting makes clear that serious reform must address both formal institutions and the social expectations that keep corrupt behavior going.

Gaps in Scholarship

Corruption in Bangladesh has been widely documented by NGOs and investigative

reporters, yet academic research rarely links literary satire to current governance. Most writings on *Gulliver's Travels* situate Swift within his eighteenth-century European world, while work on Bangladesh usually stresses empirical policy failures and specific cases. Few scholars have connected these strands by using satire as a lens to analyse political extravagance and corruption in Bangladesh. This study takes up that challenge. It treats Swift's satire as a framework for examining patterns of governance, showing that his literary insights into vanity, ritual, and the misuse of resources still provide powerful tools of critique. By placing *Gulliver's Travels* in dialogue with Transparency International reports, World Bank scandals, and a wide range of published studies, the research demonstrates how literature can illuminate political realities well beyond its original historical setting.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach that combines close reading of a literary text with a focused review of published research on government extravagance and corruption in Bangladesh. The aim is to draw on the insights of satire to enrich debates on governance by bringing literature and political analysis into a shared framework. In doing so, the study highlights how literary critique can sharpen our understanding of contemporary political practices and offer new perspectives on issues of accountability, resource use, and public trust.

Research Design

The study follows a two-layer plan.

- 1) The Review of the published sources: Cases were selected using three criteria: (a) prominence in national or international debate, (b) documented allegations of extravagance, corruption, or prestige-driven decision making, and (c) availability of credible evidence from academic studies, reputable newspapers, and NGOs.
- 2) Textual analysis: The primary text is Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726/2002), with special attention to Part I (A Voyage to Lilliput) and Part III (A Voyage to Laputa), where Swift's critique of royal display and misuse of power is most explicit. The analysis traces Swift's techniques—irony, allegory, caricature, and exaggeration—and the themes they generate: vanity, resource misallocation, and corrupt governance. Interpretations draw on key commentaries, notably Rawson (2001) and Farrell (2017), and Lund (2006) are oriented by general theories of satire (Frye, 1957).

Data Collection

Literary data: Evidence comes from Swift's original text (Swift, 1726/2002) Passages that clearly stage satire were excerpted and coded for recurring images and motifs.

Political data: Case details were assembled from peer-reviewed articles, investigative journalism, NGO reports, and documents from international institutions. Core sources include Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index; World Bank materials on the Padma Bridge; and national newspapers such as *The Daily Star* and *Prothom Alo*. International investigations in the *Financial Times* and *The Guardian* were used to corroborate findings on elite wealth and overseas assets.

Analytical Framework

The study employs a thematic, comparative procedure:

Stage 1 – Textual themes: Identify satirical depictions of extravagance and corruption in Lilliput and Laputa.

Stage 2 – Contemporary parallels: Map these motifs onto Bangladeshi public life, tracing patterns of vanity, symbolic prestige, and corruption documented in the review of the published sources.

Stage 3 – Interpretive synthesis: Situate the parallels within theories of satire (Frye, 1957) and corruption studies (Rose-Ackerman, 1999), showing how Swift's images clarify systemic problems in Bangladesh.

Limitations

Two caveats apply. First, scope of textual analysis: Focusing on Parts I and III leaves out other sections (for example, the Houyhnhnms) that may yield further insight. Second, data reliability: Media and NGO reports offer rich evidence but can reflect bias or polarization; claims were therefore cross-checked across multiple sources whenever possible. The study also privileges interpretive linkage over econometric testing, so conclusions should be read as analytic propositions rather than definitive causal proofs.

Despite these limits, the design provides a clear and robust way to connect literary satire with contemporary political analysis, enabling nuanced comparisons between Swift's critique of extravagance and patterns of governance in Bangladesh.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Patterns of extravagant development and elite enrichment in Bangladesh

Theme/project	Timeframe	Description	Critical Concerns	Source
Padma Multipurpose Bridge	2012–2022	Prestige-driven megaproject intended as a symbol of national pride.	Associated with graft scandals and significant cost inflation.	bdnews24.com. (2022, June 22) The Financial Express. (2024, March 10).
Karnafuli Tunnel	2014–2023	Under-river tunnel linking Chattogram to Anwara.	Criticized for low utility and high maintenance costs.	Prothom Alo. (2024, May 28).
Dohazari–Cox’s Bazar Railway	2018-2023	Railway expansion aimed at boosting tourism.	Developed without understanding the region’s unique hydrological patterns	The Dailly Star. (2023, August)
Political Patronage and Wealth Accumulation	2010–2025	Documented accumulation of wealth by Bangladeshi elites, including foreign property empires.	Reports highlight elite enrichment through political patronage	Financial Times. (2025, February 28) The Guardian. (2024, November 30)

This table outlines major prestige-led infrastructure projects and patterns of elite wealth in Bangladesh from 2010 to 2025. For each case, it notes the stated goals and highlights core criticisms—alleged corruption, financial viability concerns, and governance shortcomings.

Table 1 shows a clear pattern. From 2010 to 2025, Bangladesh’s development was shaped by prestige projects and rising elite wealth. The Padma Multipurpose Bridge, the Karnaphuli Tunnel, and the Dohazari–Cox’s Bazar Railway were framed as symbols of

progress. Their implementation raised repeated concerns. Observers noted corruption, cost overruns, delays, and uncertain long-term value. At the same time, elite fortunes grew, often through patronage networks. This growth points to weak accountability and oversight.

These patterns echo Swift's satire in *Gulliver's Travels*. Swift shows rulers who prize vanity projects and private gain over the public good. He mocks spectacle without substance and rituals that flatter power. Bangladesh's experience reveals similar risks. When national pride is tied to high-visibility ventures, leaders may neglect financial sustainability, fair distribution of benefits, and strong controls. The result is wasted resources and declining trust in public institutions.

The lesson is direct. *Gulliver's Travels* remains a warning against political vanity, corruption, and poor stewardship of public funds. Lilliput and Laputa remind us that displays of loyalty and grand projects cannot replace competence, fairness, and careful planning. Read alongside recent Bangladeshi cases of mega-projects, elite patronage, and weak governance, Swift's insights still hold. They encourage sober evaluation of costs and benefits, stronger safeguards against misuse, and a focus on projects that improve everyday welfare rather than simply broadcast prestige.

Political Patronage and Symbolic Power

In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift uses the Lilliputian "rope-dancing" contest as: When a great Office is vacant, either by Death or Disgrace, (which often happens) five or six of those Candidates petition the Emperor to entertain his Majesty and the Court with a Dance on the Rope; and whoever jumps the highest without falling, succeeds in the Office. Very often the chief Ministers themselves are commanded to shew their Skill, and to convince the Emperor that they have not lost their Faculty. (Swift, 1726/2002, Part I, p. 31-32).

The point is clear: access to power rests on spectacle and loyalty tests rather than judgment or skill. This logic has strong echoes in Bangladesh. To advance, many aspirants must perform figurative acrobatics—public displays of partisan devotion, personal allegiance to leaders, and readiness to mobilize money or favors. Research shows that state appointments, procurement decisions, and business opportunities often hinge on closeness to political patrons, pushing aside meritocratic procedures in favor of clientelist exchange (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2022). Scandals around lucrative tenders and strategic postings illustrate how affiliation can outweigh qualifications in practice.

The rope-dance thus illuminates a broader pattern of symbolic power. By rewarding those who signal loyalty most conspicuously, political elites convert public institutions into arenas for performance, rent-seeking, and gatekeeping. Officials, in turn, must repeatedly "prove" their balance through acts of deference and financial loyalty,

sustaining networks that circulate benefits upward while weakening oversight. The result is predictable: systemic corruption, demoralized professional cadres, and fragile institutions that serve patrons before citizens (Transparency International Bangladesh, 2022).

Extravagance and the Futility of Grand Projects

Swift's Laputa episodes mock grand but impractical schemes. His satire of Laputa underscores the extravagance and impracticality of intellectual vanity projects, characterized in the Grand Academy of Lagado:

The first Man I saw was of a meagre Aspect, with sooty Hands and Face... He had been eight Years upon a Project for extracting Sun-Beams out of Cucumbers, which were to be put in Vials hermetically sealed, and let out to warm the Air in raw inclement Summers. (Swift, 1726/2002, Part III, p. 151)

The joke lands because effort and money chase spectacle, not usefulness. The Contemporary Bangladesh shows similar risks in prestige-led development. The karnafulli Tunnel linking Chattogram to Anwara faces criticism for low projected use relative to its price tag and for thin maintenance planning, raising doubts about long-term value (Prothom Alo, 2024). Like Laputa's experiments, such projects absorb vast resources while their durable socioeconomic returns remain uncertain. A further case is the Dohazari–Cox's Bazar Railway. Framed as a catalyst for tourism, it exemplifies strategies that elevate visible symbols of progress over routine public needs. The project was developed without sufficient understanding of the region's distinctive hydrological patterns, precipitating severe flooding across the area in 2023 (The Daily Star, August 2023). Consequently, the overall benefits of the megaproject have been called into question.

Policymakers may champion these ventures as proof of modernity even as essential sectors education, healthcare, disaster management—remain underfunded (World Bank, 2021). The parallel to Swift's satire lies in this gap between ambition and necessity: high-profile ventures can mask weak governance, fragile oversight, and opportunity costs that fall on ordinary citizens. Read alongside Laputa, these examples warn that development measured by spectacle can crowd out practical planning, equitable benefits, and credible stewardship of public funds (bdnews24.com, 2022; The Financial Express, 2024; Prothom Alo, 2024; World Bank, 2021).

Interpreting the Parallels

The links between Swift's satire and politics in Bangladesh show how vanity, corruption, and waste can survive across very different times and systems. Although Swift wrote almost three centuries ago, the absurd worlds of Lilliput and Laputa still feel familiar.

In both settings, leaders prize spectacle and status over fair and careful use of public resources. That same preference often appears in Bangladesh today, where attention and money can flow to what looks impressive rather than to what most people need.

In Lilliput, office seekers prove themselves by rope-dancing. In Lilliput, the victor is the one who “jumps the highest,” not the most capable. The scene shows a system that rewards loyalty, not merit. Bangladesh displays similar patterns in patron–client networks. Access to contracts, state funds, and senior posts often depends on party allegiance. In such settings, those who conform and please superiors advance. Accountability, creativity, and professional standards are pushed aside.

Laputa offers a second mirror. Its scholars pursue spectacular but impractical experiments. They show little concern for real-world value. This recalls Bangladesh’s prestige mega-projects: the Karnaphuli Tunnel, and the Dohazari–Cox’s Bazar Railway. These ventures are praised as national milestones. Yet they are often linked to allegations of corruption, rising costs, delays, and uncertain long-term benefits. Like Laputa’s bottled sunbeams, they absorb vast resources while yielding uneven or unclear returns. In the process, attention and funding move away from urgent needs such as healthcare, education, and disaster management.

Swift’s satire and Bangladesh’s experience reveal a recurring pattern. When leaders prize spectacle, symbols, and private gain over duty to citizens, authority bends and institutions weaken. Swift’s warning is not about rare failures. It is about routine failure where transparency and independent oversight are missing. For Bangladesh, the lesson is clear. Without structural reforms that curb patronage, strengthen accountability, and put public welfare first, the follies Swift mocked will endure.

Conclusion

Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* is a sharp critique of vanity, corruption, and political theatre. In Lilliput and Laputa, Swift shows arbitrary appointments and ritual loyalty. He also shows grand projects that serve appearances, not public needs. The scenes come from European monarchies. They still resonate today, including in Bangladesh. They reveal how modern democracies can chase prestige and sustain patronage at the cost of welfare.

Bangladesh shows similar patterns. Mega-projects, political favouritism, and elite wealth mirror Swift’s concerns. Extravagance and corruption are not isolated lapses. They recur in how power often works. When leaders favour spectacle and self-interest over duty, societies pay. The costs include inequality, inefficiency, and weak public institutions. The problem is systemic. Party loyalty, social expectations, and weak checks and balances reinforce it.

Swift also points to remedies. Satire exposes folly and invites reform. In

Bangladesh, satire in literature, journalism, film, theatre, and popular culture can raise public awareness. It can energise debate. It can press leaders to account for the use of public funds. The broader lesson is twofold. First, strengthen institutions to secure transparency, accountability, and merit. Second, reshape norms so citizens value fairness and service over spectacle and favour.

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